



**Australian
Fabians.**

Preparing to Govern: Ideas for the next NSW Labor Government

Fabian pamphlet



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About the Australian Fabians

For more than half a century, the Australian Fabians have been at the forefront of research and debate into progressive political ideas and public policy reform.

Australian political life is entering a new era. There is an urgent need for searching debate and new thinking.

The Australian Fabians aim to achieve:

- Greater equality of power, wealth and opportunity.
- Broader promotion of collective actions and public service.
- An accountable, tolerant and active democracy.

The Australian Fabians:

- Contribute to progressive political thinking by generating original ideas that reflect a higher order of thinking in order to meet the challenges of the times.
- Contribute to a progressive political culture by disseminating these ideas and getting them into the public domain.
- Are an active movement of people who identify with, are engaged in and who encourage progressive political debate around social justice, economic and political reform.
- Influence the ideas and policies of political parties, especially the Australian Labor Party.

What makes the Australian Fabians distinctive?

The Australian Fabians are a democratically constituted membership organisation. We provide members with the opportunity to participate in public debate, direct access to our publications and events, and the opportunity to participate fully in the decisions and actions of the organisation.

The Australian Fabians are part of an international social and intellectual movement. The UK Fabian Society has been a central part of the democratic socialist, social democratic and Labour tradition throughout the 20th century in Great Britain.

The Australian Fabians have been active since 1947. The New Zealand Fabians has more recently become part of this tradition.

Because political ideas matter

Over the years, the Australian Fabians has looked to the Australian Labor Party as a Party through which social democratic principles and values can be achieved. Our relationship with Australian Labor governments is that of a 'critical friend'. We are neither 'on-' nor 'off-message'. Some of what we do may be congruent with government thinking; some not.

Good government needs new ideas and public debate. The Australian Fabians ask difficult questions – and, if necessary, propose difficult answers. Our constitution and history demand this of us. Our independence of mind is fiercely guarded.

The Australian Fabians is an independent organisation. The Australian Fabians Inc. (also known as the Australian Fabian Society) is a Not-for-profit association incorporated in Victoria, Australia.

If you want to help make new thinking happen join the Australian Fabians. There is a membership form in this publication or join online at fabians.org.au.

Foreword

We are in an age of celebrity politics, driven by personality and social media. That way lies perdition and madness.

As I told the annual general meeting of the NSW branch of the Australian Fabians, I'd recently read a biography of Clement Attlee, a reminder that there is another way.

He was the second last man to be evacuated from Gallipoli, later wounded in Iraq and served on the Western Front.

Clement Attlee was leader of British Labour for twenty years and Prime Minister for six years from 1945.

Churchill led Britain's World War II victory with Attlee at his side, and then Attlee won the election. And created the welfare state with Britain's first majority Labour government.

Attlee was the opposite of celebrity. Short, balding, with a neat moustache and a man of so few words that when asked by an interviewer if he had any thoughts about the general election replied: 'No.'

Yet at a time when Britain's streets were filled with bomb rubble, shops empty, rationing in place, and his Treasury coffers bare from the war, he achieved political greatness.

Under his Labour government the National Health Service was created. The essential, and broke, coal, gas, electricity and railway industries were taken into public ownership and controls placed on the steel, air and trucking industries.

Independence for India was negotiated. The National Parks created. And British voters recognised what had been done in their name, returning Labour to office for another term.

A Fabian himself, in a government no doubt influenced by Fabian ideas, this six year period of Labour government was a triumph of reforming ideas over personality politics.

It remains a great reminder of the possibilities of politics.

As is this volume of important essays, a collection of thoughtful, insightful and penetrating insights into New South Wales today and what NSW Labor can prioritise over the next decade.

It is being launched at our Annual Conference, one of the great forums of Australian political life.

It arrives at a time crucial to our futures. We are at a crossroads. Inequality is at a level we haven't seen in decades, with housing, education and healthcare all in crisis. With a government so blinded by doctrinaire ideology it believes the obscene spending of billions of dollars knocking down sports stadiums is progress.

Never ending sell offs of public assets is a tired and lazy solution, inevitably leading to a raw deal for the end user, the people of New South Wales who suffer today from the higher prices that have resulted from the conservative privatisations.

I am proud to be a Fabian.

With Fabian help and substantial input we can properly define the challenge confronting modern NSW Labor and craft a modern electoral platform that appeals to our fellow citizens.

As Clement Attlee and the early Fabians knew, life is about the power of the right idea at the right time.

I trust you will enjoy what you read in the following pages, and find the ideas right for you.

Luke Foley MP
Leader of the NSW Labor Opposition
Sydney, June 2018

What sort of fish are we cooking? Why Labor must govern differently at State and Federal Levels

Tim Lyons

Tim Lyons is a Research Fellow at public policy think tank Per Capita.

“Governing a great country,” said Lao Tzu, “is like cooking a small fish.”

This is generally understood to refer to the fact that a small fish is delicate, and that too much poking at it will result in it breaking up.

When governing, we need to understand what sort of fish it is we are cooking when and use different recipes.

A saying from a Chinese sage about cooking fish probably seems a very odd place to start a reflection on how Labor should govern, but it’s the type of fish I want to focus on.

My contention is that one reason for the failures of successive Federal Governments (Labor and Coalition) is that both sides have tried to govern and use a political strategy from State politics when approaching the task of national government. The corollary of this, is that State Governments fail when they inadequately focus on the real nature of their role.

The tasks of, and the techniques and campaigning that deliver success at the two levels of Government may overlap but they are not the same.

It is on this point that I think Lao Tzu’s aphorism points Labor in some useful direction.

The saying, as characteristically cryptic as it is, can support a range of interpretations and encourage a span of ideological predispositions. Reagan’s advisers, for example, used it on him as an exhortation to “light touch” Government. He even used it in a State of the Union address, as if the Tao Te

Ching and its spiritual focus on inaction was somehow a foundational text of Libertarianism.

Thinking about this as, for want of a better description, a social democratic cook in both senses, my take is different. The trick about cooking a small fish is that it's the work you do in preparation that really matters. The decisions you make about how you're going to cook the fish, what you do in advance or the framework if you like, are what determines the outcome. Once you actually start cooking, poking around generally just makes matters worse. By contrast, cooking a bigger, meatier fish is different. Preparation and planning still matters of course, but activity is more constant, and adjustments by the cook are more useful and indeed often required. The recipe is different.

When governing, we need to understand what sort of fish it is we are cooking when and use different recipes.

What State and Federal Governments do is fundamentally different, not just as a matter of constitutional nicety but as regard to the of tasks involved. How Labor governs successfully at State and Federal levels will be different. The campaign strategy needed to support these governments will be different. We must not conflate the two or presume that successful approaches from one can be simply transplanted in another. Both major parties, to their cost, appear to have recently presumed that successful state approach can by definition work nationally.

The core of State Government is the provision of services to the community, and to people in the bottom half of the income distribution in particular. To Labor's people. This is true of health, education, welfare, housing, public transport and much else besides.

But State Government also has an enormous influence on the how Australians live from day to day beyond this. A protective function comes from responsibility for things like environmental protection, public safety, child protection and workplace safety. Control of occupational licensing regimes in a huge range of jobs means the States play a role in relation to both community safety and consumer protection. Regulation of various forms of economic activity, like

gaming and liquor licensing, mining permits and tenancy laws gives the State a say in how actors in those sectors must behave. Primary responsibility for infrastructure means influence over the livability of our towns and cities and is a principle way State Governments can impact employment. A supervisory role over local government, and control of water and sewage, National Parks, Crown Land, land release and setting planning frameworks hugely influences the built environment and the amenity of our communities.

Some important things emerge from thinking about these functions.

First, while acknowledging the (sometimes very significant) restriction on the autonomy of decision making that flows from fiscal constraints, Federal funding and privatisations, State Governments are in a position to directly take action to address issues: they run the police, hospitals, trains and schools, they issue the licenses, they release the land.

Second, while long term thinking is critical to things like infrastructure, the day by day reality of delivering a hugely complex set of services and performing the other functions described above requires constant vigilance on the micro, activity, interventions and adaptation to deal with emerging problems. In many areas, State Government decisions have very quick effects.

Prodding at this *large* and complex fish is a virtue.

It therefore comes as no surprise what the recipe for successful social democratic regional government is: a tight focus on the detail, on getting these things right, on people seeing the services they need and their communities being good places to live. We see examples of this around the world, including in our own most successful and sometimes long-lived State Labor governments and even in America's most electorally successful leftists, the so-called "Sewer Socialists" who ran Milwaukee for decades with a program centered on sanitation, housing, education and public amenity.

This is why a successful Premier has cut more ribbons than a milliner: the focus is on activity, on being seen to deliver in response to community needs, on doing things.

It also serves as a reminder to Labor of the dangers of outsourcing or privatising State functions: it greatly reduces our ability to intervene and make swift or significant change (which is of course part of the attraction for conservatives). This model of successful regional government is also why modern Australian conservatives can struggle at this level: while the task of State Government plays to our strengths, their instinct to do things like outsource, close schools, sack nurses and reward property developers tends to hurt them.

All this is perhaps encapsulated in some of the most successful Labor State campaign slogans, focused on a good leader who delivers a practical program: think about “Wran’s Our Man” or “Bracks: Listens then acts.”

The core tasks of Federal Government are different. Simpler in one sense, in that it is not involved in direct service delivery to any significant degree. Much more complicated in other ways. The Federal Government, in areas that it regulates and funds and those that it merely regulates, establishes the architecture of a whole series of macro issues that are long-term in nature. Examples include superannuation, the NDIS, aged care, Medicare, higher education funding, taxes and transfers. In these policy areas, progress is often measured in decades. The superannuation system is still immature after almost three decades and treasury modelling suggests that the full impact of the proposed cut to corporate tax would take up to twenty years. Similarly, in areas of regulation only. Changes in areas like immigration, competition law, telecommunications, foreign investment and workplace relations impact society and the economy only over time.

Continuously prodding at this *small* and complex fish tends to make a big mess.

None of these sorts of areas are suitable for tinkering and fiddling, they require conscious long termism, and careful planning. As it is not the direct service deliverer in most cases, the Federal Government relies on others to implement changes. Its power is enormous, but there is almost invariably a delay between a Federal Government pulling a policy lever and something of substance happening in the real world. Both of these factors mean there is a real danger in the desire to adopt the successful State approach of constant activity and delivery in a realm that doesn’t lend itself to this approach.

This can become comical. A focus on *announcables* of depressing regularity, excruciating vacuity and zero impact (e.g. #cash4u). Rudd butchering the English language to regularly enumerate his “detailed programmatic specificity”. Abbott missing a morning of Parliament to open a small road widening project in Adelaide and to get a 15 second grab up. Frydenberg hyperventilating over the fate of individual power generation assets. Or it can be proposals that nobody, the sponsors included, think will have any significant effect and are quickly forgotten. The Green Army. Grocery Watch. Readers will have their own examples.

Except in an extreme crisis, Federal Governments are also subject to a much greater degree of media and public scrutiny than States. The nature of the regulatory powers of the Commonwealth are such that extremely powerful vested interests are involved, and these interests are quick to find their voice. These factors call for careful, deliberative preparation of policy. It is also a fact that while both major parties have produced a variety of competent Premiers, neither has produced a figure who has been proven capable of doing the whole job as Prime Minister in a generation. Gillard got closest: she ran an effective, successful government but failed the politics. Rudd, Abbott and now Turnbull have failed both.

In the end, asking “what would Bracks do?” is a pretty good heuristic for a State Labor Government but it is one that is likely to steer a Labor PM off course.

A Premier is rewarded, generally, for a huge series of small decisions they take. A PM is, generally, rewarded for the very large ones.

They are both governing, both cooking a fish. You just need to be clear about what sort of fish it is.

I'd identify two specific challenges for the next Federal Labor government in order for us to get it right.

The first is to establish and maintain a clear framework for the macro economy and fiscal policy. Our ability to deliver on the balance of our program and the life expectancy of the government rests on this. Labor's economic team of Chris Bowen, Jim Chalmers and Andrew Leigh deserve credit for changing the

economic debate in Australia and for moving the party onto a more substantial economic platform than any opposition for many years. The willingness to deal honestly with the revenue challenges the Commonwealth has, including facing up to issues like negative gearing and dividend imputation credits, is encouraging.

The second is in relation to policy imagination. Federal Governments over rely on voucher or quasi voucher systems (where people buy services in a contestable market supervised by Government) to deliver policy. What might be called the “Productivity Commission Special”. Such a system effectively destroyed the Australian TAFE sector. The NDIS is falling apart as it’s still being built. This policy mechanism has left aged care and early childhood education woefully underfunded. Shonky operators have gouged and rorted these systems and clients have received poor outcomes. It’s created dysfunctional labour markets, gender pay inequity and poor-quality jobs for many of the workers involved. The operation of these schemes reveals that they usually do not give the government the ability to ensure good outcomes and value for money. There is an urgent need for all of us in the labour movement to reimagine how social democracy meets the needs of people in these policy areas.

Political philosophy in action

Michael Daley

Michael Daley is NSW Deputy Labor leader, Shadow Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Shadow Minister for Gaming and Racing.

I can think of no more appropriate an organisation to publish an essay about *political philosophy in action* than with the Fabians. The Fabians have always advocated a unique form of Labor politics – one of gradualism, reformism and democratic advocacy. The Fabians have always sought to keep Labor true to its core mission: civilising capitalism. And despite more than a century of shared history, the Fabians and the Labor Party are as relevant today, and more needed and required today in society – particularly for those core values – than they have ever been.

Across the globe, long-accepted economic norms are being challenged. Australia in no way is immune. Stagnant wages and growing inequality have led many to question the institutions and organisations that have underpinned our post-war prosperity. Politics is increasingly polarised – fragmented by class and culture. In this context, the major political parties in Australia have a responsibility to provide certainty, stability and sensibility to our politics.

Certainty and stability in a political sense can be derived from many sources. One of those sources for political parties is the party's DNA: its *raison d'être*, its core belief systems, its very philosophy. Naturally, a party's philosophy has to bend in the wind, it has to be adapted for the times, but it should not, cannot, ever be forsaken without losing the party's identity. When a party forms government, its philosophy should be its beating heart, the core of its decision making.

Some argue that there is very little that separates the major parties. Some in the commentariat argue that political ideology that drove debates and reforms from decades ago has been replaced in Australian politics by the cult of personality and a self-centred identity politics that visit policies transiently. This could not be less true. The NSW Labor Party, born from that social movement of individuals, families and whole communities, has for over a

century used the mechanism and power of the State to redress the balance – through work safety laws, laws to ensure fair pay for the work people perform, the first anti-discrimination laws, the first consumer safety and advocacy laws, and so many acts of Parliament and the building of institutions that protect society from the unrestrained power of powerful economic players. Our history is replete with example after example of our party standing up for regular people.

In 2017, at a gathering of the Party's peak decision-making body in New South Wales, we saw in action Labor's reason for being. The back and forth, to and fro, of annual State Conference. Every motion, every speech, advocating for a better approach to Labor policy on crucial issues – with equality at the heart of each consideration. I didn't for a minute agree with every proposition or speech that was put to that conference, but no one can say that any of them were motivated by selfishness. They weren't. They were motivated by Labor's core.

