



Street posters in support of David Feeney



Campaigning with Fiona Phillips, 2019



On the phones into Robertson 2019



Tasmania to check out World Heritage forests delivered by Gillard government



LEAN SUBMISSION TO THE FEDERAL ELECTION REVIEW 2019

The Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN) has written two submissions to this review. The first summarises feedback from our members. As it notes, LEAN believes passionately in the importance of helping the membership be heard. It was notable the appreciation our members expressed in relation to our efforts to hear their views both verbally -in post-election meetings – and in writing. We honour their views in a summary submission.

However, this submission is from the National Executive of the Labor Environment Action Network. We have been purposefully slow in engaging in the post mortem election debate as we have felt the need to carefully analyse and better understand the result before jumping to conclusions. LEAN has not made any public comments on the election results, instead we have been through a process of consultation with our members and analysis . These are our initial comments.

This submission seeks to address two key issues: the policy washup from the “climate change election” and the continuing challenges of building a party that is diverse, strong and democratic.

Our starting point in formulating comments on the latter was a rereading of the 2010 Bracks, Faulkner, Carr National Review and reflecting on both its formal recommendations and intent. As a party unit building genuine communities of activists, we believe we have important insights on the issues of party integrity, democracy and growth.

The submission is broken into three sections:

1. The “climate change election” – policy implications of the election
2. Building a bigger, more engaged political movement
3. Full list of recommendations

ABOUT LEAN

LEAN now operates across every state and territory. We are organised, like the party, around state branches. Each state branch has different capabilities and cultures, as is reflected in the party as a whole.

State LEAN branches work independently with varying formal relationships to their state party (eg LEAN is an established Labor Action Committee in NSW and Queensland). We also have a growing network of local LEAN groups that operate like local branches. Currently LEAN operates in Townsville, Darling Downs, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, North Coast NSW, Newcastle, Inner West Sydney, and a nascent group on the NSW South Coast.

Trained LEAN activists visit local ALP branches to brief them on environment policies. LEAN probably has a larger direct reach into local branches than any other party unit. LEAN engaged with 500 party branches and other units before the 2018 National Conference.

LEAN also has a national executive that coordinates national initiatives such as national policy campaigns (50/50 climate campaign and environmental law reform campaign) and Federal relationships with the parliamentary party, union leadership and party organisation.

LEAN has all the challenges of a completely voluntary organisation but none the less, it is a remarkable expression of the Labor party membership's commitment to and enthusiasm for genuine and meaningful collective action toward building a strong Labor party both in terms of winning elections and building policy depth.

Since the election, LEAN state branches report record numbers of people wanting to get active, either joining the party to be part of LEAN or joining LEAN from existing party membership. Our post-election meetings have been some of our largest ever. Record numbers of LEAN members have shown up to the NSW, Victorian and Tasmanian LEAN AGMS.

It is no surprise that one of the most vibrant parts of the party exists around one of the great policy challenges of the 21st century.

1. THE "CLIMATE CHANGE ELECTION" – POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE ELECTION

LEAN believes the environmental crisis facing Australia and the globe is a very particular policy concern for the party. Unlike in the 1980s, where protecting the environment – while never easy - was a discreet and geographically bounded task focused on our physical natural assets like our forests and wetlands. We are now faced with the need to re-orient our entire economy to both avoid and manage a changing climate. At the same time, the indicators for the health of the natural world, regardless of climate change, have crashed and the impacts of consumption and economic growth are now starting to threaten irretrievable changes to our way of life.

To be true to our mission as a party that believes in redistribution and providing a good life for all by providing shared assets and a decent society in which all can thrive, environment cannot be a 'take it or leave it' aspect of our party's mission. As we are fast approaching the point where the natural world's ability to sustain life and lifestyles will be compromised, a workers' party of the 21st century must put this problem in the centre of its mission.

That said however, this recent election provided stark lessons about the challenge of the perceived jobs v environment trade off. This is particularly relevant for Australia, whose prosperity is so grounded in our resource industry.

The last fifteen years of climate politics in Australia has been brutal. It has delivered the demise of leaders on both sides of politics. Climate and environment are both essential and wickedly difficult policy challenges that Labor cannot ignore and must address in a sophisticated manner.

Recommendation 1

The party must spend considerable resources resolving the policy and political issues surrounding climate change and the environment. They are unique in the level of threat they pose to the fundamentals of our economy and society.

GLOBAL POLITICAL TRENDS – CLIMATE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

LEAN believes that we must reconsider not only the communication of our climate change policies but their content as well.

