



## SPEECH

### **THE HON. BILL SHORTEN LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION MEMBER FOR MARIBYRNONG**

#### **OPENING ADDRESS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**MELBOURNE EXHIBITION AND CONVENTION CENTRE, MELBOURNE**

**FRIDAY, 24 JULY 2015**

**\*\*\*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*\*\***

Friends, delegates, true believers, fellow Australians:

This conference comes at a pivotal time in our national life, and a restless moment in our national mood.

The tests facing Australia are great.

The consequences of failure are grave.

And *never* has the contrast between us and our opponents been more clear.

Be it jobs, health, education or energy...

Never has the choice between a Labor party planning for the future, and a Liberal party stuck in the past been more stark.

Never has it been more urgent for Australian society to put aside the old politics of division...

...and the narrow advocacy of vested interests.

Never has it been more important for all of us here today...

To stand together, to face the future, to offer ourselves as a Labor Government, for all Australians.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet.

I pay my respects to their elders, both past and present.

And as the party of Land Rights, of native title, of The Apology and Closing the Gap...

We pledge to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution.

We will accord the first members of the Australian family, an overdue place of honour on our national birth certificate.

And alongside new words of recognition, let us bring new energy to building a better future for the first Australians.

A brighter future of better schools, safer communities longer, healthier lives and greater representation as Labor candidates and Labor members of parliament.

Please join me in thanking my excellent Deputy Leader, Tanya Plibersek.

And to all my remarkable Labor team, thank you.

Thank you for your unity of purpose.

I'd allow any of you on Q&A, any time.

I acknowledge all the members of Australia's trade union movement.

No group of people in all Australian history has done more to guarantee safety, to build national wealth, to lift the living standards of ordinary people, than our unions.

Ten thousand Royal Commissions won't change this.

Delegates, in our 124th year, we gather in the best democratic traditions of our movement.

From all across Australia, and from all points of our party's compass.

We come not just to shape a new Labor platform, but to meet the test of a new Labor generation.

A generation that has learned the hard lessons of the past

A new Labor generation, ready to serve, and to lead.

## **TRIBUTES**

Today, we pay tribute to legends we have lost.

Lifelong apostles of our cause:

Tracker Tilmouth from the Northern Territory, and Kevin O'Leary from Queensland, a party member for 85 years.

Pioneering Premiers:

Neville Wran.

Wayne Goss.

Joan Kirner.

And an iconic Prime Minister.

Gough Whitlam did not just lodge in our hearts...and we owe him more than sentiment alone.

Gough united and changed Labor, so Labor could unite and change Australia.

And we must carry on the work of party reform at our 47<sup>th</sup> conference.

Rebuilding Labor as a modern party, to serve modern Australia.

More accountable, more democratic and more clear about what we believe, and where we stand.

Today our party is easier to join - and thousands more people, from all walks of life, are doing just that.

More members who have more of a say: in our policies, candidates and party leaders.

But we are not here today to talk to ourselves, about ourselves.

Instead, we gather to speak to all Australians.

As Gough Whitlam said, 43 years ago, in a packed hall in Blacktown on a hot November night...

Elections are a choice between *"the habits and fears of the past, and the demands and opportunities of the future."*

## **THE FUTURE**

The habits and fears of the past...or the demands and opportunities of the future.

This is the choice our nation faces.

If we are bold, if we are smart – the moment is there for Australia to seize.

We can build an economy, where growth is strong, prosperity is shared and opportunity belongs to everyone.

But the Liberals have got our economy wrong.

They have:

- Damaged confidence
- Driven up unemployment
- Doubled the deficit

And every Australian pays a price for their failures:

- Higher taxes, and charges
- Rising cost of living
- Reduced opportunity

Labor understands fiscal responsibility.

We are prepared to make hard choices, and back fair savings.

But Australia's economy requires more than confidence-destroying cuts.

At the end of the mining boom, with big changes to our terms of trade...

With the world's biggest middle class on our doorstep...

Amidst the disruptive, creative forces of the digital revolution...

And with two generations of Australian retirees, alive at the same time, for the first time....

Labor understands the economic remedy our nation needs:

Increasing growth, creating jobs, through boosting productivity.

This is not the politics of soft options – and raising the GST.

Productivity, growth and jobs is hard economics.

Modern Labor believes in the operation of markets, in competition and profits.

We understand small businesses, indeed all businesses, are an essential part of our prosperity.

We work with business, we understand the mutual interests of employers and employees.

We are builders of consensus – and practitioners of co-operation.

Labor also believes some of the proceeds of productivity and growth should be fairly shared, to look after the less well-off.

We always have.

Because from education and healthcare comes progress, decency and social justice.

This is why a Labor Government - all of us – will deliver growth and productivity.

Chris Bowen will improve superannuation, because Labor believes in the world's best retirement system, not the world's oldest retirement age.