In contrast, the Liberal Party is not a popular movement and never has it been. Menzies' gathering of Australia's conservative diaspora in 1945 was a reaction to the growing electoral success of our party. Since their inception, the Australian Liberal Party has been about opposing Labor's vision, rather than arguing for its own. Without us, the Liberals have no purpose. With their partners the Nationals – the party of the landed gentry – theirs is not a coalition of the willing, it's more a marriage of convenience and contempt. Convenience for the big end of town and contempt for the average person.

Some might be forgiven for asking what role ideology and party philosophy might play in the workings of a State Government. It is often suggested that unlike the Federal government, State Governments are managerial – focused solely on service delivery without philosophical direction. I reject that. But with less than a year to go until the NSW election, I thought it time to examine that proposition.

The Tories are in continual pursuit of smaller government. They talk about it in terms of economic efficiency. But smaller government really means dismantling the laws and institutions that protect people against more powerful economic actors. It's an obsession – one they have applied ruthlessly in NSW since 2011.

Who can forget the front pages of the Daily Telegraph in the early days of this Government in 2011, deriding public servants as fat cats and bludgers? O'Farrell promised to cut a swathe through their numbers and his Treasurers Baird and then Berejiklian did, ruthlessly. Together they sacked 15,000 government workers; many of the best and brightest were let go from departments like RMS, Transport, Department of Planning, Environment, Resources, Health and Education. In an interview with the AFR in 2011, as Shadow Treasurer, I warned that the Liberals' decimation of this tier of the public sector would reduce its productivity. I was derided by O'Farrell & Co as "the middle manager". Well, how is that going for them now? Morale in the public sector is unfortunately at rock bottom. Leaks from all departments are increasing daily. Productivity has declined, so too the flow of ideas. Just consider the legislative wasteland that the Parliament has become, fewer bills of less significance than ever before.

I know from Ministerial experience that the real policy grunt work that Ministers rely on, that Governments rely on, that is the lifeblood of ideas, often comes from that middle to senior level. The people who are moving through the ranks. They've got experience and enterprise, time under their belt in Government departments. They're the ones that send the ideas up to the Ministers' offices that are translated into legislation and Government policy. But this sector has been blamed, scapegoated and denuded, so that well is drier than ever before.

But, it is much more serious than just that dwindling brain power. Let me give you an example. We are in the middle of a housing affordability crisis. It is an emergency. The statistics are well known. When I met with the CEO of one of Australia's biggest developers and constructors, I asked them the single biggest issue that is preventing them from bringing projects to the market quickly. That CEO said to me that the biggest problem is getting approvals from State Government departments. This is a recurring theme from industry participants. It now often takes more than a year to get concurrent approvals from Government entities: Department of Planning, RMS, Sydney Water, Rural Fire Service and other departments. It all comes back to a lack of personnel. The planners and so called "middle managers" who assess these applications are simply no longer there. The lack of personnel in government departments

is now a significant constraint in housing supply, or, to put it another way, the Liberals' determination to achieve smaller government is now a defining factor in our housing problem. Gladys Berejiklian tells us that increasing supply is the only answer to the housing emergency. If so – by their own measure – the Liberals' blind adherence to the belief in smaller government is now stopping people realising the Australian dream of owning their own home. There is no way for the Liberal Government to gild this lily.

It is also having a budgetary impact. As the public sector declines, the Liberals have directed an increasing amount of public funding to their mates in the private sector to do work previously done by government employees. Keep this context in mind: the Government is building a light rail from the city out to Randwick and Kensington. They are in serious dispute with their Spanish contractor. The contractor has lodged \$340 million worth of claims they say arise from the government's lack of planning and organisation, like chopping and changing the design every five minutes. In March 2017, the Government awarded a \$277,000 six-month contract to a private consultant from North Sydney to review changes to the construction schedule that they forced upon the contractor, to get an understanding of the commercial implications of changes made to the schedule. The consultant delivered its report in January 2018, just a year before the project opens. This thing was half built and they were still designing it and trying to work out financial details and implications. But that madness aside, why is there no-one in Transport, or RMS or Treasury with the skills to do this work? Answer – because they have all been removed.

You would think that with so much construction underway, the government would have some skill in-house or some government employees to supervise and shepherd these projects through efficiently. But no. The price of this six-month contract would pay for two senior officers to do this work full-time. In fact, the sums are disturbing. In the 2015/16 Financial Year the Government budgeted a whopping \$135 million for external consultants. That blew out to over \$200 million. This was the fourth year in a row that the figure has blown out. The budgets are astounding; the blowouts are even more astounding.

The Liberals obsession with smaller government is a multi-million-dollar productivity-smashing brain drain. The pursuit of smaller Government is

wedded to the Tories' belief in the primacy of the market. Unfettered and untempered by the public interest.

It's on this count that this Government has really led the citizens of NSW up the garden path, particularly on privatisation and energy policy. Having sold the retail assets, the Government then turned its attention to generation, transmission and distribution. The ACCC – thank God for the ACCC – warned about market share and that the Liberals' arrangement would lead to higher bills for all NSW consumers, so Berejiklian and Baird took the ACCC to court. Rod Simms from the ACCC reiterated his view that the arrangements that were put in place by the NSW government in relation to privatisation have led to higher bills for NSW consumers. One that costs consumers more. But then, worse was to come. The Australian Energy Regulator handed down a determination to reduce electricity prices in NSW. So, the government then took them to court too. They used taxpayer funds to pay lawyers to force energy prices up. They made a conscious decision to increase the budgets of energy companies at the expense of the family budget. Now, citizens are buckling under the weight of energy bills and the energy companies are making a killing. Thank you, Gladys Berejiklian.

The truth about public life and government, for those of us that are elected representatives, is that we are mere trustees. With that comes the responsibility to govern beneficially and with respect for our citizens. Respect for one's constituents should be a core belief of any political party. Of ideology. One that goes to the intrinsic values of a party itself. And with that comes a responsibility: a duty to be transparent; to justify and consult; to use public assets for the public good; to treat every public dollar as one gained and held in solemn trust. When it comes to these attitudes, there is a swagger about this Liberal Government. A manifest arrogance. Not only a disregard for ordinary people and their hard-earned dollars but contempt for ordinary citizens.

I believe very strongly in the duty of governments to apply public assets to the public good. The "social utility" of assets if you like. The Liberals believe that public assets have a duty too: to be sold. They have sold \$50 billion of all manner of publicly-owned assets in just six years. Electricity, ports, buildings and land, even the Land and Property Information titling and registry services.

Not even that was sacred. Nothing is spared. Fifty billion dollars! They are in the process of wasting much of it, rushing to sign contracts before the State election. Imagine the waste that will result.

Under the Liberals' plan the public asset becomes a private return. Under Labor's, the same asset is applied to addressing inequality.

They are also in the process of perpetrating a criminal lost opportunity – the selling off of public real estate. The government, through Urban Growth, is redeveloping government land all over Sydney – the Bays Precinct, Central to Eveleigh, North Parramatta and a number of other sites. It's a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do something really good with this land, not only in design terms, but to use the power of government to do something about housing affordability. Under this Government's usual approach, the land will be divided into lots and these lots will be sold – to private investors, speculators and developers. There is nothing wrong with that, except in the context of a housing affordability crisis consider this: up to 50% of these units will be purchased by foreign investors. Many of these properties purchased by foreign investors will lay empty. We know that from the latest Census figures. Around 30-40% will be purchased by domestic investors armed with generous tax concessions courtesy of the Commonwealth. What's left will be unaffordable for all but the most cashed-up. Most will sell for more than the \$650,000 stamp duty free threshold and will therefore be effectively out of reach of your average first home buyer. In other words, the gain, the bounty, the return from this disposal of public land will be privatised. Public land, private benefit. The social utility will not be maximised.

Recently, Luke Foley and I announced a vastly different plan. We will set aside 25% of the dwellings built on former government land and 15% on rezoned private land. They will not be sold on the market – they will be quarantined for low to middle income families, key workers, local people. Not foreign investors. And they will be made available to those people at a discounted rate to rent or buy, an opportunity to get into the market. Under the Liberals' plan the public asset becomes a private return. Under Labor's, the same asset is applied to

addressing inequality. This is based on a simple principle – the sale of a public asset should result in a public benefit. The public should get a return. The opportunity to own their own home is a most worthy return. Labor will deliver that. This is our philosophy in action.

The Liberal Government's attitude

In Australian politics, pride often goeth before a fall. In 2019, I hope that will be the case. Because, there is a born-to-rule arrogance about this Liberal Government. A spoilt swagger. A sense of entitlement like never before. A government with an affection for, an understanding of, an affinity for its citizens wouldn't, couldn't have come up with reforms like the Greyhound debacle, the sacking of councils, subjecting communities to dictatorial administrators. Such a government wouldn't have contempt for the importance of transparency and accountability as fundamental to good government.

The freedom of information or Government Information Public Access (GIPA) regime has been shot to pieces. Everything is withheld. The Opposition and media learn more from the ever-growing sources of leaks, than from GIPA responses. In infrastructure delivery, their arrogance is breath-taking. This is a government that has been entrusted with billions of dollars from the sale of profitable public assets and its behaviour is like a bunch of drunken schoolboys trashing their way across Sydney in their daddy's BMW.

The expenditure of public money should always be accompanied by a responsibility to justify the spending. That responsibility is magnified with the quantum of the spend. Projects should be subjected to public scrutiny. Feasibility studies should be published. The master plans, business cases and options analyses should be released to allow an evaluation in the full light of day of the benefits and costs, the scale and magnitude of each and every project.

But, not in Premier Berejiklian's world. All across Sydney, Berejiklian is changing the face of Sydney with unjustified and unexplained projects. There is never a full explanation or sufficient genuine discussion. Contracts are signed in secret, and then announced as exclusives on the six o'clock news. This government thinks that they do not have to plan, they do not have to justify, they do not

have to consult or explain. They believe that they can ignore advice, ignore communities and depart from norms that have been practiced for centuries in the Westminster system. Practices bedded down to ensure better Government, to ensure that that sacrosanct public dollar is spent wisely.

Well-established Cabinet processes are designed to ensure good government. In the infrastructure process, good governments proceed this way: they design a concept plan, conceived of in a government department with the consent of the minister; detailed designs are completed, accompanied by detailed costings from Treasury; a business case with full justification and alternative options is prepared; the whole lot is submitted to Cabinet, tested and turned inside out, examined and interrogated in every detail, fully robust; if approved, a sum, a funding amount is approved. Sacrosanct; the responsible minister is threatened with death by the Treasurer to spend wisely and not to return with the begging bowl; the plans are then advertised, community input sought, input which improves the outcome; based on feedback from the community, improvements are made if necessary; planning approval is then gained and the construction and operation is put out to competitive tender to keep the price down; construction then begins, supervised by experts in the department with the knowledge and experience to keep the contractors honest and on task. This government has turned that process on its head.

Now, there is no capability within government to properly cost projects, no rigour in the financial planning. If so, how could the light rail have gone from \$1.6 to \$2.3 billion and WestConnex from \$10 to \$17 billion? We know there are more blowouts on those projects to come. Community consultation is a farce. The contracts on the South Eastern Light Rail were signed before community consultation and even before the project was designed. The design of that project is still not finished even though it is half constructed.

Once the construction begins on these projects, there are no experts left to supervise the construction. I know many of the experts in the RTA who could do that stuff in their sleep; they worked for me as Minister for Roads. They led the world. We used to export them to Germany and the US and the UK to show others how proper infrastructure delivery is done. They are gone. They're no longer in government. Gladys and Co. didn't want them.

How could a properly functioning Cabinet preside over these debacles? In planning, it is the same. The duty to preside carefully over a growing Sydney is being breached. The Court of Appeal recently nullified a planning consent the government had granted to itself at Walsh Bay. A \$210 million refurbishment of the Sydney Theatre Company space and redevelopment of the surrounding wharves. Local businesses took them to court. The court found that the government had failed to properly consider “construction-related impacts”, in layman’s terms, how much disruption and chaos they were planning to visit upon the local residents and businesses next door. Is this for real? They’re building in a heritage protected area of Sydney, with Barangaroo under construction, in a hugely constrained area, with no traffic plan and they think they don’t have to consider how the Development Approval, and the project, and the construction of it is going to affect local people and local businesses? Thank God for the courts; there to protect the citizens from the ravages of this impudent government.

The courts came to the rescue again recently. At the historic Rocks, nullifying a horrible decision of Environment and Heritage Minister Mark Speakman and granting a reprieve to the Sirius building. Another indulgent and arrogant decision, wholly emblematic of this government to put money before heritage and history; to choose the property play, before people.

As the election draws nearer, Gladys Berejiklian will continue to jettison policies, jettison controversy, and try to roll herself up into a ball. She will ditch reform and strut her stuff in hard hats and fluoro vests until Election Day. But here is what should concern her colleagues and her supporters. I’ll let them in on a little secret. This is not a very good Government. They can’t implement – neither policy, nor project. And what should concern the Tories is that as an implementation minister, Gladys Berejiklian has been the biggest failure of all of the ministers.

The Southeast Light Rail is her project. As Transport Minister, she conceived of it, procured it, presided over the so called community consultation, signed the contracts. Here is the state of her project: the cost has blown out from \$1.6 to \$2.1 billion. The Premier lied about the reasons for the blowout and got caught out. Eight hundred trees along the route have been removed, including century-old trees that saw the Anzacs off to war in 1915, and welcomed them

home again. Bus stops along Anzac Parade are presently 400 metres apart. Young and old people have access to a bus stop. The light rail stops will be 900 to 1000 metres apart. The light rail will carry only slightly more passengers than buses, but 4 lanes of road space have been removed. Despite being under construction, traffic modelling has still not been done on major intersections. And the benefits and costs the Auditor General said should be published by December 2017? Still a secret. The project is sending businesses from George Street to Kingsford broke all along the route. The capacity of the light rail can never be expanded, and like her trains to the Blue Mountains which can't fit through the tunnels, this light rail can never be integrated into the existing light rail network in Sydney because it has different specifications.

Labor recognises that in a market economy, government has a role to play to ensure that the market serves the interests of the people, and that to do so, from time to time it must be tempered, it must be civilised.

Now Berejiklian is running the entire show. Make no mistake, this is a bizarre time. It's not normal. But it's instructive – a full-blown study of cashed-up Tories in action. A living display of what conservatives will do when they pursue their party DNA, their belief systems. An incompetent, egotistical, contemptuous wrecking ball across Sydney. That's life under Gladys Berejiklian. How is that Liberal Party broad church looking now?

Labor's alternative

The conservatives accept inequality as the natural order of things. It is not. Inequality is man-made. Children aren't born racist, or sexist, or cruel, or greedy; these traits are all learned. The unequal aspects of our society, of our economic relations, were made by those who held the upper hand, and this has been re-engineered and transmitted from one generation to the next. Labor tempers that behaviour.

If we are elected to Government in 2019, we will govern from day one in accordance with our century-old philosophy that puts people, their interest,

their hopes and endeavours and their rights directly at the heart of our decision-making. We will seize the chance to ensure that broad consultation, transparency, and a commitment to act on the crucial issues of fairness and equity for the benefit of the people are not just essential Labor principles, but the hallmarks of a good government.

Labor recognises that in a market economy, government has a role to play to ensure that the market serves the interests of the people, and that to do so, from time to time it must be tempered, it must be civilised. Labor seeks Government because our mission is never complete. We consider that good, effective and honest government is a fundamental right of each citizen.