In the anglo-sphere, western democracies are experiencing a backlash from traditional blue collar communities, especially in the regions. This is putting the social democratic project under pressure and potentially threatening its extinction. Trump and Brexit are, at least in part, manifestations of the frustration of those who perceive themselves to be losers of the globalised, deregulated, neo-liberal

economy. The right has worked effectively to lump climate change in the basket of things that fire up this fear and sense of nostalgia – insecure work, globalisation, increasing power of the cities.

Our climate solutions so far have been read by many working people as threats not opportunities. Working people, Labor's natural constituency, have a sense of dread and danger about the fruits of 30 years of neo-liberal focused reform undertaken by both political parties in Australia. Globalisation and privatisation and deregulation move to remove "inefficiencies". These "inefficiencies" have often turn out to be the meaningful work and safe life experiences of working people.

While many, indeed most, believe climate change is real and action needs to be undertaken, they are fearful of the impacts of climate action policies in terms of cost and economic security (ie job losses).

While we have walked away from the policy purity of a carbon price across the economy, our policies are still in the technocratic and market mechanism sphere. They are supported by treasury officials, corporations and the political class. It is hardly surprising many of the Australian people are suspect. It seems some concur with Tony Abbott that we are peddling "a made up market in invisible gases being sold to no one".

The experience of how easily Tony Abbott dismantled the carbon price in 2013 but struggled to similarly destroy the renewable energy target is a simple illustration of this point. Targets and mechanisms are read as games played by financiers and elites, which may or may not help the climate but will probably negatively impact ordinary people's lives. On the other hand Australians have proven themselves fans of real things, like solar panels with 2 million of our households having acted on this, making us the world leader in domestic solar uptake. We are also the third largest domestic battery market, despite our small population.

LEAN believes the question of where to for Labor on climate policy is a microcosm of Labor's broader questions on its identity and purpose. What does an appropriate mixed economy look like from here - one with full employment and a stable, affordable low carbon economy? And how does Labor convince the Australian people it can achieve these economic outcomes? What market orthodoxies of recent decades need to be questioned to create an economy that works for all and can safely steer the energy transition?

The Green New Deal conversation internationally is one response to this set of questions. Its exact meaning is fluid. For the Australian Labor party it touches on questions of the ability of a privatised electricity system to deliver reliable, cheap and clean energy to power our economy. And challenges us to consider a climate change policy that speaks to real things in real places and uses the language of infrastructure and industry policy rather than market efficiencies. Thinkers like Mariana Mazzucato and Jeremy Rivkin, who are not promoting revolution but rather want to recast the role of the state to better direct and correct markets have insights Labor must consider. This is our challenge for the next years.

It is important to note, that while LEAN believes Labor must reconsider the content of its climate action policy, we stand by the framing policies we campaigned for – at least 50% renewable energy by 2030 and adoption of the Climate Change Authority's recommendation for economy wide emission reductions (45-60% by 2030 on 2005 levels). We note that while this is currently 45% by 2030 (on 2005), the Authority is reviewing these targets and LEAN believes Labor should adjust its emission reduction target based on that advice.

Recommendation 2

The party should reconsider both its specific climate change policies and the communication of those policies, while continuing to support the Climate Change Authority's recommendations for economy wide emission reductions.

FOSSIL FUELS

Clearly the anti-Adani campaign was a major issue for the Labor party this election.

The science demands that the globe rapidly transitions away from reliance on fossil fuels. While LEAN supports the demand side international agreement, we recognise that the argument that additional action from wealthy supplier countries like ours, is compelling.

LEAN struggled to assist the party constructively in the context of the anti-Adani campaign. The campaign was resistant to working with allies to build political solutions that could work. It was deaf to the dangers of allowing the "culture war" aspect of their campaign to escalate. For many years now, environment campaigns have become equal and opposite participants in the divisive culture wars, allowing themselves to become tribal symbols, often seemingly pitting educated urbanites against impacted communities. It is our observation that when environmental campaigns allow this to be the case, they always lose and often impact Labor negatively in the process. On the other hand, such campaigns work to enhance the Greens vote at the expense of resolution of the problem.

The Adani dynamic in this year's election had many parallels to the dynamics of the forest campaign in the 2004 election. There is a pattern. The repeated nature of the problem, matched by the relatively naive and unsophisticated nature of much of the environment movement's leadership, suggest Labor should at least try and have the conversation about the implications of these tactics on the advancement of environmental politics in Australia. Environment politics is fundamentally stalled and it is the Labor party and the environment sector that both lose out (let alone the natural world).