Jenny Macklin will fight for fair pensions, because we believe in dignity in impairment - and dignity in retirement.

Kate Ellis will support schools and childcare, so every Australian child gets the best start in life.

Sharon Bird will back public TAFE because the pendulum has swung too far to private providers of questionable quality.

Jason Clare will prepare Australia for the digital economy.

Anthony Albanese will end the bickering over infrastructure and restore support for public transport because Labor believes in liveable cities.

Richard Marles will deliver immigration policies that are safe and humane.

Catherine King will support public hospitals and primary care because Labor believes in a health system where your Medicare Card, not your credit card, guarantees you access to quality healthcare.

Kim Carr will reverse the deregulation of universities, because the opportunity of higher education should not cost \$100,000.

Tanya Plibersek will uphold Australia's reputation as a good international citizen.

Joel Fitzgibbon will be the strong voice that regional and rural Australia deserve.

And Burke, Neumann, Gray, O'Connor, Dreyfus our whole team, will deliver for Australia.

And we will deliver tax reform too...

We would rather see foreign multinationals pay their fair share.

Than Australians who earn the least...paying more GST on the things they need most.

And delegates, all of us in Labor, the party of jobs, will strive to secure the jobs of the future.

We will back-in start-ups and entrepreneurs.

We will help advanced manufacturing flourish – and high quality services grow.

We will encourage more Australians to study science at university.

And we will ensure every Australian learns coding at school.

We believe Australia can win in our region, on our terms.

Not as a low-wage nation, doing low-skill work...

But as a smart, safe, skilful, fair-wage country where no Australian is expendable and every Australian has the chance to fulfil their potential.

Friends, we should set no limits on our ambitions for Australia.

Let us start by treating women equally in our society... in opportunity, in pay, in leadership...and in politics.

Let us eliminate, completely, family violence from our national life.

Let us end the debilitating gender divide.

Because if Australia can lead the way in equality for women.

Then we will truly be the richest nation in the world.

Rich in every sense of the word.

Our goal should be nothing less than the equal participation of women in work...equal pay for women at work...and an equal voice for women across our parliament.

So let this Conference declare, by 2025...50 per cent of Labor's representatives will be women.

Only in a society where men and women are treated equally, can the true potential of women and men be achieved.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Delegates

Creating the jobs of the future, guaranteeing long-term prosperity, ensuring Australia competes in the world must begin with tackling climate change.

Fourteen of the fifteen warmest years on record have fallen in this century.

2014 was the warmest year in recorded history.

The evidence is in, the science is settled.

Climate change is not '*absolute crap*', it is an inescapable fact.

And if we take a do-nothing approach, there will be more extreme weather.

More severe storms, more aggressive fires, more dangerous floods, longer and more damaging droughts.

Our farmers will face greater hardship.

Our coastal homes will be invaded by rising seas.

The infrastructure cost will be hundreds of billions of dollars.

Delegates

We can rebuild flooded cities once every century.

We can rebuild fire-ravaged bushland every half-century.

But we cannot do it every decade.

This is not a price the next generation of Australians should have to pay because of this delinquent government.

Climate change is an economic and environmental cancer – and it demands early intervention.

Mark Butler is right, this is no longer a question of Australia leading the world – it is a matter of keeping up.

If the world's biggest capitalist nation, and the world's biggest planned economy can agree climate change is a priority- it's time Australia did so too.

Mr Abbott's society of flat-earthers talk a lot of nonsense about Labor policies – but they're right about one thing.

There is, absolutely, a clear-cut choice between Labor and the Liberals on renewable energy.

This Coalition government has done everything in their power to try and destroy Australia's share in one of the world's fastest growing industries.

The Abbott-Hockey attacks on renewables are grotesque – and the consequences have been devastating.

Last year, around the world, investment in renewables rose by 16 per cent.

In China alone, up by 33 per cent.

In Australia, *down* by 88 per cent.

Only a Labor Government can save the renewable energy industry now.

Only Labor can restore the confidence and certainty this government has smashed.

This is why, in our platform we must set an ambitious new goal for renewable energy.

By 2030, our aim is for renewable energy to generate 50 per cent of Australia's electricity.

This is how we transform our electricity system, build a new industrial landscape and deliver a clean energy future.

I want to see more solar panels on Australian rooftops.

On our homes, our schools, our shops and businesses...

...cutting power bills for consumers and putting electricity back into the national grid.

I want us to develop and apply battery technology, so power from solar panels can be stored in our homes, more efficiently.

I want more Aussie farmers, earning more money, by putting wind turbines on their land.

I want more investors to have the confidence to create more jobs.

And I want Australia to get our fair share of the \$2.5 trillion in investment expected in Asia-Pacific renewables to 2030.

A Labor Government will work with businesses and unions to look after workers affected by modernisation...