We will start by restoring pride to the public sector, and close the door on the endless stream of wasteful consultancies. We will nurture our workforce as an invaluable resource. We will stop the brain drain, and restore skillful and talented people to each Government department. We will end the cloistered madness of the Berejiklian Government and restore integrity to the Cabinet processes. We will act decisively on housing affordability. We will be a Government that considers the good will of the people are valuable as civic assets of the State.

That is why it is so important that Labor seizes this moment in time for what it is – an opportunity to present a long-term vision for NSW. We have had so many successes over the last century. But there is so much more to do, because the settings and contours of our society keep changing – through external social and cultural influences, and economic winds from other countries.

But one thing remains unchanging. Labor's commitment: to provide social and political stability. To protect the vulnerable, to challenge the power of those who hold the economic cards, or think they do, and ensure that everyone gets a fair deal – regardless of where you were born or live, who your parents are, or where they came from, their colour, religion or other beliefs, everyone should get an equal start and – when life sends you challenges, when you face adversity, to ensure there is someone to catch your fall, to give you a hand up.

This is our creed.

Cities versus regions: Why good cities policy must remain central to the modern Labor project

Linda Scott

Linda Scott is a Labor Party Councillor on the City of Sydney Council and President of Local Government NSW.

Each time I travel across our majestic New South Wales ranges, as I do regularly now as the President of the peak body for all our state's 128 councils, I am amazed at the endless sky that opens up as you reach the other side. Beneath this great blue, days are filled with conversations with regional mayors and councillors – good people who are essentially volunteering their time working to create a little more public good for their community than they had growing up.

As a person who has spent her life in cities, now spending time on regional land with a profound natural beauty all too often hollowed out by gaping economic, social and health inequality and a community determined to make their region prosper again, I often find myself heartbroken at the stories of need. As a City of Sydney Councillor, I am often challenged about the regional and cities divide: when the regions need so much more attention, why should reforming cities still be a central tenet of the modern Labor project?

Stories of division

Country mayors tell the profound stories of loss and opportunity for their regions. Mayors like Chris Bilkey of Murray River, who speaks of the complexities of living in a cross-border town. Families grieving the loss of a loved one often have to wait several days for a coroner to arrive from Sydney to process their dead because we cannot solve an agreement across the NSW and Victorian borders to share resources. A Victorian coroner would likely arrive within hours instead.

Darriea Turley, our Mayor of Broken Hill, whose region is at the beating heart of Australia's water crisis, finds herself caught in the middle of a fight between the Commonwealth, three states and more vested interests than litres of water left

in the Murray Darling basin, which she is forced to navigate deftly to save her region from drought.

In any one week, I hear regional stories of roads that go unpaved, leaving children unable to get to school when it rains. Stories of towns with no public pool and no rate base to build one, with stretching summers of over 40 degrees lasting longer each year and little employment to afford energy to cool. Stories of towns where the Council public library has become the public living room for the community, largely because of the air-conditioning during summer and heating during winter. Stories of towns where the only investment opportunities for decades seem to be ones that destroy the environment, leaving the unenviable choice between short term survival that will threaten future investment opportunities – not to mention the liveability of an area – or the prospect of no clear plan for any future economic development.

In contrast to our cities, there are towns in NSW with annual new housing approvals in the single digits (ABS, 2018). On the surface, life can look grim in the face of great challenges for our regions. In the face of such inequality and isolation, I am often asked why Labor doesn't shift all our focus to our regions, and have our cities – according to the great conservative mantra – simply left alone to naturally prosper?

Ecosystems make the world go around

The simple truth is that Australian regions cannot thrive and prosper alone. Without thriving global and local cities, our regions simply won't have the markets needed to grow their own prosperity. To quote Australian musician Ben Lee's famous song, we are all in this together.

As Pinker notes, the unprecedented growth in the world's middle class has profound implications for how the world will work into the future (2018, pp. 85-86). Pinker cites the following examples:

Since 1995, 30 of the world's 109 developing countries, including countries as diverse as Bangladesh, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Panama, Rwanda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam have enjoyed growth

rates that amount to doubling of income every eighteen years....It's remarkable enough to see that by 2008 China and India had the same per capita income that Sweden had in 1950 and 1920, respectively, but more remarkable still when we remember how many capitas this income was per 1.3 and 1.2 billion people....Extreme poverty is being eradicated, and the world's population is becoming middle class.

Good governance in the public interest is a fundamental basis for great city-making, and without it, cities fall apart.

Of this growing middle class, a recent Brookings Institute study noted 88 percent of the next billion people to enter it will be on our doorstep, living in Asian nations (Kharas, 2017).

And the growing middle class – largely living in cities – needs to grow and eat, consuming services and skills along the way. Australia's regions, with space to grow food and respond to growing needs for service provision, are best placed to meet the rapidly growing needs of our world. Moreover, their future prosperity fundamentally relies on the growing cities in China and India. To give a parochial example, one of my favourite places in the world to visit and eat – Griffith, with its almond production – 1.8 million almond trees and growing (Gorman, 2017), needs the Asian food and traditional medicine market to expand and value the superior quality of Australian almonds, in order to see their regional prosperity improve. In short, as a region, we need inclusive economic growth that sees both our cities and regions, which are fundamentally interconnected, grow together.

What makes a great city?

Conservatives around the world tell tales of cities full of good men pulling themselves, through sheer hard work alone, out of hardship to build a great enterprise and, on the back of that work, a great city. To a conservative, we all just need to work harder for the boss and the great city will grow on the back of our labour.

Like all tales from conservatives, it's more myth than truth and not based on evidence. The deliberate actions of good governments acting forcefully in the interests of the public good are hidden from view. Individuals, acting alone, shine so brightly in these tales as tall as the skyscrapers, they mask all else.

There is no doubt that great cities are made by people, however in truth it takes so much more than individuals working alone. Cities without good governments are dystopian. A city built on private interests, bursting with freeways to zoom anonymously past each other in increasingly larger automobiles carrying a single passenger, delivering you past places to maximise drive-through consumption of food, retail purchasing, banking and minimise community interaction and exercise. Think Los Angeles.

How then to create a great city? We need strategies, big and small, to take this project forward. Good governance, not built on vested interests. Good governance in the public interest is a fundamental basis for great city-making, and without it, cities fall apart.

Sydney, with some notable exceptions such as the 1951 Cumberland Plan that prioritised the preservation of green belts, has suffered under many examples of poor governance. With a voting franchise based increasingly on property, not people, now re-embedded into the heart of the City of Sydney electoral system by the NSW State Liberal Government, this is at risk of continuing into the future without strong reform from a future Labor Government.

Independent, not gerrymandered, political boundaries that boost public confidence in the fairness of electoral outcomes are fundamental.

With good governance comes the creation of a strong plan for the public good, with strong planning controls to enforce the plan in the public interest. These plans, such as the 1951 Cumberland Plan, have the preservation of public shared spaces for the public good at the heart. In the modern age, public spaces needed for walking, cycling, green spaces, public transport and good quality public infrastructure are vital. Good plans in the public interest also place a strong premium of the preservation of light over public parks and public spaces, by reducing massive overshadowing. Cities with too much overshadowing

condemn communities to live in dark spaces with large and environmentally unsustainable energy costs.

And finally, good governance also leads to the fertile ground vital for the creation of great culture, and fun. Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) is perhaps the best recent global example of art-led economic transformation of a region, and Marcus Westbury's *Creating Cities* contains the wonderful story of the recreation of the centre of Newcastle, led by a process he refers to as 'amusing ourselves' (2015, p 21).

'Amusing ourselves' grew into our own arts and community organisation. My obsession grew into a festival that in turn grew into the city's largest annual tourism event and one of the largest arts and DIY media events in Australia.

Cities need diversity, and policies to create it over time.

As Jane Jacobs noted in her revered 1961 book: *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (p 328) when speaking of the importance of zoning for diversity:

First, we must understand that self-destruction of diversity is caused by success (of cities), not by failure.

Second, we must understand that the process is a continuation of the same economic processes that led to the success itself, and were indispensable to it. Diversity grows in a city area because of economic opportunity and economic attraction. During the process of diversity growth, rival users of space are crowded out. All city diversity grows, in part at least, at the expense of some other tissue. During this growth period even some unique uses may be crowded out because they give such low economic return for the land they occupy.

If simply left to a self-regulating planning system with few planning controls, cities rid themselves of diversity and thus, over time, the interest and attraction that drives ongoing investment and prosperity.

Getting the detail right: cities need 'leaky', well-integrated borders between features and regions. We all know the impact of an imposed border – a railway track, for example, in the creation of a side of the border than inhibits good quality life on one side. Throughout NSW, we continue to see the impact of living on the wrong side of the track. Whether foreshores, university town borders or ill-planned transport corridor integrations, borders can risk the creation of – as Jacobs (1961) notes, “destructive neighbours”. Good planning to integrate across borders, and ensure they are leaky, or flow into each other, creates a more liveable, safe city.

This is the great flaw of “City of Villages” strategies that have, for example, been proposed by independents for the City of Sydney Council area. Having borders between areas that aren't well integrated across, for example, the train line between Redfern and Alexandria through to the University of Sydney, or from Surry Hills to Darlinghurst over Oxford Street, has led to the hollowing out of diversity of land use, investment and the creation of a liveable city area.

Conclusion

In recent times, if Sydney had had a strong plan for sustainable economic growth to reduce poverty and economic inequality, implemented through planning controls for housing affordability, access to childcare and infrastructure, that had been enforced, we would all be better off today. It's time for Labor to create this vision for change in Sydney, which will benefit everyone across NSW.

I find great hope in mayors like Paul Maytom, the Mayor of Leeton, who are leading the way for inclusive economic and social growth in our regions. As Mayor, Paul has ensured his town has more signs to welcome refugees than to dictate your speed on the main street. His story of arriving in a town as a young man to find a place that welcomed him and gave him decades of night shift work that allowed him the opportunity to afford a family and home, has created a fire in him that ensures others – no matter where in our world they

come from or how they arrived here – are offered the same opportunities in Leeton as he found himself.

Cities can learn from the great leaders in our regions, and help their communities prosper along the way. The false division between Sydney and the mighty regions of NSW is harmful, and Labor must lead the way in reducing this division with the creation of strong, inclusive growth and great city planning to ensure we have liveable cities, and regions, for all.

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Our state's priorities

John Graham

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When things don't go well, change the goal, change the way it is measured, and then change the subject. That technique has now been taken to new levels by this NSW Government.

Michael Barber, who worked for Tony Blair's Prime Minister's delivery unit, was a persuasive advocate for improving the work of the public sector using transparent goal setting and measurement of progress.

He argued "...it matters to the success of economies, at national and global levels, because even where government is small, it takes up over 20 per cent of GDP. In many countries it is 40 or 50 per cent of GDP, and if it is unproductive it is a huge drag on economic growth."

Contrast that approach with the oldest trick in the Government playbook. When things don't go well, change the goal, change the way it is measured, and then change the subject. That technique has now been taken to new levels by this NSW Government.

Firstly, some background. The Labor government, influenced by the discussion in the UK Government, had accepted the importance of a measurement agenda for Government. In NSW, from 2006, the State Plan set out a set of goals for each area of government. The State Plan gave the Government a way to articulate its priorities. The agencies had a set of concrete goals to work to. The public was given an insight into how things travelled over time. The State Plan consisted of 34 priorities, and 83 measures. It was comprehensive.

The essay that follows describes what replaced that State Plan. It does so by comparing the goals of the 2010 review of the State Plan, and its projections for where the state would be in 2016, with what actually happened under the

Coalition Government. It is an important essay because it is rare to be able to give such a comprehensive overview of Government performance.

The incoming Government had scrapped the State Plan and replaced it with 'Premier's Priorities'. By 2017, NSW was left with 30 Premier's priorities, with 34 measures. What was missing in that list? Missing entirely were climate change and closing the gap for our indigenous citizens. Significantly downgraded were the measurements for education, vocational training, and housing.

Such an analysis shows precisely where this government has dropped the ball, and then changed the rules to cover it up. One of the reasons that it hasn't been possible to publish an analysis like this before is that this Government didn't just scrap the goals and change the measures, they also hid the plan. You could scour the Government website for days and not find any mention of the old State Plan, its goals and measures.

It is a disappointing approach, at odds with the views of Michael Barber, and more in line with those warned about by another UK writer, George Orwell.

The Coalition's State Plan

The NSW Government's state plan clearly outlines the aims and targets of the current administration and those goals clearly have a strong economic emphasis, in some cases, to the detriment of other concerns. The way that the Premier's list of priorities is put together, the targets that are used and the language used all deflect and avoid problems that the state faces. This glosses over problems and plays up the significance of their successes.

This can be seen in Premier Berejiklian's priorities as they use ineffective measures in education, vocational training and housing, and completely avoid talking about our State's commitments in the areas of climate change and closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. It is a common tactic that when things are not going well, the politicians simply avoid discussing those areas that are problematic, or they change how success is measured. This can be seen clearly in the 2017 Premier's Priorities where they've ignored problems, changed measures and twisted statistics to make their performance appear better.

This is clear when you compare the 2006 state government's priorities with the current state priorities. The 2010 review of the state priorities outlined 34 priorities and included 83 targets, that utilised easily measurable statistics that all feature in either regular Australian Bureau of Statistics publications, or in State Department Annual reports. Additionally, while most of the 2010 priorities had two or three targets to measure progress, the current state priorities have a total of 34 measurable targets for 30 priorities, providing a much narrower focus.

Both sets of priorities feature a wide range of topics including the economy, education, vocational training, crime, housing, indigenous and homelessness to name a few. The 2017 Premier's priorities have a much stronger focus on the economy and government services, with eight priorities being primarily economic and three related to government services. However, some areas such as the environment and indigenous communities received almost no attention at all.

Education

Education is a major component of state government and features in three of the 30 current state priorities. It features comparatively little in the 2017 priorities, with only one education specific goal.

One of the most important priorities in the 2010 State Plan review was to improve the State's Naplan results, including the targets¹ 'to increase the percentage of students in the top two bands by 12%' and 'to decrease the percentage of students achieving at or below by 20%'. A direct comparison of the 2008 Naplan results², Naplan's first full year, with the 2016 Naplan results³ (Table 1) shows a 5.6% increase in the percentage of students at or below the

1 NSW Government, 2010, *NSW State Plan, Performance Report November 2010*, NSW State Government, Sydney, pg. 29.

2 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2008, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2008*, ACARA, Sydney.

3 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2016, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2016*, ACARA, Sydney.

National Minimum Standard, rather than the targeted 20% decrease. It also shows a 1.9% decrease in students top two bands rather than the targeted 12% increase. From this, it is evident that there has been little improvement and some deterioration in the results of our education system since 2006.

