

COUNTRY LABOR DIALOGUE

CONNECTING COUNTRY COMMUNITIES - AUGUST 2015

National Conference sets regional election policy

Labor and Bill Shorten have been praised in the media for the 47th National Conference of the Australian Labor Party – a conference that set a progressive policy platform we can proudly take to the next Federal Election.

The updates passed to the National Platform paid special attention to the needs of regional and rural Australia. This year, Labor restated its commitment to an Australia where healthcare, education, and economic opportunities are available to every Australian – no matter where they live. Our National Platform recognised that regional policy is not a separate strand of thought to “mainstream” policy; every policy implemented must have regional Australia in mind.

The challenges and opportunities facing regional Australia have changed dramatically since the 2011 National Conference. The mining boom that has enriched the regions for a decade is reaching an end, and Labor must now work with these communities to find durable policy solutions to the economic and social issues they face.

But as Joel Fitzgibbon noted in his speech to conference, we must always face the next opportunity. The so-called “dining boom” – the enormous growth in global food demand – won’t just come to us, we must go to it. The Abbott Government is not up to the task of preparing Australia to take advantage of this shift. It is up to Labor to attract investment into the innovative, high value products that the world is seeking.

At this conference, Labor reinforced its proud history and legacy in rural and regional Australia. It was a thorough endorsement of the hard work of Country Caucus and Country Labor Branches in developing policy for primary industries, and in enhancing engagement and support for those who live outside our capital cities.



Hume FEC Delegate, Michael Pilbrow addressing the National Conference.

Jay Suvaal writes...

Thanks to all the Country Labor members who came to Melbourne to be part of National Conference.



It was a great opportunity for Country Delegates to make their voices heard on a national stage.

With State Conference being moved back to February 2016 it will allow branches more time to submit policy motions. This month's *Political Briefing* will include the amended deadline for submissions.

I look forward to travelling around over the next couple of months as we start rolling out the one day intensive Campaign Insight programs in the lead up to the Federal and Local Government elections.

If you haven't registered interest from your FEC yet please email me at jay@nswlabor.org.au.

Jay Suvaal
ACTING COUNTRY ORGANISER

Coming Events

▶ **CAMPAIGN INSIGHT REGIONAL ONE DAY TRAINING SEMINARS**
AUG – OCT 2015

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▶ **LOCAL GOVT TRAINING DAY**
– Trades Hall
Sydney
12 SEPT 2015

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▶ **LIGHT ON THE HILL DINNER**
– Bathurst Panthers
Leagues Club
19 SEPT 2015

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▶ **INAUGURAL COUNTRY LABOR NATIONAL FORUM**
– Casino
26 SEPT 2015

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▶ **NSW LABOR STATE CONFERENCE**
– Sydney Town Hall
13-14 FEB 2016

To see all upcoming
Country Labor events visit
countrylabor.com.au/events

If you have an event you
would like to promote
to other Country Labor
members please email it
to jay@nswlabor.org.au

Farming vs Mining: Balance only comes through proper planning

The Nationals and the Liberals were at war last month over the future of the Shenhua Watermark Coal mine on the Liverpool plains.

The mine is a \$1.2 billion project spearheaded by the state-owned Chinese mining giant Shenhua Coal. Shenhua Coal argues that once it is up and running the mine will create approximately 600 jobs and billions of dollars of investment over the life of the mine. But it would forever destroy some of Australia's best farmland.

The Liverpool Plains is highly fertile black soil farmland above one of the most productive aquifers in Australia. The key to the area's quality is the extremely shallow, abundant aquifer. Not only does it provide water with bores as shallow as 20 metres, it is the source for some of the most important rivers in New South Wales. It is this prime farmland that Abbott's Liberal-Nationals Coalition wants mined for coal.

Despite being the local member for the area, the minister for Agriculture, and one of the key figures in the Abbott cabinet, Barnaby Joyce claims he was given no say in the future of the Shenhua mine, and has spent the last few weeks railing against it uselessly.

This outcry from Barnaby Joyce doesn't just show the irrelevance of the Nationals to the Coalition, but also the incompetence of Tony Abbott's planning processes.

Country Labor understands mining's importance. It creates wealth, opportunity, and good long-term jobs. If soundly assessed and handled properly, a well-built mine may have little impact on the water table or surrounding farms, can deliver billions of dollars to the Australian economy and lift the standard of living for entire communities.

But the Shenhua Mine process has not been handled properly. Country Labor knows that even if they are built well, mines are not always the best use of land. You can't build a skyscraper in



suburbia just because you purchased the land, nor should you be allowed to destroy prime farmland for a short-term mine.

Moreover, these decisions should not be fought out in public feuds among cabinet ministers. They should be decided using clearly written and consistent guidelines that plan for future generations. In any competent government, the loudest voice in the room should not dictate the success or failure of a mining project.

This is the challenge for a future Labor Government: Australia's land use policies should be written and enforced so they encourage investment and jobs in mining regions. But they should also ban forever the construction of mines in our most fertile and valuable farming land.