Helping with re-training and re-skilling for new opportunities in new industries, as Australians find new ways to live.

Friends

Boosting renewable energy is at the heart of Labor's plan to cut pollution.

And instead of giving big polluters fistfuls of taxpayer dollars to keep polluting...Labor will cut pollution with a market solution.

A billion people, and more than 40 per cent of the world's economy have already embraced the opportunities of emissions trading schemes.

We must give Australian businesses the opportunity to engage with this global market.

This is the promise I offer our nation, today.

A Shorten Labor Government will build an Emissions Trading Scheme for Australia.

And we will not be intimidated by the ignorant, ridiculous scare campaigns that will come.



We will win this fight.

Let me say this to our opponents, in words of one syllable:

An E.T.S is not a tax.

And if Mr Abbott wants to make the next election a contest about who has the best policy solution for climate change...

I've got a three-word-slogan for him:

Bring. It.On.

## **SUBMARINES**

Delegates, just as any government serious about the future must tackle climate change.

Any government serious about national security must build our future submarines here at home.

As Stephen Conroy says, building the next generation of submarines in Australia is the opportunity of a generation.

Transforming our manufacturing sector...

Spurring innovation...

Driving job opportunities for skilled workers...

Pumping billions of dollars into our economy...

But Mr Abbott wants to send all that money, all those jobs, all that technology and innovation, overseas.

Let me make this crystal clear.

A Labor government will work with our industry, our unions, our allies and our overseas industry partners to build, maintain and sustain our submarines – in Australia.

## **CHAFTA**

Delegates, spearheaded by Penny Wong, Labor will fight for the best trade agreement with China, for Australia.

Strong in our belief in free trade, in new markets and new job opportunities.

And equally strong in upholding Australian safety standards, Australian wages – and Australian jobs.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

And delegates, if we have the confidence and maturity to engage in the global knowledge race, and win in the world...

...then let Australia do this not just as the modern economy we need to be, but as the modern society we want to be.

Celebrating our success – not just in sport, but in our arts.

Celebrating diversity, in our multicultural communities.

And let us make this the first decade where our head of state, is one of us.

We *can* be an Australian Republic, with an Australian head of state.

We *can* be an inclusive nation, where marriage is not about gender but two people who love each other, above all others.

## **THE LIBERALS AND THE PAST**

Delegates

Mr Abbott and the Liberals aren't just holding Australia back at a time when we're trying to get ahead...

This erratic, indulgent government...with their knee high-hopes for our country, are trying to drag Australia in the wrong direction.

Mr Abbott is a throwback to a world that never existed. .

Out of his depth, and out of touch.

Australians deserve better than a Prime Minister who wants to make them afraid of the future.

Friends

I know there hasn't been a one-term federal government in Australia for more than 80 years

But it's time there was.

Usually, with their ingrained sense of fairness, Australians give a government a second go.

But – just like in Queensland, just like in Victoria – one term is enough.

More than enough.

Australia can't afford another round of cuts and chaos.

We can't afford the destination the Liberals have in mind.

We cannot afford more cuts to the pension...

...more attacks on Medicare,

...more cuts to schools, hospitals, veterans, carers, universities and TAFE.

Australia can't afford the lesser future they want for us.

Our country is bigger, better and braver than this.

## **COURAGE**

Delegates

My first job in a Labor Government was as Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities.

After Black Saturday, I was given responsibility for bushfire reconstruction.

Whether I was meeting with a family in the ashes of their home, vowing to rebuild...

Or elderly parents, awake with midnight anxiety, wondering who will love their adult child with profound disabilities, when they no longer can.

I was a privileged witness to the same humble courage.

The courage to take what life throws at you, and stand strong.

This is the courage I saw at Beaconsfield, nearly ten years ago.

I will never forget, when I heard they had found Larry Knight's body...

How the experts wanted to halt the search so the coroner could have a protected site.

And how I heard the hard-rock miners say, with steel in their voice:

*"This isn't a recovery - this is a rescue.*

*Until we know different, there are men down there who are still alive."*

This is the courage of our armed forces, and our emergency services: facing danger to help people in need.

The courage of first-generation migrants, enriching our culture and starting a new life beneath our southern cross.

The courage of nurses, teachers, carers, public-servants, farmers and small-business owners.

The courage Australians summon every day.

Working hard, taking risks, making sacrifices, raising children, caring for parents, building communities – helping each other.

The courage of ordinary Australians, who show us, time and again, they are not ordinary.

This is the courage Australians expect of their governments.

To reject the politics of division.

To bring our country together.

And this is what Labor offers Australia:

- Good jobs
- Quality healthcare
- Great education
- Fairness for all

And we do this together.

What we achieve, we will achieve together.

Together, we are ready to seize the moment.

Ready to serve a generous, optimistic and open people.

Ready to lead a smart, modern and fair nation.

Ready, to Advance Australia.

***ENDS***