Table 1

Percentage of students in top two bands	2008 data	2016 data	Target	Difference
Year 3 Literacy	47.65%	51.65%	53.4%	4.0%
Year 3 Numeracy	40.0%	37.3%	44.8%	-2.7%
Year 5 Literacy	33.18%	31.88%	37.2%	-1.3%
Year 5 Numeracy	27.0%	31.3%	30.2%	4.3%
Year 7 Literacy	27.68%	25.90%	31.0%	-1.8%
Year 7 Numeracy	32.5%	31.3%	36.4%	-1.2%
Year 9 Literacy	22.03%	18.65%	24.7%	-3.4%
Year 9 Numeracy	27.5%	24.7%	30.8%	-2.8%
Average	32.19%	31.58%	36.05%	-0.61%

The State government has kept only one target to measure the states' Naplan results, 'the percentage of NSW student results in the top two Naplan bands'. However, the measurement has undoubtedly changed, and the devil is in the fine print. While the 2006 targets compared results in numeracy and literacy – a measure that includes reading, writing, grammar and spelling – the new target only measures numeracy and reading which skews the statistics completely. When results in writing, spelling and grammar are ignored completely, the results (Table 2) shift from a concerning 1.9% decrease in high achievers to a much more positive 2.5% increase⁴. However, ignoring those results comes at a significant cost as it allows the government to ignore the worsening state of our education system, at the cost of NSW students.

4 Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2017, *Premier's Priorities*, The Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Sydney.

Table 2

Percentage of students at or below the National Minimum Standard	2008 data	2016 data	Target	Difference
Year 3 Literacy	11.75%	10.73%	9.4%	-1.0%
Year 3 Numeracy	11.9%	14.6%	9.5%	2.7%
Year 5 Literacy	16.30%	17.25%	13.0%	0.9%
Year 5 Numeracy	20.6%	17.9%	16.5%	-2.7%
Year 7 Literacy	18.78%	21.38%	15.0%	2.6%
Year 7 Numeracy	18.1%	17.0%	14.5%	-1.1%
Year 9 Literacy	25.45%	29.00%	20.4%	3.6%
Year 9 Numeracy	22.4%	19.9%	17.9%	-2.5%
Average	18.16%	18.47%	14.53%	0.31%

The target to increase the number of children ready for school under the 'best start' program had in fact been met in the 2010 review⁵; however, since that time the number of children ready in literacy and numeracy both dropped⁶ by 6% and 2%, respectively. This has undoubtedly contributed to the further deterioration of the performance of our education system in primary and secondary age groups. The best start program is no longer a state priority or target for the state government and is measured and reported only by the Department of Education.

5 NSW Government, 2011, *NSW State Plan, Performance Report November 2010*, NSW State Government, Sydney, pg. 28.

6 NSW Department of Education and Training, 2011, *Annual Report 2010*, NSW State Government, Sydney, pp. 11 & 30.

Vocational training

Completing an apprenticeship is a valuable step in building a career in a highly skilled economy.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2017, *Premier's Priorities*, The Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Sydney.

Vocational training, provided largely by TAFE NSW, is vital to the development of tradesmen and women, and provides training that is important to every single industry operating in NSW. However, TAFE has, since 2011, seen a drastic collapse in enrolments⁷ with annual enrolments falling from more than 556,000⁸ in 2010, to just over 424,000⁹ enrolments in 2016. The current State Priorities include no targets or priorities regarding TAFE, despite its collapse. It also now measures vocational training in apprenticeships and traineeships, not by total graduate numbers but by percentage of students graduating. This is, conveniently, the only area in which TAFE is doing better than it did in 2011.

Again, the use of completion rates as a target rather than net apprenticeships allows them to disguise the sheer drop in the number of apprentices, trainees and VET graduates by arguing that they have a larger percentage of students graduating. In truth, the apprentices and trainees currently in training has dropped from 165,000¹⁰ in July 2011 to only 87,000¹¹ in July 2017, with completions also in a comparable dive¹². Why, when the Australian government has placed many of the skills taught in apprenticeships, on the critical skills list, has the state government allowed such dramatic losses in apprentices and trainees? Training is vital to continued economic growth and many industries rely heavily on the government to carry out or to subsidise and promote training.

7 NCVET 2017, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: total VET students and courses 2016*, NCVET, Adelaide, pg. 13.

8 NSW Department of Education and Training, 2011, *Annual Report 2010*, NSW State Government, Sydney, pg. 8.

9 TAFE NSW, 2016, *Tafe NSW Annual Report 2015-16*, TAFE NSW and NCVET, Sydney, pg. 11

10 Training Services NSW, 2017, *NSW Quarterly in Training Profile, July 2017 Summary*, NSW Department of Industry, Sydney, pg. 1.

11 Training Services NSW, 2011, *NSW Quarterly in Training Profile, January 2011 Summary*, NSW Department of Industry, Sydney, pg. 1.

12 Training Services NSW, 2017, *Annual Completions Report 2016*, NSW Department of Industry, Sydney, pg. 1.

The environment

The most concerning trend in the environmental targets when reviewed, was that many of them are no longer openly and publicly recorded. The current government has reduced the measurement of several very important environmental factors such as, greenhouse gas production and atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. Moreover, the most recent publically available report on these measures is only from 2014¹³. The government's lack of concern in this area is clear in the complete absence of recent data on both the NSW Heritage and Environment Office and the NSW EPA, whose websites and annual reports now make little or no mention of climate change or greenhouse gas emissions. Not measuring a problem does not reduce its impact or the necessity to act upon it; a lack of information will only undermine attempts to adapt to and ameliorate climate change.

Additionally, the 2006 target to increase the number of people in NSW with skills in renewable energy and 'green skills' appears to have dropped¹⁴. This is hard to gauge as some of the green skills courses no longer exist, and green skills training is no longer measured in the TAFE annual report. This priority was not renewed, and the state government's current priorities do not feature the renewable energy sector at all. Skills and training are vital to allowing the renewable industry, a key response to climate change, to expand and grow. The lack of government interest and lack of skilled employees will undoubtedly hamper the growth of those industries in NSW.

The current state priorities do feature one environmental target, reducing litter, in which the government is on track to meet its target early¹⁵. However, this priority seems short sighted considering the substantially greater impacts of climate change when compared to the effects of litter. While litter reduction is

13 AdaptNSW, 2017, *NSW Emissions*, NSW Office of Heritage and Environment, Sydney, viewed: 6/10/17, <<http://climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/About-climate-change-in-NSW/NSW-emissions>>

14 NCVET, 2017, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: total VET students and courses 2016*, National Centre for Vocational and Education Research, Adelaide.

15 Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2017, *Premier's Priorities*, The Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Sydney.

an important initiative, it is a problem that can be addressed by local councils and should not take precedence over measures to address the impacts of climate change. Why, when the NSW government has clearly acknowledged the gravity of climate change, with investment in Adapt NSW and climate change adaptation research¹⁶, does the government still not see renewable energy, or reductions in carbon dioxide production as a priority?

NSW Housing

The 2017 State priorities identify housing affordability as a key priority that the government is currently working on. This is a very significant problem, predominately in Sydney where housing affordability for middle and low income households is the worst in the country. The priority utilises three measures (Table 3) to assess housing supply: housing completions, house rezoning numbers and housing approvals. However, supply is only one aspect of the problem and extremely high levels of demand have driven up prices more than a lack of supply¹⁷.

Driving high housing demand is the disproportionate level of investment.

Core Logic 2016, Housing Affordability Report December 2016, pg. 2.

Thus, while the government has set a target that is both achievable and somewhat relevant, the target completely fails to address the greater part of the problem. This is another example of the state government setting targets that are achievable but won't address the problem that the priority aims at addressing.

16 AdaptNSW, 2017, *Adaptation Research Hub*, NSW Office of Heritage and Environment, Sydney, viewed: 20/10/17 <<http://climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/Adapting-to-climate-change/Adaptation-Research-Hub>>

17 Core Logic, 2016, *Housing Affordability Report December 2016*, Core Logic Asia Pacific, Sydney pp.5-6.

Table 3**Affordability measures across the regions as at September 2016**

Region	Price to income ratio	% of household income required for a 20% deposit	% of household income required to service an 80% LVR mortgage	% of household income required to rent a home
Sydney	8.3	167.7	44.5	28.9
Regional NSW	6.6	132.9	35.2	29.9
Melbourne	7.1	142.8	37.9	25.6
Regional VIC	5.6	111.2	29.5	27.0
Brisbane	5.7	114.1	30.3	25.4
Regional QLD	6.7	134.0	35.5	30.0
Adelaide	6.2	124.5	33.0	25.7
Regional SA	4.8	95.7	25.4	24.9
Perth	5.5	110.9	29.4	22.2
Regional WA	5.1	101.4	26.9	26.0
Hobart	5.5	110.7	29.4	27.4
Regional TAS	5.0	99.6	26.4	26.7
Darwin	4.5	89.7	23.8	22.2
Regional NT	4.7	93.5	24.8	28.1
ACT	5.2	103.5	27.5	21.4
National	6.9	138.9	36.8	29.0
Combined capital cities	6.7	133.8	35.5	25.7
Combined regional areas	6.3	125.3	33.2	28.6

NSW and Closing the Gap

Many of the 2006 targets set for community outcomes support the 'Close the Gap' initiative to close the substantial divides between indigenous communities and non-indigenous communities. The targets addressing the fundamental problems¹⁸, such as closing the gap in infant mortality and closing the gap in education outcomes, were all either not met or are not on track to be met. This is evident in the divide in both unemployment and employment between indigenous and non-indigenous people in NSW. This has increased since 2006 with the difference in employment standing at 18%¹⁹ currently, up significantly from the 2006 rates of 11.3%²⁰. Similarly, the gap in literacy and numeracy across all year groups and the gap in access to early childhood education have remained substantial²¹ despite government policy to address these issues.

In the more recent 2017 Premier's priorities, none of those fundamental problems appear; instead, the priorities set targets to increase the proportion of Aboriginal students in the NSW Naplan results and increase Aboriginal presence in state organisations. The Premier's priorities subsequently appear to ignore those much more significant and detrimental problems – such as lower life expectancies, higher infant mortality, low levels of employment and higher incarceration rates – to focus instead on much more achievable targets. This approach, though it may benefit the NSW government, does very little to address the divide between indigenous and non-indigenous New South Welshmen.

18 NSW Government, 2010, *NSW State Plan, Performance Report November 2010*, NSW State Government, Sydney, pg. 55.

19 ABS, 2016, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, Australia, 2014-15*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, Section 22.2.

20 NSW Government, 2010, *NSW State Plan, Performance Report November 2010*, NSW State Government, Sydney, pg. 55.

21 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2016, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2016*, ACARA, Sydney.

Summary

Across all the areas there is a common trend in that the state government, in its setting of priorities and targets, is more concerned with creating an appearance of addressing problems and creating positive results, regardless of whether those actions and targets will actually address the problem. Furthermore, the state government has pursued a policy of abandoning statistics and information gathering when that information reveals problems and downward trends. If departments are unable to understand the very problems they exist to address, they cannot function properly. This type of policy setting benefits no one except the state government and must be addressed.

If Sydney is full, it's time to decentralise

Emma Dawson

Emma Dawson is Executive Director of public policy think tank Per Capita.

It's almost two decades since then Premier of NSW, Bob Carr, infamously stated that Sydney was "full" (2000). In the intervening years, Australia's largest city has added a million people (ABS, 2018).

Across the nation, the Australian population is growing at an unprecedented rate. A recent *Four Corners* program on the ABC claimed that the country added around 400,000 people – roughly the population of Canberra – in one year, and that this population growth was occurring mainly in our four major cities: Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney (Knight, 2018).

Successive governments have taken a laissez faire approach to immigration, celebrating the headline economic growth but failing utterly to accommodate increased populations through the provision of new and improved infrastructure and services, or to plan effectively for increased housing stock in areas with good access to transport and within reasonable distances of people's jobs.

If we continue down this path without building new cities, then the populations of both Melbourne and Sydney will be close to 8 million by the middle of the century.

Our rapid population growth is driven by immigration. It's the reason behind Australia's world record run of economic growth: more than a quarter of a century without a recession is entirely due to our high levels of immigration. As noted in a recent article for Forbes magazine, it is immigration that is driving compound annual growth in Australia of 3% per annum since 1990: 'Take out population growth of 1.4% per year, and the economy has only grown around 1.6% per year in per capita terms' (Babones, 2017).

While the overall rate of economic growth is trumpeted by politicians and policy makers as an unqualified success, it is per capita growth that really matters to people. That is, without improvement in their individual standard of living, people don't feel the benefits of economy-wide growth.

So economic growth that relies on population growth actually has deleterious effects for people in their daily lives. As more people pour into our already crowded cities, existing residents experience a decline in their standard of living, with increased congestion on the roads, competition for access to health and education services and, most notoriously in Sydney, a massive increase in the cost of housing.

It's no wonder that a recent survey found that '...74 per cent of voters thought that Australia does not need more people, with big majorities believing that population growth was putting 'a lot of pressure' on hospitals, roads, affordable housing and jobs' (Betts and Birrell, 2017).

Yet there is no sign that immigration rates to Australia will slow any time soon. In fact, our nation relies on skilled migration to bolster our workforce, and only the worst kind of bigot would deny that successive waves of migrants have created Australia's vibrant and harmonious multicultural society.

The problem isn't immigration as such; it's our failure over recent decades to manage it effectively.

Successive governments have taken a *laissez-faire* approach to immigration, celebrating the headline economic growth but failing utterly to accommodate increased populations through the provision of new and improved infrastructure and services, or to plan effectively for increased housing stock in areas with good access to transport and within reasonable distances of people's jobs.

The problem in Sydney, particularly in relation to housing, is acute. Already, life in Australia's biggest city is unsustainable for a large proportion of working and middle-class people, who can't afford to buy – or in many cases, even rent – homes within a reasonable distance of their workplaces.

This has broader implications for the health of cities and communities beyond the immediate housing needs of those affected.

The consequences of population pressure on housing affordability in Sydney were laid out in a report published in January this year. Prepared for Teachers Mutual Bank, Firefighters Mutual Bank, Police Bank and My Credit Union by Nicole Gurran, Catherine Gilbert, Yuting Zhang and Peter Phibbs at the University of Sydney, *Key worker housing affordability in Sydney* warned that '[F]ailure of regions to attract and retain key workers can generate large social and financial costs for society' (2018).

Key workers include teachers, nurses, police and emergency service personnel who, '...in performing their roles in education and public health and safety... significantly influence the social and economic wellbeing of cities' (Gurran et al., 2018).

The loss of key workers is arguably one of the more significant consequences of the failure by successive governments to effectively plan for population growth through the provision of adequate housing and infrastructure.

The report found that, '[s]ince 2006, some inner and middle ring subregions of metropolitan Sydney have experienced a net loss of key workers... while outlying areas including the Illawarra, Newcastle and the Hunter Valley have experienced net gains' (Gurran et al., 2018).

The report's authors made several recommendations to address housing affordability in the city for key workers, which was the focus of their report. However, these recommendations are aimed tightly at fixing the immediate problem through remedial measures, rather than tackling the bigger issue: the rate of population growth in Sydney is simply unsustainable.

The answer, though, isn't as some people – including Tony Abbott, Bob Carr and Dick Smith – suggest: to halt immigration to Australia. We are a country built on immigration, and our population is, by global standards, tiny in proportion to our landmass.

Often cloaked in the respectable veneer of environmental sustainability, proponents of closed borders arrogantly assume that Australia can continue to live an early 20th century idyll, with a few large cities, and some sleepy regional centres and small country towns, surrounded by lush landscapes and more space per capita than any other country on earth.

The desire to stop growth in its tracks is not only selfish, it's ignorant of the truth of life outside the large, bustling cities in which small-Australia advocates almost invariably reside.