Striking this balance is a challenge for any future government, but it is a challenge that Tony Abbott's Liberals and Barnaby Joyce's Nationals fail to understand.

Jay Suvaal
ACTING COUNTRY ORGANISER

Baird playing games with 300 Illawarra jobs

The Baird Government is playing games with the future of the ethanol production industry, following a secret review of the 6% ethanol mandate.

Premier Baird and Energy Minister Anthony Roberts have been sitting on a report by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal since May and have not disclosed its terms of reference.

The secrecy of the review has raised fears that the Baird Government is retreating from ethanol – a move that could have dire consequences for the Illawarra where the factory that produces ethanol is based. The Manildra factory in Bomaderry employs around 300 people.

As ethanol is produced from agricultural waste, the indirect benefits go directly to farmers. Without the mandate, however, this fledgling industry may struggle to survive.

The Office of Biofuels NSW, the government agency responsible for ensuring that ethanol-blended petrol, such as E10, is widely available in NSW, has also been abolished.

Latest results show that the NSW Government is only meeting about half of the mandate of the total volume of petrol sold in NSW as ethanol.



The NSW Labor Opposition are continuing to fight for local jobs in the Illawarra and South Coast.

Springvale Mine: Water supply threatened

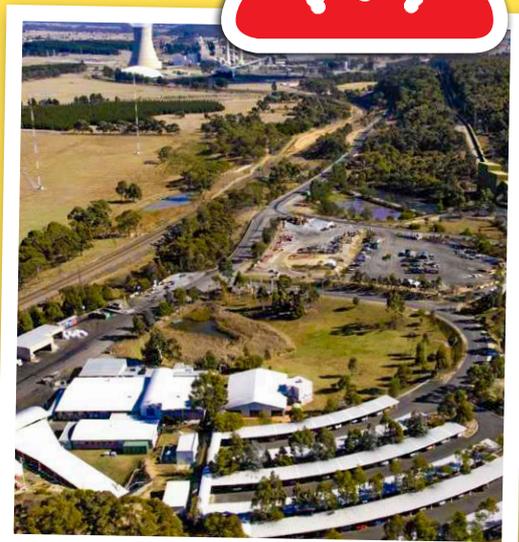
Environment Minister Mark Speakman must ensure that the licence for the Springvale mine near Lithgow includes a detailed plan to cut salinity levels of waste water.



The NSW Opposition is calling on Minister Speakman to ensure that a deadline is in place to reduce waste water salinity and prevent any further contamination of the water supply or harm to the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

There must be a detailed timetable to reduce salinity levels in Springvale's waste water to the ANZECC guideline of 350 EC. The Environment Protection Authority is reportedly allowing the mine to continue to discharge water with a maximum salinity level of 1200 EC – almost three and a half times ANZECC guideline levels.

The mine has been the source of other pollutants in the area and the NSW Opposition wants safeguards put in place to protect the environment and water supply.



“The Environmental Protection Authority is failing in its duty to enforce these guidelines. It cannot stand by and allow these levels of pollution to continue. The Authority needs to put in place a clear deadline to reduce waste water salinity,” Adam Searle said.

At the moment there is no deadline and the Government has a duty to the local community to enforce it. Anything less is not good enough.

Coalition hits North Coast hard

It has been a bad few weeks for the North Coast, as Port Macquarie and Grafton both lose out as a result of Liberal and National policies.

PORT MACQUARIE

In Port Macquarie, the NSW Government has confirmed yet another sell-off of public assets – a piece of prime public real estate along the foreshore of Port Macquarie, following a controversial expression of interest process that has angered the local community.

This Expression of Interest process was only made public after local council figures learned that negotiations between the State government and Woolworths were underway. The local council submitted a proposal to keep the site in public hands, but the Baird Government rejected it.

After a barely-visible community consultation that took place

over only 21 days, the Department of Primary Industries confirmed that the site would indeed be sold off to Woolworths.

This is another example of the Baird Government selling off public assets and Crown lands after a shadowy rubber-stamp process and against the wishes of the community.

GRAFTON

Opposition Leader Luke Foley visited Grafton this week to highlight the failings of the Baird Government in regional areas.

On his first trip to the North Coast since the recent election, NSW Opposition Leader Luke Foley called on the Government to stop ignoring the people of Grafton – who only received 1% of funding in this year's State Budget.



Luke Foley and Courtney Houssos are calling on the Liberal-National Government to stop ignoring the Clarence.

Despite calling it a waste of money during the election campaign, the Government is implementing a key Labor policy in bringing the wagering tax for the state's racing industry into parity with Victoria.

But unlike the Labor Opposition, they would make the industry wait four years for the boost they desperately need.

Reducing this tax immediately would boost the industry, create an extra 2000 jobs in areas like Grafton and support the 50,000 people already employed in racing across the state.

Events like the Grafton Cup attract thousands of visitors to Grafton each year, demonstrating the importance of racing to regional tourism.



Mick Veitch talking with local businesses on a recent visit to Port Macquarie.

Do you have a story or a photo for **Country Labor Dialogue**?

Email your story and photos to jay@nswlabor.org.au