

6 June 2019

The Hon Anthony Albanese  
Leader of the Opposition  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

The Australian Labor Party has a proud tradition in addressing the changing nature of employment and industry conditions through the transitions from a farm and factories economy to the emerging education, electronics and entertainment economies.

In the immediate post-war period (1945) Labor presented a vision of Full Employment. In 1964 the White Paper on Employment and Industry set out a plan for education, skills and workforce development. In 1983 the Hawke Government introduced the Wages Accord with the concept of the social wage and benefit trade off and in 1994 the Keating Government generated the Working Nation outline.

On 19 October 2017 the Senate established the Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers, chaired by ALP Senator Murray Watt, to inquire and report on the impact of technological and other change on the future of work and workers in Australia. By September 2018 the Committee released its report stating that "*hope is not a strategy - our shared responsibility is for the future of work and workers*".

The nature of work in Australia is transforming at an alarming rate. Manufacturing has declined dramatically with thousands of skilled workers sidelined, especially given the demise of the car manufacturing industry and the increasing substitution of capital-intensive workplaces with an associated reduction in the proportion of entry-level, labour-intensive job opportunities.

A major implication of the changing nature of work and employment is the impact this has on the education and training systems required to prepare for it. In those programs we need to clarify the requisite learning objectives, and design innovative and effective environments for learning, which is now a lifelong prerequisite. This is particularly so given the implications that the latest technological revolution has for sufficient and real resourcing to meet those changes and to respect the dignity and contribution of people in a changing workforce.

It is increasingly important to address the need for greater levels of employment security and to reduce anxiety about automation, globalisation, income inequalities and the implicit fear experienced by many discouraged workers. Labor must continue its role of contributing to the redesign and redirection of jobs and working life to

restore confidence, reconstruct economic and social inclusion and revitalise national, regional and community development. Unlike the government forces that capitalise and exploit fear, Labor must position itself as the Party that champions policies that bolster a sense of individual and family financial security.

At the end of May, thirty or more members of the Fabian Society in Victoria met to capture their thinking around this issue and to assist in composing a 'Letter to Labor' from rank and file supporters of Labor to provide a focus and some suggestions.

First off, their attention was given to the type of work that might evolve as we move forward to 2050. The five key areas identified included roles based around engaging with the community, making a social contribution, fostering creativity, building on the contribution of technology and capitalising on the emerging roles involved in human entertainment

Key concerns raised in considering the transition from an industrial society towards a knowledge and services society include a clear consideration of the future role and nature of paid jobs and new opportunities for work. Just as there is growing recognition of a pending crisis in our climate, there is an urgent need to recognise a crisis in the transition posed by the future nature of work

Forum members believe that there is a need for wider consultation across the nation to address the implications arising from new forms of income distribution as more and more people are no longer engaged in work, the industrial relations issues arising from such a transition, the ways and means of supporting industry and commercial initiatives, and the support required to promote personal growth and development given these circumstances.

In Attachment A there are a wide range of suggested considerations that could and should form the basis for an extended process of community engagement in workplaces, community meetings and policy discussions. The range and scope of these suggestions reflects the necessity to consolidate and simplify the approaches to rising levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This may lead to a questioning of the effectiveness of Labor's role in addressing such matters. It may be reflected in declining membership in traditional industrial unions.

There are rising levels of frustration with government failure to meet its commitments and address appropriate expressions of concern about large companies adopting automation and technology without accepting any responsibility for either their intended or unintended consequences.

**As an initial step to an engagement of all impacted workers and community members, it is suggested that Labor promote the initiative of a nation-wide consultation to increase commitment to the security of jobs and work through a Future Work Commission as an extension of the Productivity Commission.**

During this initial consultation process involving the Victorian Fabians, the following policy initiatives Labor should seek to be addressed by a Future Work Commission to lay the foundations for a fair and equitable Australia were put forward:

### Ensuring jobs for the future - Suggestions from Fabians members

- Integrate a learning component as part of active industry policy where we are shaping what industries we want as well as scanning and identifying the training needs arising from vocational jobs.
- Incorporate training into the workplace to ensure relevance and a hands-on approach to experiential learning.
- Use international trade agreements as a foundation for the growth of quality work and Australia's place on a global scale.
- Address the realities and implications of a Universal Basic Income scheme to ensure whether it could be practical, affordable and an appropriate strategy in order to ensure a fair and equitable Australia.
- Make aged care, health care and engagement as the common baseline of a Universal Basic Income security system to shift away from a waged and unwaged sector approach.
- Develop a decisive framework to transition to a renewable energy industry that secures work and incorporate a compassionate social safety net that lifts people into a high quality of life as opposed to descending into a poverty trap.
- Put a stop to the wholesale privatisation and outsourcing of government services.
- Encourage transition industries now, with plans for a just transition (through economic, social and ecologically balanced work)
- Create a Green New Deal as a component of a federal Job Guarantee initiative.
- Reform the industrial relations system to restore balance and return to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission with minimum wage and industry awards.
- Provide basic protection for insecure workers which was the norm in the past and is the real case for a minimum wage through Industry awards rather than Enterprise Bargaining Agreements.
- Ensure more diversity of media ownership and restrict capacity of the wealthy to purchase political influence.
- Reintroduce free education with a cradle to grave secular education policy based on government delivery.
- Address current barriers to education, including socio-economic issues such as poverty, geographic access, teacher and resource access. In one word – restore Gonski!
- Undertake meaningful national planning which is based on a social democratic approach to dealing with the precariousness of work, especially during the transition into the future of work.
- Trade and industry policy should support quality work and be planned collaboratively with the involvement all stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the members of this Fabian Forum.

**Dr Julia Thornton**

Chairperson

Australian Fabians (Victorian Branch)

CCs. **Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers**  
Shadow Treasurer.

**Hon. Clare O'Neill**  
Shadow Minister for the Future of Work

**ATTACHMENT A**



Australian  
Fabians.

# Letter to Labor Series

Job insecurity/Precariousness of Work

Victorian Fabian Workshop

29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Multicultural Hub Melbourne

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## Executive Summary

The nature of work in Australia is transforming at an alarming rate. Manufacturing has declined dramatically with thousands of skilled workers sidelined, especially given the demise of the car manufacturing industry and the slow take up of advanced manufacturing alternatives. The dozens of empty retail shops now appearing in nearly every strip shopping precinct provide clear testimony to the changing nature of retail and the availability of work.

Just as there is growing recognition of a pending crisis in our climate, there is an urgent need to recognise a crisis in transition posed by the future nature of work.

At the end of May, thirty or more members of the Fabian Society in Victoria met to capture their thinking around this issue and to assist in composing a 'Letter to Labor' from rank and file supporters of Labor to provide a focus and suggestions.

First off, their attention was given to the type of work that might evolve as we move forward to 2050. The five key areas identified included roles based around

- engaging with the community,
- making a social contribution,
- fostering creativity,
- building on the contribution of technology
- and the emerging roles involved in human entertainment.

While it may not be clear as to what will evolve over the coming decades, a number of key drivers were considered as directions and emerging trends in ordering work and engagement. Some related to cultural imperatives, others to environmental considerations, those that would contribute to society and those that involved the monitoring and marshalling of advances in technology.

Key concerns in considering the transition from an industrial society towards a knowledge society include a clear consideration of the role and nature of work as it evolves, the implications arising from new forms of income distribution as more and more people are no longer engaged in work, the industrial relations issues arising from such a transition, the ways and means of supporting industry and commercial initiatives, and the support required to promote personal growth and development in these circumstances.

A major implication of the changing nature of work and employment is the impact this may have on the education and training systems required to prepare for it. In those terms we need to clarify the requisite learning objectives, design innovative and effective environments for learning which is now a lifelong prerequisite and the implications all of this may have for sufficient and real resourcing.

As a result of the number of ideas and suggestions considered on the night the following policy initiatives were brought forward:

- Integrate a learning component as part of active industry policy where we are shaping what industries we want as well as scanning and identifying the training needs arising from vocational jobs.
- Incorporate training into the workplace to ensure relevance and a hands-on approach to experiential learning.
- Use international trade agreements as a foundation for the growth of quality work and Australia's place on the global scale.
- Address the realities and implications of a Universal Basic Income scheme to ensure whether it could be practical, affordable and an appropriate strategy in order to ensure a fair and equitable Australia.