That truth is that, in inverse proportion to the growth of Sydney, many regional towns are in demographic decline.

In 2014, the then Department of Immigration and Border Protection noted in its policy paper *Regional Retention of Migrants: critical success factors* that:

Regional Australia is experiencing a range of economic and social trends that are challenging the ability of many communities to adapt. In some cases, these trends threaten the continued viability of smaller centres that are struggling to develop sustainable communities and to support viable industries, employment opportunities and a high quality of life for residents. Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has noted that “[o]ld age dependency ratios are higher in inner regional areas, reflecting trends for many Australians to leave major cities on retirement” (Baxter et al., 2011).

At the same time, many regional areas are seeing the migration of younger people away from the regions towards larger cities, in search of education and employment opportunities.

A recent report from the Brotherhood of St Laurence found that unemployment levels of young people in regional areas is at crisis point: 'In five regions – all outside capital cities – youth unemployment among 15 to 24 year olds in the labour force surpassed 20 per cent' (2018).

Regional NSW is faring badly in this regard: the report found youth unemployment at 28.9 per cent in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven region of NSW, including Nowra, Mittagong and Ulladulla; 21.5 per cent in the Murray region of NSW, including Albury, Tocumwal, Jerilderie and Deniliquin; and 19.8 per cent in the Coffs Harbour-Grafton region of NSW, also including Bellingen and Dorrigo.

It's no wonder, then, that young people are leaving the regions in droves, but the consequences are profound. The increasing age profile of regional communities, through the loss of people of working age, leads to the collapse of economic activity and the closure of such critical community facilities as sporting clubs, aged-care and social services, and schools, as the number of school-aged children in some towns dwindles.

These trends are reversible, but we need to think differently about Australian cities.

In his original complaint that Sydney was “full”, Bob Carr lamented that:

...people who say Australia ought to have a population of 50 million are saying that the east coast of Australia be urbanised, be citified. Right down the east coast of Australia, you'd see the end ...of any conservation, open space. You'd have cities. That's what ... an Australia with a population of 50 million means – a totally citified, a totally urbanised east coast (2000).

Well, yes – and no. There is a demonstrable need for Australia to build new cities to accommodate population growth. This needn't mean a “totally urbanised east coast”. If planned and managed properly, using new technologies, we can create entirely livable cities along our temperate coast that can accommodate many more people in sustainable and enjoyable lifestyles.

Carr's vision of an “urbanised east coast” may represent, for him, a dystopia, but that's an inherently privileged view. He and others argue for limits to population and economic growth in order to protect their own wealthy, urban lifestyles; meanwhile, increasing numbers of working and middle-class people are squeezed into cities that no longer provide the promise of a good life.

We can't just refuse to take any more people in when we sit on one of the largest landmasses on earth; we need to think creatively about how we can provide for growth that improves not just headline economic figures, but the lives of all Australians, both those already settled and the new arrivals who will continue to contribute so much to our culture and society.

Investment in regional centres and a coordinated approach by federal and state governments to encourage decentralization could create a network of smaller cities on the NSW east coast that could provide strong economic activity in environmentally sustainable communities with a high standard of living for working and middle-class Australians.

As noted by the CEO of the Australian Smarter Communities Association, Laurie Patton, in *The Sydney Morning Herald* last month, '[T]here are 307 American cities with a population above 100,000'. The US has roughly the same landmass as Australia, and only 14 of its cities are bigger than Sydney.

Patton wants to see '...a bipartisan accord, involving all three levels of government ...business groups, civil society organisations and trade unions' working in consultation with citizens to harness smart city technologies to drive a program of decentralisation along Australia's east coast (2018).

It's a smart vision, and one that could deliver significant benefits for Australians in both our largest cities and smallest country towns.

What might these new, smaller regional cities look like? Some, of course, would build on existing communities, investing in transport infrastructure within and between cities across the state, and relocating businesses that trade in the digital economy to operate in smaller centres rather than the Sydney CBD.

A core infrastructure investment to drive decentralisation is a publicly funded, fibre broadband network, connecting schools, hospitals, businesses and homes with genuine future-proof technology. Such a network would have to be delivered, initially, on the public purse – the business case for commercial investment in as-yet underpopulated areas is demonstrably lacking – but once created, it would drive business activity and growth in our regions like nothing since the electricity network was established 100 years ago.

New industries will emerge. New cities with one or two large businesses, perhaps digital and creative industries, tourism and service jobs in health, education and care for children and the elderly, can provide employment and services to support tens of thousands of people living together in sustainable communities.

Critically, those “key workers” being driven out of Sydney – teachers, police, nurses and emergency service personnel – will find homes and jobs serving new communities in smaller cities along the coast.

Sustainability is key. By creating new energy networks that rely on renewables, new, smaller cities can avoid the dystopian nightmare of coastal towns and regional areas choked by pollution.

Technologies in use the world over can provide us with enough water, and modern farming technologies can provide food from plentiful remaining arable land.

The use of broadband connectivity to exchange information and conduct business activities through virtual meetings between and within cities can reduce travel and congestion.

People living and working in such smart, smaller cities would have more time to enjoy their lives. Less time spent commuting to and from a CBD workplace; an affordable house within an easy drive, or even walk, from the workplace; schools, child care and retirement communities in close proximity; perhaps even a shorter working week to create a more even distribution of work between men and women and allow shared care for children and other family members.

In short, a life not pressured by overpopulation and the choking fumes of a big city reliant on endless growth.

None of this is beyond our ability. By harnessing new technologies, and through the implementation of creative, coordinated planning, government and civil society can work together to take the population pressure off Sydney, and create truly livable cities along the east coast, which provide a vast improvement in the standards of living for working and middle-class Australians.

Isn't it time we gave it a try?

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Putting the social back into socialism

Eva Cox

Eva Cox is an activist, socialist, feminist and academic, as well as the Australian Fabians' National Patron.

As the National Patron for the Australian Fabians, I am looking forward to working with the members to address the lack of good social policies that can reassure voters displaying widespread distrust of democratic processes that governments offer policies that create community wellbeing and make societies more civil. We need to restore policies that re-create the social contract of fairness between citizens and those in power via collective, equitable programs that enhance social cohesion and the common good.

There is an under-discussed gap in current policy making in Australia that reflects similar changes in the rest of the 'developed' world. For more than three decades, policy on offer has been infected by the neoliberal virus. This created paradigm replaced the perceived need for welfare state social policies that ensured the necessary trust and legitimacy of governments in the post war decades; the welfare state designed to counter the inequities that created distrust of democracy and led to Hitler, other dictatorships and World War II.

This reliance on policies, driven by market models and capitalist excesses, is creating high democratic distrust as voters see the disappearing role of governments in dominant forms of neoliberal economics. The result is the widespread growth of populism, which often results in the election of authoritarian representatives who are undermining many of the good changes of the last five decades; the social equity programs that reduced market based inequities and affirmed the legitimacy of democracy with voters.

These policies damage trust by removing public services and state ownership of facilities, often seen as part of the social contract, because they offered fairness. Public owned commitments and services have been replaced by contracted out or privatised versions. The effect of their absence is undermining the explicit and implicit contract between state and voters because the public

know they are now redefined customers of governments. As this is implicitly a distrust relationship, i.e. searching for the best price, it is no wonder voters don't trust those in power, or those seeking power with similar basic assumptions.

We need to look more broadly on what really matters and develop good social goals so people feel their needs will be met in a range of areas, not just income.

Social derives from the Latin 'socius', the links we have with other people. People see themselves as part of societies, not just individuals, so tend to see ourselves as linked. Our sense of community belonging counts as part of our identities. Therefore, many of the tensions undermining trust in democratic processes come from the increasing invisibility of links to the public sphere, of government as provider and funder of the services that most people need, and expect to access equitably.

Current policy priorities of the ALP are often focused on adjusting the market model to make it less nasty. This is clearly seen in the lack of mentions of community or society in the Federal Platform, or in Luke Foley's NSW conference speech last year. The current ALP priorities are aimed at working people, e.g. workplace rights, but they fail to address the non-work related needs, such as the privatisation and gaps in community service and the problems of welfare payments. Where is the debate on direct public services, more equitable modes of welfare payments and community services that address the needs that can't be equitably offered as market based goods or services?

Too often, progressive policy proposals define 'paid workers' as their core constituency, and therefore ignore the unpaid social fabric that underpins societies and depends on non-materialist relationships. People have a need to belong, fairness, a recognition of the need for collective well-being. Adjusting earned income levels has its place, but it is not enough to cover the complexities of wellbeing. Proposed economic changes must be designed together with others that benefit society more broadly. Ensuring voter trust is crucial, as governments make difficult decisions to address the combined effects of environmental damage and increased automation, which impacts growth in future labour demands.

We need to look more broadly on what really matters and develop good social goals so people feel their needs will be met in a range of areas, not just income. Current market based growth goals may need to morph into setting social objectives for our communities, redistribute to create fairness and thereby encourage more trust of both governments and acceptance of diversity of other people. The best democratic model requires legitimacy via governance so people can trust those in power to work for the common good, not just promises of individuated material success.

Economics is essential for calculating the means to pay for material resources but these are limited as they do not offer voters a sense of belonging or trustworthiness. This means that progressives need to also deliver policy options to address social relational, anxiety-inducing changes. These are the drivers of populist emotions that welcome options for the appealing revived conservative right tendencies, offering limited forms of social identity via mythic pasts. This has to be countered by our offering policies that prove we live in societies where belonging, relationships, unpaid contributions and ethics count.

My proposal is that we, as Fabians, need to engage in filling some of these policy gaps by offering ideas and some options for policy alternatives that more clearly differentiate the ALP from the Coalition in these crucial areas. These can restore trust that the democratic model of politics has the capacity to meet voter needs.

The Fabians have the connections and independent structure that allow us to offer ideas for discussion with minimal organisational barriers. We need to ensure there is a forum for left debates that looks at putting citizenship, the common good and collective forms of well-being back onto socialist agendas, as they seem to have been mislaid. There is a clear gap in serious policy leadership which requires offering space to debate options and alternatives that can both undo the ill effects of market models and show voters that there are trustworthy progressive alternatives.

We need to ensure there are progressive contributions to the debate on what follows the current shift of the failing paradigm, which only took over in the

eighties. Its clear focus on individualised greed and self-interest, based on distrust of anything communal or collective, inherently breaches the implicit social contract that underpins democracy's legitimacy.

Some needed reforms as examples

The following options, both NSW based issues and broader issues, show some examples of the need for social well-being policies. Most community services are primarily state funded and/or state controlled or, even when federally funded, are licensed by states. So, it is reasonable for NSW to raise them. There are also options for using COAG, where states can lead discussion for federal changes.

Here are some areas which need serious attention:

- Set up some procedural rules for funding local community services that recognise the need for the local and user based planning of services via policies that recognise how much user local inputs contribute to the effectiveness of such services.
- Explore how issues like child welfare and child protection can be dealt with by good generalist community services that support families and meet needs. The current model is more concerned with individualised risk management and is devastating Indigenous communities with child removals.
- Act on continuing evidence that disadvantaged and Indigenous communities need effective support and development programs which must be community based and controlled services (self determination).
- Local community services should meet local needs and therefore have connections. Funding processes should encourage these services, and not just bigger commercial or major agency services. So, we need to ensure the funding of services is adequate to meet local/community needs, for both diversity and cultural appropriateness.
- These should include locally run collective women's refuges that must be separate from homelessness services.

Children's services

- Develop a planning model that ensures all local children have access to culturally appropriate local support services that can meet their developmental and social needs.
- Use the states' role in registering services and local planning to set local input and planning requirements for services that ensure local needs and affordability are taken into account.
- Encourage the Federal government to return to direct funding of child care services so there is a clear contract between funder and provider, so services meet locality needs and reasonable fee levels.
- Ensure planning to restrict chain commercial services and encourage community based, locally run services that put service user needs first and develop community links.
- Ensure all schools have access to out of school hour services that reflect local needs and control the entry of outsider commercial chains. Stop competitive tendering for such services.

Other issues, less state based that need addressing

Advocacy for payments and income support

The current welfare payments system has serious unfairness effects because of both the focus on the 'working age population' requirements that they seek paid jobs, and meet unfair conditions of means tests and compliance demands. Its failure to acknowledge the value of those with unpaid responsibilities and roles seriously affects those who give in other ways and reinforces biases against these roles. Such changes would address the gender pay gap by recognising unpaid roles and assist Indigenous and others following more communally oriented activities and choices. The following changes need to be explored as possible options.

A social dividend as a universal basic income

- Initiate discussion on the need for forms of universal income support that cover basic necessary spending. This would recognise the gender gaps,

most unpaid contributions and alternative, more collective lifestyles. We need equity that is not solely based on earned income, as well as supporting more labour mobility and likely lower demand for waged labour.

- Propose or support a trial replacing the BasicsCard and Cashless Debit Card with unconditional similar pay rates to test the concept and stop the damage of the current programs. This would be possible without extra spending, and would show whether it works.

Why do these issues matter?

We have neglected to develop the necessary social capital that makes for more civil societies, based on trust that I covered in my 1995 ABC Boyer Lectures. Access to public and private formal goods and services, as well as markets, add to the sense we have of how we are perceived and valued.

Why I am pushing these issues as National Patron?

Do I have the experience and skills?

My background contributes to my political commitments. I was born in Vienna just before Hitler added Austria to his Nazi empire. My family lost their citizenship because we were Jewish, and became refugees. I ended up in England with my mother in 1939.

Two experiences stick in my memory as contributing to my later desires for political involvement. Being a refugee was awkward, billeted in people's spare bedrooms, wondering why we were there, and my father was far away in the army. Why did we have to leave Vienna, where my mother had been a medical student? Another clear memory was aged three, when a preschool teacher denied my request for a drum, explaining they were for boys, as were the cymbals so girls got the less noisy triangles and tambourines. I was cross and complained to my mother I didn't want to be told that girls only got quieter ones. So, I became a feminist, alerted to unfairness in many areas.

After the war, we spent a couple of years in Rome, when my father, who was very into world saving, was working on displaced persons for the UN who came from concentration camps. We came to Australia in 1948, and I was called a reffo at

Bondi Beach school. So, I realised from an early age that what I experienced was unfair and I wanted to fix it for myself and others.

I grew up believing people should/could stop inequities. This got me into trouble at school and stimulated my interest in politics. In the mid-1950s, at Sydney University, I was involved in setting up the ALP club, but didn't join the party then. Instead, I found the Sydney Libertarian Push, which allowed me to become both a socialist and anarchist. Told they were contradictory, I said socialism created fairness, and anarchism showed those in power didn't have to dominate. I still manage the contradictions.

I joined the ALP in the late sixties to stop White Australia and the Vietnam war. I qualified as a sociologist at UNSW, returning to study as a sole parent on social security payments. I also was an early active member of the Women's Electoral Lobby, where I pursued my feminist/left agenda for many years, without more recent successes.

I've been an academic, a political advisor, consultant, teacher, researcher and welfare advocate over the past decades. I taught research and advocacy and policy at UTS and UNSW, and am currently an Adjunct Professor at UTS. I have done a lot of media and in 1995, In my ABC Boyer lectures on a Truly Civil Society, I predicted a lot of the problems we are now seeing, as I was very concerned that the emphasis on individual self-interest, greed, markets and materialism was undermining social cohesion.

