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SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
SHADOW MINISTER FOR WOMEN**

**ADDRESS TO AMWU NATIONAL CONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2016**

I want to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land that we meet on today, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I also want to acknowledge all of the office holders of the AMWU today and I want to particularly say that Dave Oliver is here from the ACTU, and it's wonderful to see you here Dave in a room full of such solid unionists.

There is someone who is not here, but I know he will be joining you later in your Conference and that's your former National Secretary, and my current colleague, Senator Doug Cameron.

I did particularly want to mention Doug because he's just taken on a couple of new responsibilities in the Federal Parliament and they're two things that are very close to my heart - he's taken on responsibility for Housing and Homelessness. You know we live in a country where we think we're an egalitarian nation, we think of ourselves as a fair country, but every night there are about 16,000 people in this nation who sleep rough. And we're moving into a time where it's harder and harder for an ordinary person on an ordinary wage to afford an ordinary home and I think Doug is in an excellent position to make a difference there.

He's also taking on responsibility for skills and apprenticeships and I know Doug will be really keen to talk to you about this over the rest of your Conference. Doug is one of the few people that we have in the Federal Parliament today who comes from a blue collar background. He tells me he's the only person on the front bench who's studied at TAFE – I'm not sure about that, I haven't tested that with my other colleagues! But Doug is taking over from Sharon Bird in this really important area because, you know, we've lost about 120,000 apprenticeships between when the Liberals came into office and today. And no matter what Malcolm Turnbull says about the jobs of the future and we're all going to be computer coders one day - we are always going to need people who make things; we are always going to need electricians and plumbers and hairdressers, people who work in childcare, nursing and aged care, and the idea that we're going to stop training young Australians for these jobs in the way this Government has and rely instead on workers coming here on 457 visas and other visas that allow their exploitation and the undercutting of Australian pay and conditions, is just not acceptable to us. So I think it's wonderful that Doug is going to take on responsibility.

And one of Doug's first phone calls, he told me, was to Laurie Carmichael who again worked so hard in both your union and at the ACTU. At 92, Laurie was giving Doug advice about these policy issues. So you won't just get the benefit of Doug's wisdom, you'll also get the continued benefit of Laurie Carmichael's wisdom.

I really wanted to come today for a couple of reasons. I wanted to come today first of all to thank you for your efforts in the last election campaign.

We came within a whisker of defeating not just Tony Abbott in his first term, but also Malcolm Turnbull in his first term.

That applause really is for all of you because it was your hard work and the thousands of unionists and ALP branch members and supporters like you around the country and the thousands of conversations you had over 8 weeks, knocking on doors, on phones, standing in the cold outside railway stations, that brought us so close to victory. Really it is a matter of a few thousand votes in a handful of seats and sadly, all our hard work – I'm very pleased with it, I'm very grateful to you – but there are no prizes for coming second in federal politics.

So the first thing I wanted to say to you today is a really heartfelt thank you for your work, for your support, for your labour but for your ideas as well.

The second thing is I am here today to make a commitment to you that every hour of every day between now and the next election, whenever that is, we will be working in the Federal Parliament to defeat Malcolm Turnbull - to ensure that we make Bill Shorten Prime Minister, to ensure that we elect a Labor Government with fairness at its heart.

We had a fantastic effort from one of your members, Glenn Dallimore, a Shipbuilder in Mayo in South Australia – have we got any South Australians here? Well great work, I've got to say, great work! Jamie Briggs, one of the least popular members of the House of Representatives, and apparently his constituents, or former constituents, don't like him much either. It was the Labor preferences in that seat that meant that Jamie Briggs was knocked off. I mean, we would have loved it to become a Labor seat, but I tell you, one fewer Liberal seat is a pretty good result too. So we've seen the Xenophon candidate there elected and let's hope that in the future that we can use that strength – that campaigning strength that we saw from your union in South Australia for the next campaign too.

In Tasmania your union campaigned successfully to get rid of three members of the House of Representatives. Tasmania is a state that has a lot of economic challenges, its got big challenges with its health system and its education system, and the response of the Liberals there was always, "let's blame welfare recipients, that'll fix it. If only the welfare recipients had a harder life, that'll make Tasmania a better place to live". Instead of actually standing up for jobs in Tasmania, they stood by and let down Simplot workers and Bradken Foundry workers – they didn't lift a finger to protect those jobs, to support those people. Instead they just blamed people after they lost their jobs, having done nothing to support them to keep those industries going. So, good riddance to those three, I say, and I thank you for your efforts.

In Paterson, in Hunter, in Macquarie, in Barton and Lindsay, AMWU members campaigned very hard and we won those seats because of your efforts. In Burt and Cowan in WA and Moreton in Qld – right across the country you worked to make sure that people put the Liberals last and to win seats for Labor, so I thank you.