- Make aged care, health care and engagement as the common baseline of such a Universal Basic Income security system to shift away from a waged and unwaged sector approach.
- Develop a decisive framework to transition to a renewable energy industry that secures work and incorporate a compassionate social safety net that lifts people into a high quality of life as opposed to descending into a poverty trap.
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- Reintroduce free education with a cradle to grave secular education policy based on government delivery.
- Address current barriers to education, including socio-economic issues such as poverty, geographic access, teacher and resource access. In one word – restore Gonski!
- Undertake meaningful national planning which is based on a social democratic approach to dealing with the precariousness of work, especially during the transition into the future of work.
- Trade and industry policy should support quality work and be planned collaboratively with the involvement all stakeholders.

**Max Dumais**  
 Convenor  
 Zing Facilitator.

***Disclaimer:***

*This document represents individual contributions at a workshop convened for members and others of the Australian Fabians (Vic branch) and are in no way meant to represent the views or policies of the organisation. Participants also hold their individual views which they freely express through their own respective organisations and are not held to any of the views expressed in this presentation.*

## QUESTIONS THAT WERE CANVASSED DURING THE FORUM

### The types of work that could be the most engaging in 2050:

- Involvement with community engagement and personal care
- Roles involving creativity
- Activities that contribute within the entertainment industry
- Work that makes a social contribution to society
- A range of roles that support and develop technological advances.

### Key scenarios relating to the future of work:

#### Scenario One – Societal, structural, global issues

##### 1. Societal issues

- Make the alleviation of poverty an industry and identify the type of work that could be transformed into paid jobs in that industry.
- Design ways of dealing with increasingly unstable work opportunities as people become more insecure and turn more to religious fundamentalism.
- Mount a drive to address inequality and precarious work.
- As work becomes less available consider a new form of social distribution
- Replace 'pay for effort' with 'pay for contribution to society'.
- Increasing levels of social anxiety and mental illness will generate demand for people who can give people safe, social space
- Acknowledge that a degree of inequality affects precariousness. E.g. neoliberalism uses job precariousness to control people.
- Hasten the death of Neoliberalism and replacing it with a trend towards a compassionate society for the people by the people.
- Develop new measures of government success besides GDP with a new index of societal wellbeing.
- Counter media magnates and marketing gurus combining to affect a blanket control of ideas and conversations.
- Maintaining security in the face of hostile land and water grabs.
- Avoid class warfare.
- Avoid the development of an Orwellian society - restrict CCTV cameras on the street and facial recognition surveillance.
- Introduce a social value weighting to the competitive tendering process.
- Focus on a well-being benchmark with less emphasis on competition as an organising principle and more focus on quality of life.
- Shift away from commissioning models in government that overemphasise 'value for money' at the expense of non-profit or community run organisations e.g. childcare, mental health services.
- Recognise all types and forms of work attracting wages - e.g. Carers, volunteers, artists, child carers, philosophers, poets, artisans
- Attribute an economic value to activities that currently have low or no value - e.g. fun, care, self-expression.
- Limit the capacity of the super-rich to purchase electoral power.

- Analyse the extent to which government can determine the power balance between finance capital and labour.
- Design a new Federal Job Guarantee initiative so people are not trapped in unsatisfactory or poorly paid jobs
- Promote socially useful work
- Tackle threats to democracy through the manipulation of peoples' thinking and ideas
- Keep control of key enabling technologies to ensure strategic industrial policy outcomes so that we maintain control over what manner of work is created.