Labor must consider its relationship to the environment sector. It needs at one level to take the sector more seriously by fully recognising its reach and potential to impact elections and expect more of the sector. It is unclear why environmental leaders allowed Bob Brown to destroy their credibility with a convoy to central Queensland. Crocodile tears are not enough, environment groups of standing in the community should be accountable for silence on such self-serving stunts.

The environment is a consistent loser in current Australian politics. The lack of sophistication in Labor's relations with the environment sector ideally would be addressed by both parties.

Tactics aside, LEAN does not believe it is feasible for Labor to ignore the issue of exporting large quantities of fossil fuels and increasing the production and extraction of fossil fuels. The concern is not going away and as climate impacts hit harder so will calls for Australia to lead in shifting the globe away from fossil fuel dependence. Our on-ground contact with voters and our LEAN members tell us that young Australians are most concerned climate change including coal and gas exports. Adani galvanised many young Australian on the issue.

We do not have any clever policy solution and recognise the huge challenges this problem presents economically, socially and electorally. We just mark it as an important and potentially continually corrosive issue which Labor must find a way to constructively address.

LEAN notes the Labor announcement on April 23 of \$1.5 billion to support a gas pipeline from Northern Territory to Queensland was particularly damaging. It was policy making on the run. The media release's claim that, "Opening up the Beetaloo alone could provide enough gas to supply the domestic market for up to 400 years", made a mockery of Labor's claim to understand and care about climate change. It was read as such by concerned voters. For LEAN such policy surprises undermined many of our members' faith in the value of their efforts within the party.

The fact that the announcement was made on the day when most candidates and campaigns had to finalise their how-to-vote preferences did not help. Many local campaigns reported that the Greens backed away from preference deals with the ALP as a result of the pipeline decision.

Recommendation 3

The party cannot ignore and must address the issue of expanding fossil fuel export industries.

Recommendation 4

The party should consider more robust negotiations on issues of tactics with the environment sector toward mutual benefit and better environmental outcomes in Australia.

Recommendation 5

The party should avoid knee-jerk policies that send mixed messages like the Northern Territory to Queensland gas pipeline.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

LEAN has been actively campaigning for an overhaul of the federal environment laws and the institutions that support them. The scale of the crashing of environment indicators supports the logic that we must look to a better systemic approach to limiting extinctions, improving water system health, managing drought, halting of deforestation. Site by site solutions are both politically costly and cannot deal with the scale of the challenge.

LEAN stands by its call, endorsed by the National Conference in 2018, for Labor to commit to rewriting the federal environment laws, shifting to simpler, clearer, outcomes-focused development approvals and more rational frameworks for investment and policy prioritisation. LEAN also continues to back the creation of a Federal EPA and Environment Commission to build strong, expert capacity into a policy area that has often descended into interest group management.

LEAN believes more work needs to be done over this term of government to flesh out key design issues of a new environmental governance regime, in preparation for effective implementation. This is both in terms of policy detail and stakeholder consultation. This should include consideration of inclusion of a Federal Environment Commission.

LEAN believes this policy could be given more prominence in the next campaign. It confirms Labor is serious on environmental issues and provides a stark contrast to our opponents.

Recommendation 6

The party should maintain its policy of overhauling our Federal Environment laws and the creation of an independent EPA. More work should be done to further develop the framework in preparation for implementation, including consideration of a Federal Environment Commission.

2. BUILDING A BIGGER, MORE ENGAGED POLITICAL MOVEMENT

The 2010 Labor Party Review conducted by Bracks, Carr and Faulkner focused on the need to rebuild and reinvigorate the party. It stated:

The Review Committee believes developing a modern and meaningful role for members within a democratic party is the fundamental challenge facing the modern Labor Party. (4.14, p12)

In building pathways to deliver meaningful pathways of engagement the review identified *the three areas most important in this regard:*

1. *participating in values-based campaigns*
2. *having a say on policy*
3. *helping to select Labor's local candidates. (8.4, p 22)*

LEAN believes we are one of the best examples within the party of attempts to build a “modern and meaningful role for members”, particularly those who do not wish to commit to a career in the party, but simply want to be part of making Australia a better place. In particular LEAN provides pathways on points 1 and 2 above.

In reading the 2010 Review it is striking that a good number of the recommendations have been delivered. It is also striking the limits of such reforms as many have floundered without the commensurate cultural change to give them life.

Conversely, it is notable that the recommendations that aimed to give some formal role and recognition to groups such as ours (particularly Recommendation 29) were ignored, and yet LEAN with energy and intent has still managed to assert significant influence and delivered significant changes to policy.