We're at a stage now where we're waiting for the final results in Herbert. Right now we're 35 votes ahead and I think the truth is there is every chance that we'll have to count these votes again. This is one of the closest contests we've seen. We have a fantastic campaign in Herbert, we've got a great candidate there and the difference is if Malcolm Turnbull wins Herbert that means he can appoint the Speaker from the Government benches and still have a majority, still not need to negotiate with us, or anybody on the crossbench. If he can't, then he has to let one of the Independents be the Speaker.

So it will be quite a different Parliament, depending on who wins Herbert. The fact that it's so close, so down to the wire, really is a great encouragement for us across all of our seats for next time around. Some people wrote us off in Townsville, but we're going to win that seat or we're going to come awfully close.

One of the reasons that we worked so hard in the campaign, and one of the reasons that we'll work so hard over the next few years to win back government for Labor is because we want to leave a country to our kids that is better than the one that we grew up in. That's the reason that we're all involved in politics. We want to make sure that in every Australian family has got parents who can put a roof over the heads of their kids and food on the table, because they've got a job with decent pay and conditions, with security, in a safe workplace environment. We want to make sure that every kid in every school in every part of Australia gets the opportunity they deserve to make the most of their potential, to make the most of their talents. We want to make sure that unemployment, if it comes, is temporary, and that sickness and disability aren't a ticket to poverty in this country. We want to make sure that our kids' dreams are not constrained by where they grow up, by their family background, by their suburb or postcode. We want to make sure that they can get a decent education, at school, at TAFE, at university. A decent, functioning TAFE system, not a string of dodgy private colleges trying to rip them off. A university degree if they work hard and they want it, a university degree that they can afford, not a \$100,000 debt. And an apprenticeship or a job waiting for them when they're done.

So I know over the course of this Conference you'll be discussing a lot of important issues. And there'll be your issues, your industrial issues, but there will also be these bigger issues: the issues of the kind of society that we want, the kind of society that we want to build. Your issues of course will be industrial issues because they are our bread and butter. They are the guarantee that we can give people a decent quality of life. You cannot have a decent quality of life in this country without quality jobs with decent pay and decent conditions. And Andrew Dettmer mentioned the ABCC as a great example of what this Government has in store for the quality of work in this country. The ABCC – there is no one in the Labor Party or in the Union Movement who says people should be allowed to break the law. This is the great untruth here. If people break the law, they face the fullest consequences of the law. But there shouldn't be two laws. There shouldn't be two different laws; one for employees and one for employers. There shouldn't be two different laws depending on whether you work in the building sector or the banking sector. There should be one law for Australians.

You'll be talking about all of the industrial issues that this Government has put on the agenda, including penalty rates - we've had more than sixty members of the current Parliament vote to reduce penalty rates in this country. They've already done it. This isn't something that we're talking about for the future. When they had the opportunity, when WorkChoices was being debated and they could vote against penalty rates - they voted against penalty rates. When we offered the Government this week an opportunity to join with Labor, to put in a joint submission to protect penalty rates, they voted against that too. These people are after penalty rates. They will not be satisfied until they reduce weekend penalty rates and we won't stand for that because people rely on those penalty rates for their take home pay.

This is again an issue of what sort of society do we want. Malcom Turnbull says we live in a 24/7 society and it's alright for anybody to get anything they want anytime of the day and night. I like that too. I like being able to get a cup of coffee at 5.30 in the morning or 10 o'clock at night but I want the people who are making it for me to get decently paid because they're not home with their families. Let's compensate people properly for what they're giving up when they're working those anti-social hours.

We've seen some of the battles you've had recently in your own industry, the fight for the workers at the Carlton United Breweries who were sacked without notice and then offered their jobs back with less money and worse conditions. Is this really what we expect or want in Australia? Workers working for a multi-national corporation with \$20 billion of annual sales, how could they stand up for their rights if they didn't have their union backing them? How could they stand up against that sort of size and that sort of power.

We've seen workers from across the labour movement turning out to support those workers at Carlton United Breweries too. If you touch one you touch all - it's not just this union that has to stay solid in the face of that sort of attack, but all unions and all unionists standing up on the principal that you can't sack a workforce and then offer them back their same jobs for less money and worse conditions.

Whether it's mine workers in Western Australia or brewery workers in Victoria or casuals in Tasmania or workers here in Sydney in the biomedical sector, we stand strong when we stand together.

And we know, that every day around Australia, unions are with their members, negotiating their pay and conditions, standing up against unsafe work practices and also active in their communities. Just like Union members in Ballarat, where the AMWU is working to undertake skilled work for community services and mentor school based trainees and apprentices. It's just such a great contribution to make to a local community.

So you should be proud of your campaign during the last election, you should be proud of the work you are doing to stand up for the pay and conditions of your members and for workers right around Australia. The union campaign in this election seriously frightened the Liberals. There is no question that your work and Labor's work to make sure that our submarines are built in Australia was successful because the Liberals in South Australia got really scared that they would lose seats.