So, I accepted the role of mentor, as an activist, to push for more debate and action on better policies for the future. There are many out there who want to influence more optimistic social policies that can attract progressive voters, looking for something better than what is currently on offer.

If you would like to contribute in these areas, please consider joining the Fabians and help us create more positive change.

NSW Labor's vision for fairer workplaces

Adam Searle

Adam Searle is the Labor Leader of the Opposition in the NSW Legislative Council, Shadow Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, and Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations.

I was brought to the practice of law, and to politics, by a concern for how the world of work impacts on the individual and society. That is why I found myself in the ALP. Labor is one of a small family of political parties around the world which is not merely social democratic in character, but has an organic connection with the organised movement of working people embodied in trade unions. That connection, with unions forming the actual foundations of the party organisation, ensures that the ALP remains focused on two things.

The linking theme was the objective of achieving greater balance between workers and those who engage and pay them, so that they can have, if not an equal relationship, at least a less unequal one.

Firstly, with the practicalities of delivering social and economic change that can be observed and experienced in people's everyday life. This approach was described in the early part of the twentieth century as "*socialism without doctrine*" (Métin, 1901) which remains an apt description of Labor today.

Secondly, the enduring organic connection with the union movement has ensured that political Labor has remained concerned with how the world of work itself impacts people, their families and the wider community. Work determines your income and, in large part, the standard of living you and your family enjoy, as well as many of the opportunities that are afforded your children.

Accordingly, how we regulate work, the rights people have individually and collectively, and how the power dynamic between employers and the workforce is mediated, says a lot about a society. Labor, in both State and Federal

spheres, has delivered frameworks that emphasise collective approaches to wage fixing, through awards and industrial agreements, encouraged collective institutions, including unions and employer associations, whose interactions were supervised by specialised tribunals and courts composed of persons with expertise in the field of employment. These arrangements were underpinned by a range of individual legal rights to protection from unfair dismissal, from unfair work contracts, and a range of other protections from unlawful discrimination. The linking theme was the objective of achieving greater balance between workers and those who engage and pay them, so that they can have, if not an equal relationship, at least a less unequal one.

The conservative Liberal and National parties (“the Coalition”) have, when in office, sought to dismantle or at least weaken these protective laws and the institutions that enforce them, not so much deregulating the labour market but creating a regulatory framework which emphasises and strengthens the existing, inherently greater economic and bargaining position of employers, limiting the scope of issues that can be brought by workers to courts and tribunals for decision, reducing the scope of what can be included in industrial arrangements, and other measures to limit the effectiveness of unions and collective action more generally.

The cumulative effect of these policies has been the loss of industrial arbitration for wages, the continued decline of union density across industries and the acceleration of casual, contract and other forms of insecure and impermanent work to the point where Australia now has a record rate of temporary work. All of this has resulted in the flat wages growth we have today. The profit share of national income is soaring, while the share going to workers is equal to the lowest level since the Second World War.

Over time, people will not be able to get loans to buy a car, much less a home. They won't be able to take holidays or sick leave. Workers' discretionary and general spending will continue to contract, and with it our economy. On any analysis this approach is lose-lose for our society, including the business community.

Since the late 1980's, as Labor and the Coalition succeeded each other in government, so too the approach to industrial relations ("IR") and laws changed, reflecting the contested field it has become after nearly a century of cross-party consensus. The first place to experience this was NSW, with the Greiner Government elected in 1988 embarking on controversial and far reaching changes to industrial laws which were then imitated around the nation as other Coalition Governments took office. This culminated in the Howard Government's *Workplace Relations Act* of 1996.

But, just as NSW was the first to shift to the right on IR, it was also the first to step back to the centre. In the mid-1990's, Jeff Shaw QC¹ and NSW Labor developed a bold and distinctive model for IR in this State, focused on driving workplace productivity and ensuring fairness for working people, which acquired support from unions, employers and the wider community. These were implemented by the Carr Labor Government and were used as a model for other Labor Governments around Australia (*Industrial Relations Act, 1996*). It was the classic embodiment of timeless Labor values, in modern language and with modern sensibilities. Progressive and technically competent. There is insufficient space here to make good this claim. One example will suffice: the law and architecture for pay equity matters in the 1996 NSW Act was, and remains, superior to anything in the Commonwealth system, whether your point of reference is the law, the procedures available for identifying any gender-based pay gap, or the practical outcomes².

1 Jeff Shaw QC was a leading industrial barrister, then Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations in the Carr Government 1995-2000 and later a Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW.

2 Compare *Automotive and Metal Workers Union v HPM Industries* (1998) 94 IR 129 with *Miscellaneous Workers Kindergarten and Child Care Centres etc (State) Award* (2006) 150 IR 290. Even the later and successful *Equal Remuneration case* (2011) 208 IR 345 ("The Commonwealth SACS Case No 1") did not overcome all the procedural and legal issues, in my view; see also Macdonald, Fiona; Charlesworth, Sara --- "Equal Pay under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth): Mainstreamed or Marginalised?" [2013] UNSWLawJl 21; (2013) 36(2) University of New South Wales Law Journal 563.

This settlement lasted until the WorkChoices laws of 2006, which not only created the worst system for workers but stripped the States of the majority of their IR systems and depriving even more workers of rights and protections. While the Rudd-Gillard Labor Government's *Fair Work Act* took away the worst excesses of WorkChoices, and restored many individual and union rights, it did not return to the States their lost jurisdiction. Nor did it remove prohibitions on the States effectively legislating in areas such as unfair contracts and equal remuneration laws in relation to private sector workers.

In NSW, changes brought about by the current Coalition Government since 2011 have seen the Industrial Relations Commission ("IRC") stripped of its power to set fair wages and conditions and reduced to only a handful of members, struggling to keep on top of their work and unable to put together appeal panels. Work safety laws and their enforcement have been watered down and moved into the regular court system, the Industrial Court abolished, and public sector employment rights seriously eroded (Government Sector Employment Act 2013 and Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014).

Today, there is a growing campaign from the union movement and the community to "Change the Rules" that govern work. How, and in what way, the rules are changed is a vital debate for society in general. With the balance having shifted decisively to the Commonwealth Government, the question is whether there is any space for a distinct State contribution to regulating work.

I believe there is both the space and the necessity for a continued State Labor contribution, not to compete with the Commonwealth but to complement and supplement a federal system. This should be based on three pillars:

- i. Improving, refining and reorganising existing State laws, courts and tribunals into a single system that deals with the world of work. This will provide the foundations of a diverse and sophisticated industrial jurisdiction, supervised by a court and a tribunal properly equipped to promote both fairness and efficiency at work.
- ii. Filling the gaps in the *Fair Work Act*, where matters have expressly been left to the States (2009). This includes anti-discrimination and work safety laws, among others. A NSW Labor Government should use these avenues

to expand workers' protections and create innovative and modern solutions to ongoing workplace problems that remain unaddressed at any level.

- iii. Using the undoubted general powers of the State to legislate with respect to matters entirely within its competence, such as the criminal law, and matters untouched by federal regulation to deal with new and emerging issues. This would include addressing matters such as wage theft and providing minimum pay and conditions to those working in the so-called 'gig' or 'new' economy.

At the 2015 election, NSW Labor put forward a bold suite of measures using these very approaches. We have continued to build on that foundation in the years since. We have committed to new measures with real teeth to protect workers who are pregnant or have family responsibilities in terms of flexible work; new protections from sex discrimination in redundancy, dismissal and the non-renewal of work contracts; improved pay discrimination laws; new laws to tackle bullying at work, and to protect whistleblowers, whether they work in the public sector or in the private sector. Because returning home safely at the end of each day is a right everyone should share, NSW Labor has committed to the highest standards for work safety laws and enforcement. Not only will we return safety prosecutions to a specialist industrial court, we will ensure that the IRC can make orders to settle disputes about work safety and injured worker rehabilitation. Using our power to make laws providing leave for victims of crime (Fair Work Act, 2009), we will ensure victims of domestic violence get ten days' paid leave (Patty, 2017).

In 2017, we announced a comprehensive package to combat the scourge of wage theft: making it a crime to deliberately fail to pay wages and entitlements – providing tough criminal penalties against companies and the possibility of jail for individuals, underpinned by a range of supporting measures, including making head franchisors liable for what goes on in their franchise network and the registration of labour hire firms to ensure they provide safe and fair work conditions and do not undermine industry standards (Searle, 2018).

The Victorian Labor Government is now adopting a similar approach on wage theft. Federal Labor is also considering what it might do in this area (Patty and Towell, 2018). What started in NSW is gathering momentum.

We have also committed to tough modern slavery laws, to remove exploitation from the State's procurement supply chain (McGowan, 2017 and NSW Legislative Council, 2018).

Just as '*big data*' is shaping our social interactions, it is also influencing the world of work. A lot has been spoken about the gig economy and how it represents an important body of innovation in our economy, enabled by technological change. I agree, but innovation must not come at the cost of creating new forms of exploitation.

Gig or new economy workers acquire work through 'platforms' such as Uber, or AirTasker, among many others. While the platforms provide access to the work, they are not an employer and workers have none of the benefits or protections of employment. These workers are also not independent contractors, and do not have even the superficial rights found in the Commonwealth *Independent Contractors Act*. They are outside all forms of legal protection. As technological and social change continues, an increasing number of workers will find themselves in this position.

While these arrangements might work to the advantage of some workers, there are many others who can obtain only part-time or casual work in our economy, unable to get enough hours pay to meet their needs and the needs of their family. They are forced to seek work on the margins of our economy and to do so outside the protective frameworks provided by current laws.

While the legal rights of these workers is being tested in courts in Europe, Britain (Moyer-Lee, 2018) and the USA (Tippett, 2018), it is with mixed results, and there is much uncertainty. That is just not good enough. People who work in the gig economy should have minimum pay and safe workplaces, like other workers. We must create a legal framework for the setting and enforcement of minimum pay and conditions for all 'gig' workers.

While there is not the space here to give a full account of our policies and approach, I have endeavoured to give a short outline of what we will seek to achieve if we are elected to government in 2019, and to place this program in the context of our history. The second Labor Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, is

credited with describing our party's program as being to achieve for all working people "the fairest condition of life; the fullest opportunity to rise in life." This remains our objective more than a century later.

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Unpaid internships: experience or exploitation?

Tilly South

Tilly South is a PhD Candidate researching unpaid internships and was a founding member of intern advocacy group Interns Australia.

As a progressive party that has built its history on the protection of working people, Labor should carefully consider the implications of unpaid internships that exist to privilege the wealthy and socially well-connected.

In March 2018 *The Sydney Morning Herald* gave a grim account of what's become known as the 'intern economy' (Koziol 2018). Interns at company Future Squared were undertaking industry placements at a "student experience centre" at a location called the "Dream Factory" in Melbourne's suburbs. These interns had paid a private company around \$1000 to be placed with the company and were not remunerated for their time. In fact, the company had listed "communal lunches", "yoga" and "hot desking" as remuneration. The company hosts up to 60 interns each year. It's not an unusual story – with young Australians increasingly desperate to find paid employment, they'll participate in months or years of unpaid internship experiences to get ahead. Initial claims of skill development and mentoring are often no more than a promise.

The number of people participating in unpaid internships is significant. A third of Australia's working age population has completed at least one episode of unpaid work (of which internships is one kind) in the last five years, with this number increasing to 58% for young people (aged 18-29) (Oliver et al. 2016). It's guessed that around one third of these experiences are internships. The pressure on young Australians to be 'job ready' has undoubtedly left many students believing unpaid internships are their ticket to success.

However, this culture comes at a cost. Critics argue that internships are to blame for an increasing lack of diversity in 'the professions', which includes

professionals such as journalists, lawyers and arts administrators. A recent New York City survey of its public cultural institutions found that while 33% of its citizens are white, 61.8% of its cultural workforce is white (Schonfeld & Sweeney 2016). This is hardly representative of one of the most multicultural cities in the world and it would not be a surprise to find a similar dynamic in Sydney or Melbourne.

As a progressive party that has built its history on the protection of working people, Labor should carefully consider the implications of unpaid internships that exist to privilege the wealthy and socially well-connected. Those who can afford to undertake large periods of unpaid work are undoubtedly in a position of privilege – a position that allows them to climb the professional ladder. We should challenge these structural barriers that unquestionably make our society more unequal.

What's driving the internship phenomenon?

The changing nature of higher education

Labour market studies show that both the expansion of the middle class and policies that encourage a growing higher education market have vastly increased the number of graduates in the job market (Brown, Lauder & Ashton 2010; Tomlinson 2008). In Australia, a demand-driven system opened up access (the 'uncapping' of university places) to higher education. Over the last decade this saw a peak growth figure of 9.6% in 2012, which has since dropped to 1.5% in 2014-15 (Universities Australia 2016). Similar figures are being reported in the UK. With this growth comes congestion, or at least a perception of a bottleneck in the job market.

The expectation that job seekers are higher education graduates and that the numbers of these graduates is increasing, has led to a perception of 'credential inflation'. 'Credential inflation' is the devaluing of credentials, caused by a 'vast expansion in educational attainment that was not equalled by an upgrading of the labour market' (Van de Werfhorst & Andersen 2005, p. 322). This credential inflation has led employers and job seekers to devalue academic qualifications and to distinguish oneself in a crowded graduate labour market, students

market their value to the labour market in other ways such as by undertaking unpaid internships.

A neoliberal agenda and the entrepreneurial self

Gradually, we have seen a shift from workplaces that expected to absorb the cost of training staff, to employers that praise the 'entrepreneur' who seeks out their own training and development. Neoliberalism has infiltrated higher education and the entry level job market, urging individuals to compete for jobs and to market themselves and their independently developed skills. According to some researchers, this has created a culture of work intensification and the 'normalisation of exploitative working conditions' (Allen et al. 2013, p. 434).

The reality for many young job seekers is that employers now prefer to hire entry-level candidates that have some level of experience in the workplace, including internship experience. This has led employers to engage in a practice called 'experience discrimination', where students and recent graduates depend on these earlier experience building programs like internships in order to gain secure, paid employment.

Experience or exploitation?

When researchers and policy makers address the issue of internships, much of the research is focussed on outcomes: employment outcomes or satisfaction levels. Even the pay grades of former interns are used as markers of the success of unpaid internships. However, media reports and critical commentary (e.g. see Perlin 2012) tell a different story: exploitative unpaid internships where interns run personal errands, make coffee and perform menial tasks for little to no reward are rife.

So what motivates (primarily) young job seekers to undertake unpaid internships? Not much is known about the motivating factors for interns, aside from the overarching structural question of the pathways from higher education to the workforce. On an individual level interns can be motivated by a variety of factors, including:

- Looking for work at a specific company and using the internship as an entry to paid employment at that organisation
- Networking and mentoring with industry professionals
- Genuine skills development
- Career clarification – “is this what I see myself doing?”
- As a compulsory placement as a part of a degree or diploma

Limited empirical research takes a close look at the actual experiences of interns and it isn't a particularly pretty picture. Aside from obvious examples of outright exploitation, confusion and ambiguity is endemic. Poor quality control and disparate standards in the delivery of internship programs are problematic and without rigorous checks and balances, exploitation is a very real possibility. One study revealed students' wariness of exploitative business practices, with students citing horror stories of interns who had been 'overworked and not compensated fairly' Peretto Stratta (2004, p. 28).