## *2. Structural issues*

- Strong democratic government is needed with a new Accord policy.
- Review the laws around intellectual property. It is often created at a cost within the public sector only to be patented by the private sector.
- Challenge inequality as a key driver that ends up with a slave class by re-regulating the labour market and constraining part time work and casualisation.
- Challenge the commodification of resources and human activities
- Consider the development of the 'Gig' and 'Share' economies, and the measures needed to ameliorate their outcomes.
- Ensure diversity in the workforce
- Enforce maximum working hours to enable work to be spread around.
- Place greater emphasis on a social licence to operate, along the previous lines of the banking licences.
- Recognise the need for rapid and flexible specialisation but ensure technology doesn't replace jobs.
- Encourage rapid technological development which will affect types of jobs e.g. rapid development of smart-phones has changed everything.
- Improve data security and personal identity security.
- The Orwellian concept may be inevitable, so we need to address the possible use of implants – just as pets are already microchipped. Need to turn this into a social and community benefit by design not default.
- Avoid the prospect of a Soma-scripted society where everyone is drug dependent.
- As brains replace hands in the creation of value - we need to recognise that people skills will be more necessary than machines.
- Encourage the use of Psyops to assess the information needs of the Australian population and craft messages that influence and engage target audiences in progressive change.
- Monitor technological change such as the development of artificial intelligence, machine learning and genetic engineering or modification.

## *3. Global concerns*

- Support equitable growth within developing countries like India, China and Indonesia into wealthy and powerful countries.
- Move away from questionable 'nationalism' within an increasingly borderless world and open communications.
- Check the power of multi-national corporations through defining and developing our own Global Value Chain Strategy.
- Support a borderless world on condition that international trade agreements maintain and protect workers' rights.

- Look to Scandinavia for our policy solutions rather than the US. (Closely consider any US labour policy - and then do the complete opposite!)
- Plan for a potential population collapse.
- Question capitalism in its current form and consider a different kind of framework or paradigm.
- Strive for racial harmony and understanding leading to mutual respect on a planetary scale.
- Monitor closely the emergence of a 'Surveillance society' – with the realisation that compliance may also be enforced with technology.
- Combat the introduction of a Social Credit Regime, as implemented in China, being imposed at any time in Australia.
- Anti-globalisation may change what work must be done internally in a country.
- Attract car companies and skilled manufacturing back to Australia.

## Scenario Two – Environmental, local, personal

### 1. Environmental implications

- Focus on the values of well-being and sustainability and consider strategies that identify work opportunities to support survival in a world of increasingly scarce resources.
- Re-use and recycle all waste and actively plan to remove the concept of waste from the language.
- Encourage the design and development of electric vehicles.
- Address environmental needs in response to climate change, plastic pollution and the provision of clean air necessary for sustainability. Invest in mass clean air solutions city-wide.
- Harness renewable energy which is equivalent to Mining 2.0.
- Prepare for climate breakdown, as we cannot work if we do not have water, air that is breathable or the ability to cope with extreme temperature swings.
- Find sustainable ways of filling up all the big holes left from mining and quarrying.
- Define work opportunities for climate refugees
- Find jobs that are safe and fulfilling for workers and their skills and knowledge in a democracy where new products add value to environment and society.

### 2. Personal development

- Incorporate training in other languages so we can communicate better in the workforce.
- Treat unemployed people respectfully with financial and retraining support. Introduce a new concept of human rights and an entitlement enshrined in law to a government backed income insurance for time spent between jobs.
- Adopt a lifetime entitlement to education and training that enables access to free, lifelong learning experiences and provide adequate public funding to support Lifelong education with the right of access for all levels of the community.
- Place a value on educational attainment for fun, not just jobs.
- Provide meaningful self-development opportunities by providing time off and income support for people to retrain in midlife.
- Expand workplace laws to recognise and cover neurodiversity as a normal component of the neurological spectrum.

- Encourage occupations that enhance rather than diminish human relationships.
- Design leisure activities imbued with meaning by building on those past times that have enriched people's lives.
- Recognise and factor in a greater role for identity in driving work choices.