LEAN is gratified by the level of support and legitimacy the party affords it. We believe this is grounded in both our organising efforts (it was hard for the party to ignore LEAN, even with zero votes on the floor of Conference when we had nearly 400 local branches behind us) AND our proven ability to be sophisticated players both in terms of the policy prescriptions we propose and our conduct within the party and publicly.

This is not to say however that we do not believe it is a huge threat to the party that organisations such as ours thrive and exert power outside the party's systems with no way to reward or acknowledge the efforts of LEAN activists.

In a factional system, with promotion ever increasingly reliant on loyalty and patronage, this has impacts not only on our ability to deliver good candidates but also our capacity to expect people to commit time and energy to activity that focuses on good policy and meaningful activism.

Fundamentally LEAN confirms that many people care more about good policy than advancement in the party – but this is a weakness the party needs to address to avoid every shrinking numbers and a sense of illegitimacy and discouragement for those who work so hard within organisations such as LEAN.

It is important to note LEAN members are very diverse demographically. LEAN has members across every age group with about equal numbers of young people and retirees. LEAN is also geographically diverse and not just based in the inner city. The 500 local branches that supported our most recent campaign included Caboolture and Cessnock, Warrnambool and Westmead, Geraldton and Glenorchy. Accordingly LEAN is not a single issue or single group organisation.

Treating LEAN like a legitimate player in the party

LEAN has two specific recommendations regarding our ability to thrive and be better participants in the party's processes.

Firstly, That the party actively let new and existing members know of our, and other action groups, existence. We are often met with surprise at our existence even from those active in the party and bewilderment that no one told them they could be part of such a group. Labor should actively promote our existence to its membership. This serves to build LEAN and to reduce member drop off.

Secondly, that the party consider adoption of Recommendation 29 of the Bracks, Carr, Faulkner review. LEAN asserts itself informally in most of these processes, but it would be better for all if this had some level of formality around it. Recommendation 29 reads:

That the Party's National Principles of Organisation be amended to allow the affiliation of like-minded organisations, in addition to industrial unions. Furthermore, that campaign groups such as the Labor Environment Action Network and Rainbow Labor be granted ex-officio delegate rights at state and territory conferences and policy committees, once they are able to demonstrate and verify membership of a sufficient size.

The final thing LEAN would note in reference to the 2010 Review's discussion of building a broader, more connected party was that there was a number of recommendations proposing better links with progressive movements including potentially building infrastructure to support issues based campaigning. LEAN would love to be part of further discussions about what this might mean as we often reflect on our own role in this and the considerable potential this has to broaden our reach.

Finally, a note on culture and the power of a little bit of creativity in this sphere. John Graham, when he was the Assistant General Secretary of the NSW party actively encouraged the re-formation of LEAN. He identified potential leadership and mounted a recruitment campaign to have them step up. He used his position in the party to locate past activists and tracked down the defunct LEAN data base, he reached out to past and potential interested party members across the states.

In particular John encouraged both current National Conveners to get involved – this included convincing a new party member with many years experience in civil society to step up as well as a deeply embedded senior member of the NSW right. It proved a good combination in building an effective organisation. John's pro-active approach stepped well outside the party's usual way of doing its business.

Furthermore John also ran a number of workshops with Labor people who had involvement in movements outside the party. Groups such as Rainbow Labor spoke about their pathway to influencing the party, educating those of us who were new to it and making links to civil society.

Recommendation 7

The party needs to find mechanisms to involve organisations like LEAN in the party's policy and organisational structures including promoting its existence to the membership and giving formal access to party processes. The party must also consider the implications of committed volunteer service in organisations such as LEAN having no internal rewards within the party.

Recommendation 8

The party should revisit the recommendations of the Bracks, Carr, Faulkner review in relation to building links to external movements and increasing its own mechanisms for issue based organising and campaigning.

Conference Processes

Finally LEAN would like to make some comments on its experience, as a rank and file organisation, of trying to constructively engage with National Conference.

LEAN brings positions to the National Conference that have been debated and discussed across the ALP membership. LEAN membership attend branch meetings across the nation, present the policy proposal and its justification, encourage discussion and debate and then propose the sub branch pass a motion in support of the policy. FECs and FEAs often do the same.

In 2015 LEAN's proposal for Labor to adopt a renewable energy target of 50% by 2030 and emissions reduction targets that reflected the advice of the Climate Change Authority (45% by 2030) were backed by 370 local branches and other party entities.