When we examine the outcomes of internships, we're also seeing results that aren't at all equitable. The evidence suggests that internships are more accessible to those with a stock of economic and social capital than those without, and that 'access problems' entrench social inequality. Governments are realising that they need to address this 'access problem'. *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report on the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions* (UK) examined the impact on internships on labour markets (Milburn 2009). Specifically, the report suggested that unpaid internships further entrench social inequality and recommended recognising best practice, providing financial support for interns and establishing a more transparent system for internships. Across the Atlantic in New York City, the city took drastic steps to overhaul its image – a \$1M partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation and the City University of New York provides paid internship opportunities at famous cultural institutions like Carnegie Hall, MoMA and the Museum of Natural History in a bid to diversify the city's cultural workforce.

What has become clear is that *only those who can afford to work for free can gain access to professional working life*. Even still, those who do manage to undertake unpaid work may find the experience is not all it's cracked up to be.

This is unless governments intervene, and it is a problem Labor Governments must tackle head on.

A fairer future for interns in NSW

In order to ensure an equitable and fair future for young people, we need to consider a range of changes to unpaid internships. Practical changes at a Federal Government level could include requiring a minimum wage for people undertaking internships, restructuring course fees at universities for students doing unpaid work placements as compulsory or elective units of their degree, and tightening up the regulations around placements to give interns the same protections as apprentices or trainees.

While industrial relations might seem like the domain of Federal governments, there are a number of reforms a NSW State Government can explore to protect the rights of interns.

Ensuring better internships through TAFE

Many might associate TAFE with traditional trades that are backed by our robust apprenticeship framework, however there are many 'non-trade' fields of study that might lead students to undertake internships. Take, for example, the fashion industry, where TAFE's Fashion Design Studio has produced internationally recognised alumni and is one of NSW's leading schools in fashion design. The fashion industry, however, is also renowned for its unpaid work placements and NSW TAFE as a conduit for industry placements should be ensuring their students are adequately protected. NSW TAFE should be given a mandate to work closely with industry partners, ensuring that placements meet best practice. Students should also be guaranteed real learning and mentoring experiences and a minimum level of pay for any additional productive work.

Regulating and monitoring internship brokers

A state Labor Government should take a serious look at the role of internship brokers and the role they play in fuelling unpaid, exploitative work. Through the Department of Fair Trading, the Government should make sure that brokers are complying with the Australian Consumer Law, not charging unreasonable

fees to their clients and fulfilling the promises they are making to prospective interns.

Brokers do not fill any inherent need in a market and it is apparent that these brokers can unscrupulously extract large sums from desperate students. This is without necessarily needing to ensure the quality or education merit of the placement itself. It should be a NSW Labor Government's mandate and responsibility to protect interns against the bad behaviour of dodgy employment agencies that do not have the interns' best interests at heart.

Becoming best practice: our state government and internships

Our State Government should always strive to be a best practice employer, setting an example for businesses across the state. This should include offering and implementing paid internship programs, setting a standard for ethical internships and encouraging diversity in the NSW Public Service. This should include a review of social work, teaching and nursing unpaid placements as well as reviewing internships in other public service agencies and publicly funded cultural institutions.

A pool of funds should be established by the Government to fund internships in public institutions, with the aim of increasing the diversity of people employed in our state government departments, public cultural institutions and other public agencies.

The Australian Labor Party is the party that has fought for the rights of workers. A NSW Labor Government must not forget or neglect the limited rights and opportunities of those doing unpaid professional work.

Both our State and Federal Governments have an opportunity to make significant reform in this area by tightening the laws that leave young people open to exploitation in unstructured and unregulated unpaid internships, and by paving the way for best practice internships: paid internship programs that promote diversity and genuine learning outcomes.

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Labor's mission to save vocational education

Prue Car MP

Prue Car MP is Labor NSW's Shadow Minister for Skills and Member for Londonderry.

Traditionally, young people do one of three things when they leave school – take a gap year, enter the workforce, or enrol in university. But how many young people are considering vocational training – and TAFE more particularly – as an option in their post school years? Sadly, we know the answer to that question. Not enough.

We cannot escape the fact that this is having dire impacts on every level of our society – on critical sectors of our economy and on the futures of an entire generation of young workers. The word 'crisis' is thrown around too much in political commentary but almost everyone agrees that this is what this is. It's a crisis that requires rescue in the form of bold and reformist policy change from Federal and State Labor Governments. And quickly.

Much has been written about the significance of the skills shortage in this state. Qualified tradesmen and women are highly sought after and required to fill ever-widening gaps in the labour market. The NSW Business Chamber only recently reported that one in five Sydney businesses encountered difficulty attracting skilled staff, with the problem even worse in regional NSW.

We have a system and, many would argue, now a culture, that encourages young people to strive towards University study above all else. But do you want to live in a society where young people feel that they have to go to university in order to be a success in life? I certainly don't. And no one I speak to when I'm travelling the length and breadth of NSW does either. Put simply, we have an oversupply of university graduates and an undersupply of jobs; yet an undersupply of VET graduates with a chronic oversupply of relevant jobs.

Vocational education – and TAFE as the trusted public provider most especially – offers an almost guaranteed pathway to a successful career, and it has done so for generations and generations. For those who want to learn

a trade, or train in expanding industries, the truth is that TAFE should be the obvious selection.

University shouldn't automatically be the natural option for young people who want to continue learning when they finish school. But rebuilding trust in TAFE and vocational education requires a fundamental shift in thinking from Government.

We need to be encouraging skills pathways for young people and break the conventional thinking that university is the only post school option. Unfortunately, the Liberal National Government has put that thinking into practice by cutting TAFE to unprecedented levels and disassembling public vocational education. They just fundamentally do not believe in TAFE.

Labor believes in TAFE and if given the chance, our Government will be one that invests in it.

Our state is suffering as a result. The numbers are stark and sobering. Internal documents leaked to Labor from within TAFE reveal that since 2011, the number of students has plummeted by an incredible 175,000. Literally hundreds of thousands of students that are not in classrooms or in apprenticeships. A shame on this State.

Of course it comes as no surprise that we've seen the loss of a staggering 5,700 teachers and support staff in this time. World-class professionals who should be training our young people in the skills of the future, and workers helping students with special needs and disabilities get through their courses.

Student course fees have soared to astronomical levels – often pricing students out of a TAFE qualification. This has often happened while face-to-face hours have diminished, so students are paying more for less time, all because TAFE teachers are being forced to deliver courses with less and less financial support from the Government.

TAFE colleges have closed or are under threat. In their place, the Government has opened glorified shopfronts they market as 'Connected Learning Centres'

– places where students are expected to learn hands-on skills without stepping foot in a classroom. Can you learn to be a carpenter on the internet? Smell bread through a computer? It's that dire. It simply defies logic to anyone except Gladys Berejiklian.

And of course, on top of all that tragedy, Governments around the country continue to insist on propping up private training providers that are simply not worthy of taxpayer's money. This disaster itself has taken up many pages of newspaper coverage across the nation and rightly so. At a Federal level, the VET-FEE-HELP loans scandal cost Australian taxpayers in excess of \$3 billion and necessitated the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to pursue several colleges for the return of hundreds of millions of dollars in lost money.

Recent documents uncovered by NSW Labor through the Government Information (Public Access) Act lay the real impact of this agenda out for all to see. They show that 17,000 NSW students have been directly impacted by failed service providers funded by the State Government. The documents show that 51 of these publicly funded training providers have been terminated or suspended since October 2016, and the reasons are shocking; including being deregistered by Australia's skills quality regulator (ASQA), using unqualified teachers and instructors, subcontracting, using incorrect training tools and assessments, and insolvency.

The range of courses targeted include Hospitality, Business and Early Childhood. All areas of significant shortage in the economy. The truth is that the competitive funding model in vocational education and training has failed a generation. And it will be one of the most devastating legacies left behind by the Liberals and Nationals.

NSW Labor believes we can do better for this State, so we offer a different approach. There are fewer priorities that will be more important for Labor in Government than the rescuing of accessible and affordable public vocational education. Labor believes in TAFE and if given the chance, our Government will be one that invests in it. TAFE must be brought back to the once world class institution that we know it has the capacity to be. Young people need a

Government that recognises TAFE as a credible and trusted pathway which can lead to a successful job.

NSW Labor's bold plan to guarantee at least 70% of VET funding for TAFE will return public money to our trusted public education provider. The current Government's funding model – ironically labelled Smart and Skilled – has been nothing short of an abject failure, and has resulted in less and less money available for our once thriving TAFE Colleges. Guaranteed funding will give the public provider the financial certainty it is so desperately crying out for.

On top of this, we will actively pursue policy outcomes to boost apprenticeship numbers in NSW – we must do so if our young people are to consider a trade instead of university. For generations, working people in NSW have followed the trusted path into decent work through an apprenticeship. For years and years, they have provided our young people with the opportunity to build prosperous working lives. But Australia now has 130,000 fewer apprentices and trainees than it did in 2013. In NSW alone, this decline has now reached 63,000 since the Liberals came to office in 2011.

A Labor Government will ensure that 15 percent of work on NSW Government construction projects valued over \$500,000 must be allocated for apprentices, trainees, Indigenous Australians and the long term unemployed. This policy to boost apprentices will encourage young people into skills based employment so that they can get the jobs they need for the future, creating up to 9,000 jobs just in the first term of a Labor Government.

The truth is that Labor will always believe that public education is a Government's highest priority. At its heart, it is always about equity and fairness. It's about the opportunity for a young person to have access to training to better their lives, without regard for their postcode. It's about the chance for a worker made redundant by a changing economy to reskill to work in an evolving labour market. And it's about everyone's right to be able to access the life-changing power of education, regardless of the income of their parents.

Many accomplished Australians have graduated from our wonderful TAFE colleges. Former Prime Minister Paul Keating was one. In a speech to the Skilling

Australia Forum in 2003, he referred to the vocational education sector as the “Oft forgotten tier.” He puts the case for a Labor commitment to this sector as only he can do:

Education is the centrepiece of any modern economy. It is how we keep the culture of our productivity alive and well; it is the key to personal mobility and one of the important ways we promote individual self-regard and esteem...

It is up to those in leadership to keep the pressure on for an education and training system which, at least, will give these young people the tools, the skills, the attitudes and the confidence to carry on and to thrive. For their own sakes, and for all our sakes.

What could be more Labor than that.

The party of the environment

Felicity Wade

Felicity Wade is National Co-convenor of Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN).

The environmental imperative of the 21st century means that we will render ourselves an anachronism if we fail to hold, celebrate and own our environmental legacy, updating it to make it central to our vision of a civilised, decent society where shared prosperity and environmental health are equally important.

NSW Labor at its best is the party of the environment.

NSW Labor has always been an environmental leader. As Luke Foley often recounts, Bill McKell went for a trip through the high country on a horse, saw the impacts of grazing and created the Kosciuszko National Park. It was Neville Wran who protected the rainforests of northern NSW and famously, when asked on his retirement what was his greatest achievement, said "Saving the rainforests".

Bob Carr was a worthy successor. He led the party to successive wins at the ballot box and made environmental protection central to his pitch to voters. 151 new National Parks and Reserves were created under his leadership as well as the world's first emissions trading scheme.

The last decade of environmental politics has seen an interesting division emerge between climate change and traditional environmental issues. It is clear that voters care about both, but the scale and scope of the climate challenge has dwarfed the traditional concern for rivers, forests and wildlife.

We must hold both to be true to our mission as the party who stands for equality and believes that government must ensure the market does not have free reign over people's lives or the environment. The environmental imperative

of the 21st century means that we will render ourselves an anachronism if we fail to hold, celebrate and own our environmental legacy, updating it to make it central to our vision of a civilised, decent society where shared prosperity and environmental health are equally important.

NSW – take on climate change leadership

While there tends to be quite a lot of boosterism around our side of politics on renewable energy, the hard facts are quite sobering. Particularly as I sit here in late March sweating through a 37 degree day, listening to news of the south coast town, Tathra burning to the ground.

The Federal Government's *Australian Energy Update 2016* reports that 86.3% of Australia's electricity generation continues to be powered by fossil fuels, mainly coal and gas¹. Renewables delivered 13.7% of the country's electricity in 2014-15, with 5.3% being legacy hydro power. Only 2.4% of Australia's energy is delivered by solar (Office of the Chief Economist, 2016). NSW's energy mix echoes the national one closely.

Our electricity sector is transitioning too slowly. The task has hardly begun.

Our Labor colleagues across the other state jurisdictions have adopted strong targets to address this. Victoria has committed to 40% renewables by 2025, Queensland to 50% by 2030. South Australian Labor, before the March loss, had committed to 75% by 2025.

NSW sits there as a big black hole in the renewables transformation. There is a huge opportunity to leverage our geographic centrality to the National Energy Market (NEM). What's more, we have fantastic renewable energy resources and we are the finance capital of the nation.

¹ 62.9% coal, 20.8% gas and 2.7% oil.

NSW is the largest economy in the country. We generate 33% of GDP – well ahead of the next biggest state, Victoria at 22% (NSW Department of Industry, 2018). A third of Australia's population live in NSW. We are the nation's centre of innovation, we are home to the finance and investment sector, Sydney is the country's only truly global city.

We need to lead.

Our other competitive advantages on renewable energy include our place smack bang in the centre of the National Energy Market which links electricity supply across the eastern states – Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Even the new Liberal Government in South Australia has committed \$200 million for an interconnector to NSW, wanting to suck energy out of NSW. Currently we have very little to offer. Exporting energy should be an opportunity because our energy consumption does not match our size. NSW, including ACT, consumes only 24.9% of the national energy consumption total. Victoria and Queensland almost match us.

While Rob Stokes bleated rhetorical flourishes about making NSW the California of Australia, NSW Labor should make it so. California is the world's sixth largest economy, it is currently generating up to 80% of its daily needs from renewables. It has harnessed the smarts of its innovators, provided incentives, announced itself open for business and is building industries, jobs and cheap energy to drive other economic opportunities in the process. And while California is an inspiring example, Texas actually produces more renewable energy. The politics of California has politicians framing their efforts as action to stop climate change, while Texas is pursuing renewable energy with equal aggression, framing it solely as a huge economic opportunity, a way to make Texas rich as fossil fuels falter.

The small jurisdictions of South Australia and ACT have done great work in testing some models – it's time for us to super charge them. And if necessary, take a global role in leading the debate.

NSW Labor needs to adopt realistic targets. 50% renewable energy by 2030 should be the very least we commit to. Considering the fact our electricity

consumption does not reflect our economic might, perhaps the target should be more like 70% by 2030. Once we have committed to targets we should legislate them.

Climate Change Act

NSW should create a Climate Change Act that emulates the UK's *Climate Change Act 2008*. The Act is powerful. I have never read an Australian piece of legislation that is so clear, so straight forward. It is a lesson in good drafting, if nothing else!

The UK Climate Change Act begins:

'It is the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 80% lower than the 1990 baseline' (Climate Change Act 2008 (UK), no.27).

The policy commitment is legislated and the relevant Minister given the task to deliver it. Hard targets and pathways to getting there – including five-year carbon budgets – are the key tools. But the real strength comes from the independent Committee On Climate Change.