## Scenario Three – Community, regional, learning-based approaches

### 1. Community concerns

- Challenge the assumption that school is the core of education and stop treating schools as the only place where thinking is to be learned.
- Scrap VCE and ATAR. Respectful relationships are key, as well as safety and creativity in schools, not standardised "tests".
- Don't assume that schooling is able to keep up with the rate of turbulence and change
- Stop relying on the commercial sales force as we move to being energy self-sufficient and focus more on learning how to make use of energy rather than having to buy it or being trained on to use it.
- Ensure work equality with no premium on either paid or unpaid work
- Supporting communication between the people who matter for the people who matter.
- Encourage a cultural shift that moves away from a culture of fear and poverty and the capacity to embrace continuous reform.
- Build future industries and enterprise on the operating principle of the gaining of wisdom.
- Create the right to private space that enables the opting out of Orwell's 1984 scenario.
- Find ways to engage the disengaged for whom the world seems too hard to manage.
- Address the reason for life rather than the reform of labour
- Cultivate people who have a capacity to simplify choices and reduce complexity and determining who are the end users of those systems that create too much complexity
- Balance pessimism with a new optimism concerning social interaction being replaced by machine interactions.
- Need for an end to "economic" growth as a main driver because the earth and its resources are finite.
- Deal effectively with increasing fear and intolerance stoked by the 1% who hold 60% of the wealth.
- Foster creativity. Neuro-divergent thinking is necessary for solutions
- Deal with the lack of population as young people stop having babies and the need to accommodate climate migrants.
- Address and deal with culture wars - gender balance, work life balance, gender roles and identity
- Challenge the concept that companies only have responsibility to shareholders and owners as the only stakeholders.
- Teach co-designing and community capacity-building skills so young people can design their own solutions to local problems in future.

## 2. Regional considerations

- Designing decentralised, living and liveable smart cities
- Promoting the decentralisation of cities with a focus on those jobs that make living in crowded cities easier.
- Ensure equal educational opportunity to regional and remote communities.
- Support the notion of Circular economies that build and rebuild long-term resilience, generates business and economic opportunities, and provides environmental and societal benefits in regional towns and cities.

## 3. Learning-based objectives

- Redesign learning objectives with a focus on thought leadership and place a greater emphasis on developing the skills of leadership, teamwork, flexibility and creativity.
- Provide more focus on generalised education that teaches clear thinking, analytical skills, general knowledge, concise communication and relationship skills.
- Encourage concept development as a basis for increasing knowledge and setting direction. Focus on learning to think and on developing an individual's capacity to form conceptual frameworks.
- One implication of the current system, private or public, is it is utterly ill-fitted for the future of work. Completely redesign our current 'industrial era' school system to a modern collaborative, self-paced and autonomous peer to peer learning environment.
- Get rid of the vocational focus in education and don't set people up to train to fail. Encourage learning for its own sake with a focus on learning how to learn.
- Increase Civics Education to include social and political education for people to act on evidence rather than on fake news.
- Redesign technical learning to be a genuine skills upgrade rather than just certification and accreditation.
- More re-packaged bridging and transition learning with one-off and component courses which are free or at minimal cost - if Germany can afford free higher education why can't we?
- Design a rewarding and encouraging approach to motivating people to become educated, not a punitive one.
- Improve the standards and quality of education in order to return people to the standards required for understanding and insight, rather than just information and acquiring knowledge.
- Transfer the principles of early child-hood education to the rest of the education system to generate knowledge and insight including the role of 'play' in learning.
- Facilitate environments for learning rather than teaching and avoid rote learning and replace it with thinking and skills development.
- Revisit 'hands on' learning through mentoring for young men.
- Promote a more diverse range of learning modes and approaches and eliminate the 'chalk and talk' components of retired 'tradies' in TAFE.
- Teach thinking processes, not just information collection and management as information now changes too quickly. Ideas used to outlive us, but now we can outlive them.
- Provide World Class early childhood education so that people are primed to think throughout life with structured learning models.
- Value lifelong learning and sequential skills development. Education needs to be accessible throughout the whole of life.