It's not complicated. We already had a commitment from the Government made before the 2013 election that our submarines would be built in Australia, all twelve of them built in Adelaide. They broke that commitment and the only thing that made them reverse their decision and build in Australia was our campaign for Australian jobs and Christopher Pyne's real fear for his seat.

Look at what's changed in the last few years. This Government was able to goad the Australian car industry into leaving Australia. They thought they could do that with no consequence. They actually offered them a challenge to leave Australia. Do you remember Joe Hockey in Parliament that week and that the executives in America were watching his performance in Parliament? They said "oh alright we were going to stay a few more years but we don't have to. We'll just pull out now". What an appalling situation that the Australian Treasurer would actually, for ideological reasons, issue a challenge to an industry to leave this country. That's what he did. He was successful in destroying the car industry. But they didn't do that with the submarine industry because they knew the consequences would be that they would lose more and more seats in South Australia.

During the time of this government, because of their ideology, Australia has lost 93 jobs a day in the manufacturing and mining industries. There are 44,000 fewer manufacturing jobs and 49,000 fewer mining jobs compared with when they took power in 2013.

We've now got the lowest proportion of manufacturing jobs in the OECD. The OECD countries, the countries that we're measuring against, they're high wage, high skilled countries like Australia. They're not saying it's not too expensive to manufacture in their country, they're finding a way to do it and the fact that Australia is now at the bottom of that list is a cause for shame for us, or it should be.

Manufacturing is a great source of jobs, it's a great driver for innovation, it's a great secure future for this nation if we are prepared to take up the challenges of the changes in our economy. We want to work with you, with the manufacturing sector, with the broader labour movement to make sure that our policies are good for jobs, good for manufacturing and good for our economy.

We know that these immediate interests, the number of jobs, the pay and conditions, they are the things that really drive us in the Labor Party in Parliament, they drive you in your day to day work in the union, but they're only part of the picture of building a fairer Australia, a big part of the picture, but there's more to it.

We think of ourselves as an egalitarian country but we have the highest rates of inequality in this country that we've seen for 75 years. And it's been getting worse. We now have a society where the three wealthiest people have as much wealth as the million poorest people. That gap is getting bigger. The only time in recent decades that it hasn't gotten bigger is during the time of the Rudd/Gillard Government.

If we don't take action to ensure that we continue to see strong wages growth that inequality is only going to get worse. Profits are continuing to rise but we've seen stagnant wages growth, we've seen living standards actually go backwards in this country. We've seen unemployment rise, it's now higher now than during the global financial crisis.

You need decent jobs to prevent the rise of inequality, you need security at work and also a safety net that means that if you can't work for some reason you don't fall behind. That's what makes up the duty of our labour movement to our members and to the people who look to us.

One of the most critical areas in reducing inequality is education; I'll just finish with this as it's one of the new portfolios I'm taking on. Education is really the golden ticket for any Australian kid. It doesn't matter where you grow up, it doesn't matter your family background - if you can get a decent education you can have a whole range of life opportunities available to you. But we have let too many kids down.

We're actually going backwards on all the international education indicators - we're getting worse at maths, we're getting worse at science, we're getting worse at English - and kids who grow up in regional and remote communities are about two years behind in educational attainment compared with kids who grow up in city areas.

We know there's a whole range of kids who aren't finishing school, so it's harder for them to get a job and for their whole lifetimes they are going to have lower earnings than people who do finish school.

We need early childhood education and care that inspires a love of learning in even the youngest children, then a school system that delivers for every child, in every school in every part of Australia. That returns Australia to being a top performer in reading, writing and maths. That prepares our kids for the jobs of the future.

We need a well funded, world class TAFE and VET sector, and a university education for young Australians if they work hard and they want it. They shouldn't face \$100k degrees. The Liberals say why should factory workers pay taxes for other people to go to university? The answer is because it could be their kids who are going to university. And when those kids graduate and get well paid jobs, they should pay tax so the next generation of young Australians get their chance to have a great education.

The Liberals have cut \$2.7 billion from the skills portfolio - \$1 billion from apprenticeships. They've cut funding for TAFE. They've cut group training. They've delivered high youth unemployment, unaffordable TAFE and university, and fewer pathways to a real job. And then they say we need to make it easier to employ temporary workers and exploit young people through internships. Instead of providing real pathways to work, they've come up with an "internship" scheme, paying employers \$1,000 to take on young people at a wage cost of just \$4 an hour.

Well we won't stand for it.

Every person in this room, and every one of your tens of thousands of members, and many millions of Australians, share a desire for Australia to be stronger and fairer. A country where we work hard and look after each other when times are tough.

I know you are committed to that goal.

So is the Labor Party.

I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead to reach it.