In 2017, Victorian Labor enacted its own Climate Change Act, seeking to emulate the UK Act. While it is positive that Victoria has put its commitments to climate action in legislation, it lacks the backbone of a seriously empowered independent authority whose advice must be considered by the Minister and who can take action when milestones are missed.

It can be argued that such architecture relies on bi-partisan commitment. The NSW Coalition is less antithetical to renewable energy than any other in the country, this is a political imperative of our urbane, progressive state. We should attempt to build bipartisan support for an act that carries us safely and prosperously through the 21st century.

In the interests of the public

The failures of electricity privatisation are becoming ever more stark as we try to retool the system in response to climate change. Massive price increases

and poor planning are the fruits of making profit the key driver in delivery of this essential public service.

Having fought so hard against privatisation of our electricity infrastructure, NSW Labor is now failing to adequately consider the future implications of allowing the private sector to own and drive the future electricity system. It is unclear to me why we are providing incentives to private operators to build and own large scale solar and wind farms.

Electricity infrastructure, unlike so many other forms of infrastructure demanding our attention, pays. It returns dividends that build hospitals and schools. There is no doubt however, that the terms of state owned corporations must be rewritten so that public good, not just profit are central to their mission. This will be a key driver in controlling spiralling prices. The re-alignment of Labor's relationship to the great privatisation madness of the 80s and 90s must be addressed fundamentally.

We need to reimagine and describe to the electorate the role of the state in the post "neo-liberal" period. We need to do better than just knocking off the hard edges of our earlier evangelical zeal for privatisation and marketisation of everything. Electorates across the western democracies are rejecting the model.

The role of the state in a clean, new energy system seems like an obvious place to start on rebuilding the public interest into the delivery of key public services. With the cost of borrowing so low, there has never been a better time for serious public investment.

LEAN is proud of having won a commitment at the last NSW Labor Conference for the creation of a new state-owned corporation, 'NSW Renewable Energy Futures'. *NSW Renewable Energy Futures* will be funded by the sale of NSW's share of the Snowy Hydro to the federal government and green bonds with the task to 'build, invest, own, and operate large-scale renewable energy and storage technologies, whilst modernising the grid'.

The motion says the corporation 'will maximise the speed and efficiency of the energy transition, reduce prices for consumers, maximise job opportunities in

the future economy for regional NSW, and deliver dividends for the people of NSW in a shared and decentralised energy future'. This is a good start.

Regional development opportunities – Renewable Energy Zones

One of the impacts of the privatised electricity sector, where investment decisions are driven by profit maximisation rather than the functioning of the system as a whole, are the problems we are experiencing with ensuring supply and delivering an efficient transition.

Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has recognised that the ad hoc approach to retooling the electricity system is not working. AEMO is working on an “Integrated System Plan” which will be released in June 2018. It is looking at two things – the creation of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) which are regions that have the best renewable resource (wind and sun) and make most sense in terms of efficiency of the transmission system and the transmission upgrades necessary to support them. The aim is to optimise efficiency and affordability across the National Energy Market.

At time of writing only a consultation plan to support the development of this plan is available, but it provides some pretty clear indicators of places where we might want to concentrate renewable energy development and the transmission infrastructure to support it.

Transgrid are already working on the idea of a Renewable Energy Hub for New England. The sun is good up there and numerous market players have identified the potential, with numerous projects in the pipeline.

The other likely hotspot is the west of NSW where both wind and sun abound and proximity to Victoria and South Australia could make it a central hub for the entire National Energy Market.

These are opportunities for huge investment that NSW Labor should make its own.

Just transitions

It is hard to imagine how the transition happens in a timely and fair manner without a more interventionalist government than has been the fashion over the last couple of decades.

Within NSW borders is the Hunter. The Hunter is home to our biggest coal fired power stations and the world's largest export coal mining industry. Regardless of our actions, the mining industry will begin to feel the effects of the down-turn in global demand for fossil fuels.

The path to the energy transition is pretty much inevitable now. The relative cost of coal fired power stations compared to renewables demands it, but we must provide proper adjustment to the communities affected. This is a moral imperative for the Labor Party. It is also a political imperative as the shift to clean energy must not create a schism in the centre of our society. It must be an opportunity for all.

NSW Labor must join with the Federal ALP in adopting the key principles of the ACTU's Just Transition policy. NSW Labor should commit to pooled redundancies where coal fired generators close. When the first coal fired generator closes, it and surrounding generators offer voluntary redundancies. Many who are close to retirement take the offer, allowing the remaining workforce from the closed plant to be re-employed in neighbouring plants. AGL and CFMEU are working on this model for the closure of Liddell in 2022.

As we come to the end of this process, when the alternative generators are too far away, ideally workers are offered guaranteed work. We all know there are many, many years and jobs in cleaning up the mine sites that have been abandoned – this is earth moving, building and planting. Government needs to be active in building these industries and the business models that will deliver not only jobs but essential environmental services to the community as a whole.

Natural environment

As an old style nature conservationist at heart, I cannot end this piece without the pitch for the natural environment. It is my observation that the energy transformation with its need for big chunky infrastructure is in many ways more natural, comfy territory for us and our Laborist tradition. And yet the health of the natural environment matters for everything Laborism is trying to deliver – clean air and water as well as liveable cities and functioning natural systems are essential to building a fair society where a good quality of life is shared by all.

The demand to sequester carbon in vegetation will build economic opportunities into the need to halt land clearing and revegetating our agricultural lands. The Great Koala Park on the state's mid north coast is a wonderful plan hatched in the mind of our leader, Luke Foley. It should be a trumpeted, proud legacy of the next NSW Labor Government.

Beyond this we must work with Federal Labor to ensure we rebuild our legal and institutional approach to environmental protection that radically reverses the current devastating losses. Currently Australia has land clearing rates that rival Brazil and Indonesia and is one of seven countries responsible for half the world's biodiversity loss. This needs to end and NSW Labor must commit itself to the task.

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Why imagination matters: A creative policy vision for the arts in NSW

Labor for the Arts

Labor for the Arts; a group of Labor supporters who are committed to ensuring that Labor is the leading party for the arts in Australia.

We have the knowledge, the passion and the history to become the leading State, and the leading party, for the arts in Australia – we just have to harness it.

Introduction

Right now, the world feels like it is in political and civil turmoil. People are reaching out for meaning and not finding it in social media or the news. The arts are a crucial antidote and a way of mirroring our world back to us, so that we might change for the better.

NSW Labor has the opportunity now to provide a stable and consistent approach to the arts in this State. We have the knowledge, the passion and the history to become the leading State, and the leading party, for the arts in Australia – we just have to harness it.

As part of a creative vision for NSW, *Labor for the Arts* (L4TA) believes that both the intrinsic and instrumental value of the arts should be recognised, and that NSW Labor should focus on and celebrate strategic initiatives that increase arts access. This includes for those audiences and arts practitioners from culturally diverse communities, those from lower socio-economic communities, people aged 65 and over, people living with disability, and residents of regional NSW and Western Sydney. NSW Labor must enable this access by developing policies for providing space for the arts to flourish and for artists to collaborate. There is no better way to build a sustainable and vibrant arts ecology.

L4TA also believes that NSW Labor must realign its vision for the arts with an understanding of the current economic context. NSW Labor must change the current funding structure under which the major performing arts companies, an elite few, receive guaranteed funding. NSW Labor must address the inequity in the arts sector with a new arts funding policy vision for the future of the State's arts legacy. The arts in NSW does not have to be only about what is “good” or “bad” art, which is what the current funding structure encourages. It can be about the future and about the past, to create a fair and just society through the arts.

Further, we must be clear: arts workers and artists matter. Any policy developed and implemented by a Labor government in NSW must be one with a plan for increasing the economic wellbeing of those working in the arts sector and for the economic wellbeing of the State of NSW. With this approach underpinning the policy goals of NSW Labor, the incredible output by the sector can be enjoyed by all; through cultural tourism to sustainable career paths. This goal of fair and sustainable workplace conditions for artists and those in the sector, surely, is aligned with the ALP's social democracy ideals.

Policy vision for NSW arts

To be a party that leads with creativity, Labor needs a vision for the arts in New South Wales. That vision should encompass **imagination, excellence** and **equality**. L4TA believes that these policy goals can be achieved with the bravery and commitment of the party's leaders in NSW. We outline our policy ideas below.

Imagination

The ALP has the opportunity to support and lead the future of the arts. Labor's history is inextricably linked with the boldest outcomes in the arts – from Paul Keating's Creative Nation to Gough Whitlam's arts legacy and to our most recent cultural policies. That cultural legacy is under threat from funding cuts and the failure of the current Federal government to implement a real and actionable arts policy. NSW Labor can take this imagination gap and transport NSW to a place that is creative, innovative and sustainable.

Any NSW Labor policy for the arts which harnesses imagination must therefore be aware of the future of the arts: how technology plays into arts practice, the way the arts can be incorporated into education curriculums (STEAM instead of STEM) and how all industries and sectors can embrace unconventional artforms through new media. In support of this, a NSW arts policy should include artforms such as gaming and games development as part of its media and screen initiatives, as well as consider how current law and policy interacts with technology. This will ensure the State not only leads the way in innovation, but sparks a new conversation with the voting public about the place of creativity in our lives.

Summary: the arts in NSW will be strengthened by an imaginative vision that embraces new technologies and ideas with bold commitment to its future sustainability.

Excellence

There are incredible arts companies in Australia and a large proportion in New South Wales. Many of these companies, growing and established, attract domestic and international tourism. Cultural tourism is a major economic boost for the State and the value of the arts sector must be recognised in this context. NSW Labor can ensure a creative vision for the State if it encompasses the following components of “excellence in the arts”:

- A strategic plan focusing on an imaginative policy vision;
- Stable long-term funding for large and small to medium arts organisations across artforms – not just the major performing arts companies; and
- Clearly articulated and culturally diverse arts initiatives for developing the arts sector to ensure its economic wellbeing, and the economic wellbeing of the State of NSW.

It is also essential to recognise that “excellence” does not mean established or mainstream. Much of the arts ecology depends upon the development of skills and resources through emerging and start up arts organisations or individuals. This should be recognised in an arts policy for NSW through educational and other initiatives. The cuts to TAFE and the harm caused by the Federal

government's reference to arts courses as a "lifestyle choice" must be reversed. NSW Labor can be the party which leads with creativity and restores the arts ecology.

Summary: excellence in the arts means stability of funding and a recognition of all levels of the arts ecology in NSW to ensure economic wellbeing for the State and the arts sector.

Equality

Did you know that arts workers are some of the lowest paid in Australia? Numerous statistics and studies have been carried out to demonstrate the exploitation of the labour of artists and those working in the arts. Labor's fundamental purpose should be to imagine and deliver a future where we value our artists and the arts sector in New South Wales.

Did you know that arts prizes and education is taxed for artists, but athletes' education and winnings are not? Are not our ballet dancers athletes as well as artists? Is it not a marathon to become a visual artist established enough to represent Australia in the Venice Biennale? Or is it not a similar risk for an artist to take residency opportunities, away from family and a wage, to allow an artist to create as for a sportsperson to commit to their sport at an early age?

It is incumbent upon NSW Labor and its membership to consider the arts important enough to make it a touchstone of its policy platform. NSW Labor and its membership should think of the number of times they have read a book this year, or the number of times they have visited free art gallery exhibits at our excellent institutions. Perhaps a visit to Sculpture by the Sea with family was a fun day out, and maybe a concert was enjoyed. These are all artforms. These artforms matter. The arts sector is not just for consumption. It is a livelihood, and it should be celebrated and exalted, not reduced or punished by poor funding and lack of vision. NSW Labor has the opportunity to bring NSW to the forefront and lead the way for making NSW the cultural hub of Australia.

Summary: NSW can lead the way as a cultural hub for Australia by prioritising the arts and ensuring fairness and respect in remuneration for artists and arts workers.

Space for the arts

The arts sector prides itself on collaborative relationships and its intertwined networks across artforms. One of the complexities of the arts infrastructure offering, particularly in Sydney and metropolitan areas is the space available for artists to collaborate. The cost of space in Sydney is prohibitive to many individuals and organisations. This will result in a fractured arts ecology with isolated arts practitioners and organisations, rather than a strong and emboldened one.

The recent excellent decision by the Foley Labor Opposition relating to the Powerhouse Museum, and the strategy to pursue the poor planning and lack of transparency still being promoted by the NSW Government, is an example of the issue of space for the arts. This does not need to be a conversation about the arts in the inner city versus arts in Western Sydney. Both are equally valid and valuable to the arts ecology. This should instead be a public policy focus on ensuring and securing arts spaces for our creators in NSW.

Summary: arts infrastructure should be supported strongly through key economic and budgetary measures by a NSW Labor government.

Changing the arts funding game

It is egregious that the NSW Government continues to support the major performing arts funding framework arrangement. This anachronism of a funding structure has been in place since the inception of public arts funding in Australia and NSW – it is no longer relevant. It does not make sense economically for NSW Labor to support a policy which quarantines funding for a specific subset of elite arts companies. To continue to do so demonstrates a lack of imagination.

The current funding arrangements for the arts in Australia and more particularly in NSW were exposed for the inequality at its centre when deep funding cuts were announced in the unfair 2014-15 Federal budget. Part of that inequality links to the current NSW policy of support for funding of the major performing arts framework.

The funding that has been ring-fenced for the major performing arts framework has detrimentally impacted other artforms – visual arts, literature, media arts, gaming – by failing to recognise that secure funding leads to excellence. Not always. The arts sector is adept at navigating funding cuts and political vicissitudes. But it could better focus that energy on generating creative and artistic work. A well-funded artist run emerging art gallery could use funding to find and reveal our next great artist. A small literary publication could generate the content of our major media outlets if it could afford more writers and administrative support. And our smaller to medium performing arts organisations could produce even more incredible work for new and diverse audiences if it had more than a fraction of the funding available to the few.

It flies in the face of all that Labor stands for if the current arts funding arrangements continue for the major performing arts companies. It's time to revisit the NSW commitment to this framework, and to consider evolving to a new and equal framework which includes funding across the arts ecology. This is linked to the goal of excellence in the arts and should be interrogated robustly. It can start with NSW Labor and we can take this vision for a fairer and better arts funding infrastructure to create a lasting arts legacy for the state.

Summary: an arts policy for NSW should reassess the balance of funding in the arts and ensure it values the contribution of emerging and smaller arts organisations. This will ensure the support and long-term viability of career paths in the arts, and recognition of myriad layers that create a vibrant cultural economy.

Summary of policy vision

Imagination must be at the heart of a vision for NSW as the leading State for the arts. Coupled with the intertwining goals of excellence and equality, Labor and the arts can lead the way towards a creative future. In the context of a changing workplace structure, and with emerging technologies disrupting traditional skills, the arts are a crucial touchstone of a visionary government. People will increasingly need to draw upon their creativity to contribute to the workforce, and NSW Labor can be right there with them to provide a vibrant, sustainable arts policy that supports its workers.

NSW Labor should answer scepticism about the arts – from those who would bemoan its funding or support in contrast to other worthy Labor policy areas – with the confident knowledge that the arts sector plays a major role in benefiting the State. This is not only through funding or cultural tourism, which is important, but also through the legacy created by envisioning a creative arts policy.

To answer this piece's provocation: the arts matters because without it, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, what are we fighting for?



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