## Scenario Four – Managerial, dispersal, skills-based development and income distribution.

### 1. Managerial issues – resourcing

- Revisit the funding balance between local learning and over reliance on export learning initiatives.
- Reverse the growth in privatisation
- Reverse the shift to credentialing. Move back towards holistic learning and the pursuit of knowledge through philosophy, poetry, music and art. Need full government support and funding by placing an equally high value on the development of the arts as is currently the case with stem subjects.
- Offer community health programs through schools.
- Get rid of HECs and cancel all existing debts and replace it with a national education service like the national health service and integrate apprenticeships, on-job training and the full range of education with proper financial support for learners at any stage of life without fees.
- Eliminate the lack of opportunity resulting from inequality in the school system by reducing support for private education at the expense of public education. Invest in all education that can be lifelong, free and secular.
- Fund different housing models to provide security of accommodation and a roof first e.g. housing co-ops, communal housing, rent control policies.
- Marshal political power to harness inactive private wealth and redistribute it into the active economy. E.g. Exercise a higher marginal tax as was the case after WW2 to support the New Deal
- Reverse the growth and development of privatisation and outsourcing and regulate control of labour hire companies.
- Have unions on boards as in the Industry Super Funds and as is the case in Germany and Scandinavia to great effect.
- Invest in industrial democracy models that strengthen union power and the bargaining power of workers as well as their contribution to the ownership and advancement of their enterprise.
- Restore wider access to compulsory arbitration in relation to working conditions and/or industrial disputes.
- Re-regulate the labour market by bringing back centralised wage fixation and eliminating enterprise bargaining agreements to ensure that there are minimum hours of work.
- Put more government money into enforcing and protecting hours of work.
- Given the decline of trade union membership, restore the balance in industrial relations by supporting strategies that expand union membership.
- Have an Accord style, corporatist model of regulation of both jobs and labour standards through regular tripartite negotiations between industry, government and unions and maybe with an environment movement representative voice.
- Adopt more active government support for entrepreneurs and for companies to become exporters.
- Encourage co-operative enterprises and produce a policy platform based on the development of cooperatives, particularly Worker cooperatives.
- Establish Micro-enterprise funding options.
- Ensure the better application of Fair Work Authority workplace justice together with the unionisation of casual workers.

## 2. Social Distribution

- Consider if more remote work and home-based work would increase isolation and social disharmony.
- Enable more paid sabbaticals to study fulltime with more opportunities like Churchill Fellowships which apply for all workers, not just professionals.
- Design housing developments that allow space and time for food production locally
- Give more weight to the social value of work and put a price/value on domestic work.
- As resources diminish, climate adaption will mean being limited in where and how we can work.
- Bolster the value of a worker in order to rebalance the industrial compact between labour and capital.
- Support the development of social enterprises that fill market failures e.g. lack of NDIS service providers in small regional towns.
- Start with the concept of 'Circular economies' and design education and training around the local economy and community.

## 3. Skills-based development

- Workplace should become a place of education and skills development. Match demand and supply in areas requiring high skill development.
- Move to a 'one on one' exploration of opportunity with access to a place where a person can explore the possibilities, not the impossibilities.
- Avoid the technology imperative with human creativity by using technology as an installation process.
- Need to reintroduce risk in learning. More schools need to incorporate outdoor, community and life skills learning opportunities.
- Encourage and fund informal education provision e.g. Neighbourhood houses but ensure appropriate quality frameworks for all educational activities.
- Preserve human interaction – pulling away from: "Internet Bubble" by valuing human contact and meaning.

## 4. Income distribution

- Legislate for portable Long Service Leave options across all sectors.
- Allow pensioners to earn up to the tax threshold of \$18,000 without losing pension income and re-designing the aged pension so it is no longer a poverty trap for those without built-up assets.
- Support a minimum living wage for all. Consider the introduction of universal employment insurance to underwrite periods of unemployment as of right.
- Place a cap on inheritance amounts that can be transformed from generation to generation. Adopt a social benefit approach to wealth distribution rather than having a reliance on redistribution from one generation to the next.
- Shift tax from consumption and productivity to land, assets and resources.
- Consider the introduction of a Universal basic income scheme and address the real issues with a Universal Basic Income policy in order to develop a baseline support that is affordable, accessible with UBI as a safety net and funded by an insurance-based structure.
- Frame policies that shift taxation away from individuals and replace it with corporate and cyber national taxation in order to provide a Universal Basic Income scheme.

- Move to a land tax rather than a tax on effort as space will become a premium as the population expands.
- Instead of a safety net approach, have an opportunity foundation (universal) to underwrite periods of individual unemployment.
- Require that corporate taxation is regulated on a global scale so that there is no escape to tax havens.
- Taxation and social security policies should recognise an individual's life and work history of income and wealth not just periodic snapshots of time.
- Enshrine the principle of equality of economic share within the context of financial security for life. Ensure productivity increases are equally shared between labour and capital.