



ALP NATIONAL PLATFORM UPDATE

Last week the Australian Labor Party held its national conference to determine its policy platform for the next Federal election.

While the platform is much smaller than the one the party took to the 2019 election, it does include a number of important commitments for workers in the rail, tram and bus industries.

The RTBU was able to secure a number of important amendments to the Platform in the lead-up to the Conference. We also secured a major win for our national Keep Freight on Aussie Trains campaign, with Labor committing to a number of measures which will protect Australian freight jobs from being undercut by foreign shippers. Labor also backed the RTBU's Protect COVID-Vulnerable Workers campaign, agreeing to introduce a JobKeeper-style scheme for vulnerable workers who need to self-isolate during localised outbreaks.

Highlights from the ALP National Policy Platform:

Rail Infrastructure

Labor will plan for future high speed rail links as a means of transforming interstate travel and regional development along Australia's east coast corridor. Labor will also continue to invest in faster and improved rail across the nation. Labor also recognises that interstate and regional rail networks have suffered from decades of under-investment. Urgent action is required to ensure our major rail corridors can operate efficiently, reliably and safely. Labor will work with state governments to address rail infrastructure needs and provide a level playing field for transport operators. In Government, Labor will ensure more trains are built in Australia by local workers and ensure every dollar of federal funding spent on rail projects boosts local jobs and industry.

Rail Safety

Labor recognises that strong prescriptive safety regulations are the foundation stone of a safe and reliable rail industry and is committed to harmonisation of rail safety regulations to ensure best-practice standards and practices are applied consistently across all jurisdictions.

Public Transport

Labor recognises that modern Australian intra-city and inter-city public transport networks are made up of trips using buses, trains, ferries, on demand transport, and active travel. Labor will work with state governments to increase use of all public transport and active travel modes.

Rail Freight

Labor understands the importance of a strong and healthy rail freight sector to regional economies. A Labor Government will conduct a comprehensive review of the rail freight sector to ensure rail continues to play an important role in the movement of freight across Australia.

Labour Hire

Labor will protect labour hire workers by establishing a national labour hire licensing scheme to regulate the labour hire industry and ensure that minimum legal standards are met. Labor will also legislate to guarantee that labour hire workers receive the same pay and conditions as directly employed workers doing the same work. Labor will not accept the abuse of fixed term contracts of employment.

Wage Theft

Labor will increase penalties for employers and related entities that systematically underpay and exploit workers and pursue the prosecution of serious contraventions of the Fair Work Act by employers.

Highlights from the Conference Resolutions:

Role of public transport in Australia's economic recovery from the pandemic.

This Conference acknowledges the dedication of Australian public transport workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic showed, public transport workers play a vital frontline role in the provision of services that are essential to our society and our economy. Safe, reliable and efficient public transport services with secure jobs will be crucial to bringing our cities back to full speed, and to facilitating Australia's economic recovery.

The pandemic has led to dramatic reductions in public transport patronage across the board. At the same time, some State Governments - notably the South Australian and NSW Governments - are continuing with job-destroying public transport privatisation programs.

This Conference:

- Recognises the role of public transport services and public transport workers in the economic life of our major cities;
- Asserts that maintaining effective urban public transport networks is in the national interest;
- Condemns the public transport privatisation agendas of the NSW and South Australian Governments;
- Supports a more active role of the Federal Government in funding public transport infrastructure;
- Contends that Federal funding for urban public transport infrastructure funding should be contingent on State guarantees that service provision related to that infrastructure will not be outsourced, franchised, contracted out or otherwise privatized; and

- Supports a public transport industry which provides secure jobs for Australian workers as a pivotal plank for Australia's economic recovery.
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COVID-Vulnerable Workers

This Conference notes that despite the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to be a threat to the health and welfare of Australians for some time to come.

It is likely that Australia will continue experiencing small localised outbreaks of COVID-19 until the pandemic has passed. While many working Australians can choose to work from home, others in frontline service occupations do not have that option. For workers with pre-existing health conditions, this may mean they have to risk their health (or even their lives) to maintain an income.

To that end, this Conference notes the Rail, Tram and Bus Union's Protect COVID-Vulnerable Workers Campaign www.covidvulnerableworkers.com.au.

Conference supports a Federally-funded scheme to ensure vulnerable workers without access to paid sick leave receive a payment to allow them to stay at home and self-isolate during a localised outbreak of COVID-19.

You can find all the details of the Special Platform Conference, including the full platform and all the resolutions, at <https://www.alp.org.au/conference2021>