In 2018, LEAN's proposal for Labor to commit to new federal environment laws and an independent EPA to perform both a regulatory and policy function was endorsed by 500 local branches and other party entities.

In 2015, Mark Butler and the leader, Bill Shorten engaged with us very constructively and agreement with key unions was reached on our core proposal before the Conference. It was dropped to the media during the week before, announced in Bill's opening speech and supported unanimously on the floor.

In 2018, the pathway was less collaborative. Even though the final policy outcomes were positive, the contested pathway showed up the weaknesses in the Conference processes and their overt undermining of members based initiatives such as ours.

LEAN does not align factionally. It is both cross-factional and non-factional. As we are powered primarily by rank and file, most of our people do not engage with factions and none bring their factional issues to LEAN.

The Conference however allows no real participation for such entities. Even though many LEAN members also have other party roles and the LEAN leadership have direct relationships across the parliamentary party and unions which allow the deals to be done outside the factional frameworks, we still struggled because of the difficulties of navigating the logistics of the Conference. This information was held and communicated only through the factions' leadership.

Our recommendation is that a mechanism be found to allow organisations like LEAN to formally participate in the National Conference. At the last National Conference neither LEAN convener was a delegate to the Conference (although one co-convenor did get appointed a proxy delegate). We delivered 500 party units backing our proposal but could not address the conference about it.

Recommendation 9

The processes and logistics at National Conference need to be transparent and accessible for groups like LEAN who have broad party backing, but are outside factions. (NB This proposal relates to process, not power relations).

Recommendation 10

The party needs a mechanism to allow LEAN representation at National Conference.

Simplification of Platform

LEAN would strongly support the simplification of the National Platform. The level of detail in the platform is not able to be managed in the Conference context. LEAN found that on issues beyond our major campaign agendas, smaller issues and negotiations delivered bizarre outcomes.

At the 2018 National Conference LEAN experienced platform amendments being made part of bigger, un-related power plays in ways that delivered both silly and destructive outcomes. On the silly front, a motion stating that Labor, in principle, opposed the flooding of World Heritage Areas was rejected on the basis of such a position being a pre-empting of the EPBC processes. (Aren't we the party that stopped the Franklin Dam?) And on the negative, a motion regarding burning native forests for power was amended to the point of implying Labor support for this position, which continued to cause problems with environmental stakeholders right up to the election. The motion

was not the result of any serious policy intent but rather the exercise of superior power in unrelated horse-trading. Labor should not create spot fires for itself on the basis of bad process.

LEAN supports the comment below, recorded in the 2010 Review and believes the Platform should be made significantly shorter and more properly negotiated statement of policy intent and direction.

“The Platform has to mean something. It doesn’t have to dictate the minor detail of the policy but it does have to provide a framework for decision making by a Labor government.” — National official (p19)

Recommendation 11

The National Platform should be simplified and shortened and the process allow for more considered decisions.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The party must spend considerable resources resolving the policy and political issues surrounding climate change and the environment. They are unique in the level of threat they pose to the fundamentals of our economy and society.
2. The party should reconsider both its specific climate change policies and the communication of those policies, while continuing to support the Climate Change Authority’s recommendations for economy wide emission reductions.
3. The party cannot ignore and must address the issue of expanding fossil fuel export industries.
4. The party should consider more robust negotiations on issues of tactics with the environment sector toward mutual benefit and better environmental outcomes in Australia.
5. The party should avoid knee-jerk policies that send mixed messages like the Northern Territory to Queensland gas pipeline.
6. The party should maintain its policy of overhauling our Federal Environment laws and the creation of an independent EPA. More work should be done to further develop the framework in preparation for implementation including consideration of a Federal Environment Commission.
7. The party needs to find mechanisms to involve organisations like LEAN in the party’s policy and organisational structures including promoting its existence to the membership and giving formal access to party processes. The party must also consider the implications of committed volunteer service in organisations such as LEAN having no internal reward within the party.
8. The party should revisit the recommendations of the Bracks, Carr, Faulkner review in relation to building links to external movements as well as increasing its own mechanisms for issue based organising and campaigning.
9. The processes and logistics at National Conference need to be transparent and accessible for groups like LEAN who have broad party backing, but are outside factions. (NB This proposal relates to process, not power relations).
10. The party needs a mechanism to allow LEAN representation at National Conference.
11. The National Platform should be simplified and shortened and the process allow for more considered decisions.

David Tierney and Felicity Wade

LEAN National Co-conveners

August 9, 2019



On Magnetic Island...



Queensland LEAN, for a just transition