

COUNTRY LABOR DIALOGUE

CONNECTING COUNTRY COMMUNITIES – JUNE 2015

Liberal-National Budget a 'cruel hoax' for regions

In the Federal Budget this year, Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey have again delivered nothing for regional NSW other than re-announcements of failed policies and sneaky cuts for rural families.

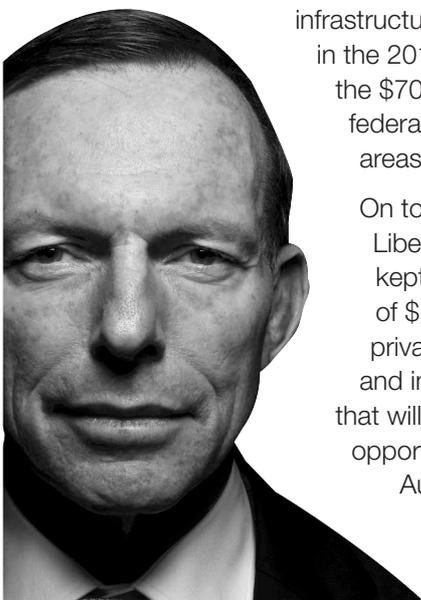
Their centrepiece is a drought loans policy that is a proven failure for helping country communities. Hidden in the fine print is \$2 billion in cuts to health and aged care that will hit rural NSW hardest.

In his budget speech, Hockey re-announced \$250 million to continue concessional drought loans. This is money the Liberals and Nationals have so far failed to spend because most farmers either can't access the loans or consider them unhelpful. Joel Fitzgibbon has called the policy a 'cruel hoax', and has estimated that only \$30 million of the previous \$270 million concessional loan package ever actually went to farmers.

While the government announced this budget as a stimulus package, independent analysis shows it is just last year's painful budget repackaged for the opinion polls. A family with a single income of \$65,000 and two children will be \$6,164 a year worse off by 2018-19. This will hurt hundreds of thousands of people living in regional areas and sometimes struggling to get by.

Even their announcement of funding for regional infrastructure amounts to little more than a mean trick. The \$35 million for local infrastructure projects they announced in the 2015 budget is dwarfed by the \$70 million taken out of federal assistance for country areas by the 2014 budget.

On top of all that, the Liberals and the Nationals kept to their core policies of \$100,000 degrees, privatised hospitals, and inaccessible benefits that will shut the door on opportunities for regional Australians.



Jay Suvaal writes...

This past month, I've been travelling NSW, meeting with as many members as



possible. It's fantastic to hear all the great stories from the state campaign and I look forward to working with everyone as we transition into the federal and local government campaigns.

To win the next elections we need strong regional policy so I encourage Branches, SECs, and FECs to start sending in their policy ideas for the next state conference.

We are also starting to organise Campaign Insight Regional One Day Training Seminars so please let me know if your FEC would like to host one.

Please contact me on jay@nswlabor.org.au or **1800 503 035** if there is anything I can help you with.

Jay Suvaal
ACTING COUNTRY ORGANISER

Coming Events

▶ **ALP NATIONAL CONFERENCE**
– Melbourne
Convention Centre
24-26 JULY 2015

▶ **CAMPAIGN INSIGHT REGIONAL ONE DAY TRAINING SEMINARS**
JULY-SEPTEMBER 2015

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

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

▶ **NSW LABOR STATE CONFERENCE**
– Sydney Town Hall
3-5 OCTOBER 2015

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

McKell report highlights impact of penalty rate cuts to regions

If the Liberals and Nationals cut Penalty Rates, it may have devastating and disproportionate consequences for rural communities, according to an economic analysis released by the McKell Institute.

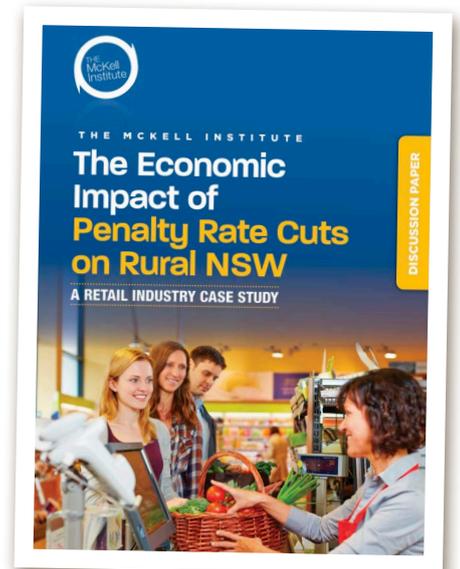
Workers in the retail industry would lose between \$89 million and \$315 million a year – equivalent to a 4.6% to 16.5% pay cut. More worrying for the towns themselves is the \$26 million to \$111 million that would be lost in disposable income across rural NSW.

The practice of paying workers extra for inconvenient or unsociable hours is almost as old as Federation, dating to a 1909 court decision. But elements of the business lobby, led by the Australian Retailers Association, are trying to change this tradition, saying ‘we should not be talking about unsociable hours any longer.’ Now Coalition MPs like Warren Entsch, Wyatt Roy and Dennis Jensen are calling for a review of penalty rates.

The McKell Institute report shows that rural Australia has a larger retail workforce, a lower median pay, and a high percentage of businesses owned by large metropolitan-based corporations.

With these assumptions, the McKell Institute’s analysis revealed that the \$5,300 pay gap between metropolitan and rural NSW would only grow wider if penalty rates were partially or totally removed.

The McKell Report can be downloaded at http://mckellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/pdf/McKell_Penalty_Rates_WEB.pdf



Estimated Economic Impact of Penalty Rate Cut – Full Abolition, High Estimate

ELECTORATE	ESTIMATED DISPOSABLE INCOME LOST BY WORKERS	AVERAGE % LOST INCOME	ESTIMATED LOSS TO LOCAL ECONOMY
Calare	\$22.6 million p.a.	16.3%	\$8.5 million p.a.
Cowper	\$22.8 million p.a.	16.9%	\$8.1 million p.a.
Eden-Monaro	\$23.1 million p.a.	16.0%	\$7.8 million p.a.
Farrer	\$22.2 million p.a.	16.4%	\$8.3 million p.a.
Gilmore	\$21.4 million p.a.	16.4%	\$8.1 million p.a.
Hume	\$22.5 million p.a.	15.3%	\$8.4 million p.a.
Hunter	\$21.5 million p.a.	16.9%	\$8.9 million p.a.
Lyne	\$21.5 million p.a.	16.7%	\$7.1 million p.a.
New England	\$23.7 million p.a.	16.7%	\$9.3 million p.a.
Page	\$23.4 million p.a.	17.3%	\$7.2 million p.a.
Parkes	\$22.4 million p.a.	15.8%	\$8.2 million p.a.
Paterson	\$20.5 million p.a.	16.9%	\$5.4 million p.a.
Richmond	\$22.6 million p.a.	16.6%	\$6.5 million p.a.
Riverina	\$24.8 million p.a.	16.6%	\$9.4 million p.a.
Rural NSW	\$315.1 million p.a.	16.5%	\$111.2 million p.a.

Barnaby bungles infrastructure for desperate farmers

On 25 May, *The Australian* caught Barnaby Joyce selling drought-affected farmers short. Joyce refused a request by Queensland's agriculture minister Bill Byrne for infrastructure money that would keep crops and livestock alive.

Joyce's excuse? The government's failure to properly fund NSW's water infrastructure grant scheme meant there was no money left to help struggling Queensland farmers.

In a letter to Bill Byrne, Joyce said his own government's delivery agency had 'failed' to give adequate notice to Queensland's government that

federal water infrastructure assistance funds were about to dry up.

Bill Byrne had written seeking extra funding for Queensland's program. This allows farmers to claim a rebate on building emergency water infrastructure, such as pipes, water tanks, water troughs and bores, to supply water for animal welfare.

Under the scheme, farmers can claim a rebate of up to 50% of the infrastructure cost, up to \$20,000 a property, each year.

More than 80% of Queensland is drought-declared, the state's most widespread drought on record.

Labor Leader tours flood-affected Hunter

NSW Opposition Leader Luke Foley toured flood-affected areas around Maitland and Cessnock in the NSW Hunter Valley in the aftermath of devastating storms in late April.

During the storms, more than 100,000 homes and businesses across the region were without power and dozens of communities, including Gillieston Heights, were inundated or isolated due to floodwaters.

Luke Foley thanked the hundreds of SES and RFS volunteers for their efforts during and after the storms and noted the resilience of the Hunter's people and communities.

Member for Maitland, Jenny Aitchison, joined Luke in calling for a rigorous review, to ensure the Hunter region is adequately prepared for any future natural emergencies.

“*Member for Cessnock Clayton Barr said,* The storm hit us hard but with the help of emergency services and volunteers, communities across our region got back on their feet.”



Luke Foley, Jenny Aitchison and Clayton Barr at Testers Hollow where floodwaters covered the road for a number of days.

Invitation to inaugural Country Labor National Forum

In order to win the next election, we will need to build support for Labor across Australia. That means we will need to build our support outside the capital cities too. Labor has a rich tradition in rural, regional, provincial and remote Australia.

The Nationals and Liberals take people living in rural and regional Australia for granted. The Abbott Government has made life harder for those in country areas by increasing the petrol tax, making it more expensive to go to the doctor and \$100,000 degrees.

Now is the time for Labor to offer a better alternative, and we will. To do so, we will need your thoughts, ideas and participation.

Please join Labor Leader Bill Shorten, myself and many other Labor members in Casino in the NSW Northern Rivers on 26 September to be part of the Inaugural Country Labor National Forum.

To express interest in attending, please email Sandra.Crowe@aph.gov.au before 26 June.

We know not everyone will be able to make it, but that doesn't mean you don't have plenty of ideas about what needs to change for people living in rural and regional Australia. If you can't make it in person email your thoughts to Sandra.Crowe@aph.gov.au so we can collate them into a report to be circulated at the Forum in September.

Hoping to see you there,

Joel Fitzgibbon MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR
AGRICULTURE & RURAL AFFAIRS



Campaign Insight Regional Training Days

Campaign Insight is NSW Labor's world-leading training program for running a modern and effective political campaign. It teaches the skills and techniques involved in winning seats for the Labor Party.

If you'd like to register your interest in holding a one-day Campaign Insight Training Day for your FEC please complete the form below.

Name: FEC:

Email or mobile phone:

When would you like to hold your Training Day?

Please scan and send to Jay Suvaal on jay@nswlabor.org.au

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

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