

CHALLENGE - THE MAGAZINE OF THE LEFT OF THE LABOR PARTY



WHAT'S NEXT?

REBUILDING AFTER COVID

NSW CONFERENCE EDITION | OCTOBER 2021

We acknowledge that this magazine was produced on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

The Left acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to culture, language, land, waters and community.

This is stolen land.

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THE MOUNTAIN NSW LABOR HAS TO CLIMB

By the time 2023 comes around, the New South Wales Coalition Government will be the longest serving centre-right government in the state since the Second World War. The class divides laid bare by COVID-19 have demonstrated the need to elect a NSW Labor Government after a decade of increasing inequality, but there is a real risk the NSW Coalition Government could scrape through and govern for another term in minority.

Despite the Coalition Government's botched handling of the current COVID-19 outbreak, anger over the treatment of Western and Southwest Sydney and integrity questions that have resulted in the resignation of a Premier, we haven't seen a clear mood for a change in government yet. The space for state oppositions to cut through has been squeezed for the past 20 months with the public's mental bandwidth and attention span pushed to its limits. NSW Labor is also hamstrung by a range of factors, though not all of its own creation. Blame cannot be laid solely on a single individual or grouping.

After a lost decade, the legacy of the last NSW Labor Government still hangs over of the party in the public's mind. The NSW Coalition Government's investment in infrastructure (albeit privatised) is a stark contrast to the last Labor state government and are visible reminders of its history. It is compounded by internal party problems.

Our party has atrophied over decades, but a long period of incumbency at a state level covered it up. NSW Labor has lagged compared to other state branches in small donation fundraising and digital campaigning capacity, and has failed to cultivate a party culture where organising principles are rewarded. Members and supporters are treated as irritants rather than a base that will grow and contribute to campaigns if respected.



OSMOND CHIU

Osmond Chiu is the editor of Challenge Magazine and a Research Fellow at the Per Capita thinktank

The differential treatment of much of multicultural Western and Southwest Sydney through the current COVID outbreak has been blatant, yet NSW Labor is increasingly disconnected from those very same communities we seek to represent. Much has been made about the professionalisation of politics, but our candidates at all levels do not reflect the cultural diversity of our increasingly multicultural state.

Part of the solution is genuine party reform that ends the machine culture and encourages real internal contestability through direct elections. It is needed to reforge the party's culture, and to bookend a period that should have ended in 2011. A de-factionalised Sussex Street where staff are hired based on their suitability for a role rather than their factional allegiance is necessary, but it alone will not be enough.

The NSW Liberals and Nationals have used their incumbency to hobble Labor's ability to campaign. Premier Barry O'Farrell cut resources to opposition MPs, while Parliamentary Budget Office processes in New South Wales are frequently used to score political points. The lack of resources is worsened by a media environment that pays far more attention to federal politics than the daily ongoings of state politics.

We must also confront the reality that the NSW Liberals have positioned themselves as a big-tent brokerage party that seeks to squeeze out Labor and dominate what they see as "the centre". They have sought to neutralise electorally salient issues. From their cross-partisan action on renewable energy, to allowing movements on social reforms like decriminalising abortion and dismantling aspects of the lockout. We need to confront the reality that this NSW Coalition Government may be addicted to privatisation but they are not controlled by a right-wing cabal of social conservatives and climate deniers, even if Dom Perrottet is the new Premier.

All this has combined with COVID-19 to create an uncertain electoral environment in New South Wales. Within the Sydney metropolitan region, the public mood is turning because of the Coalition's handling of COVID-19 Delta outbreak and its treatment of Western and Southwest Sydney compared to the rest of the city. Labor leader Chris Minns' positive approach of constructive criticism, mirroring Anthony Albanese's approach, has slowly begun to shift perceptions of NSW Labor. That alone, however, may not deliver a majority unless more regional gains are also made.

There is an attraction to being small-target, safe pair of hands, waiting for the NSW Coalition Government to implode and for public resentment to boil but unfortunately, as we learnt federally in 2019 - division, questions of integrity or constant leadership changes are not always enough.

The question that NSW Labor needs to ask itself is: why should a marginal seat voter switch to Labor? What positive vision can we offer that the Coalition credibly cannot match and will cut through in the current environment? There are no easy answers but it must be one of hope, that we can build back better after the devastation of this pandemic and that our collective sacrifices were not for a worse future. The resignation of Gladys Berejiklian as Premier and the shift to a gradual re-opening gives NSW Labor an opportunity to be heard.

By understanding and prosecuting the answers to these two questions, we will have a pathway to victory that does not rely on the NSW Coalition Government collapsing and Labor crossing the finish line like Steven Bradbury, but instead having a mandate to build back a better and fairer New South Wales for all.

A HUNGER *To win*



GEORGE SIMON

George Simon is the NSW Labor Assistant Secretary

I feel privileged to have been re-endorsed as the NSW Labor Assistant General Secretary. I continue in that position at a moment of big political change and opportunity for our party.

The bruising defeats of 2019 have done something to the Labor psyche. I hear it from members and affiliated unions I talk to all around the state. There is an urgency to their calls. They are sick of losing and they are hungry to win. They want us to spend less time focussing on ourselves and more time getting ready to battle our political opponents. They desperately want us to win to defend and lift the living conditions of the millions of people who need Labor Governments.

The last two years have been difficult for Labor members and supporters. Not only because of the election defeats but also because they have had to watch the Party Head Office yet again be engulfed in scandal. This conference will be the first time that the NSW Right will have to answer for that organisational failure of 2019.

The reason that this party plunged to one of its lowest depths in 2019 was because those in control placed factional interest over party interest. Rather than holding leadership to account and asking tough questions, they would show up at conference and carry on about Fortress NSW. It turns out we weren't a fortress at all. We were a house of cards. In 2019, that house of cards crumbled.

The events of recent weeks have upended the last decade of Liberal and National dominance in NSW. In the week we are about to emerge out of lockdown, the Liberals and Nationals have been entirely focussed on themselves. At a federal level, Scott Morrison

is trying to deflect blame from the fact that millions of people in Western Sydney have been plunged into economic and social ruin by a lockdown that could have been avoided. This pandemic has exposed the cruel and callous ideology of our political opponents. We can seize this moment to take power.

But the politics of incumbency is still strong in pandemic politics. If we want to seize this moment, we need the organisational leadership to have a winning mentality and have a plan to make that happen. It requires focus and a ruthlessness to make tough decisions. Most importantly, it requires us to set aside narrow self-interest or crude factional interest to prioritise winning.

There are still some people in our party who have missed the lesson from 2019. They still seek to disrupt and agitate for the sake of personal or factional interest. They do that to the detriment of our collective interest.

This conference will be like no other. An entirely online conference mere months from a federal election will never be able to replicate the spectacle of a packed a Town Hall on a Saturday morning in June.

In that context, we might be less concerned about what happens at this conference and rather consider how we can use it to achieve our ambitions for the next conference. If we can keep up the pressure on the organisational leadership to prioritise party interest over factional interest we are in a strong position to win. Next year on a Saturday in June we could be sitting in a packed Town Hall, maskless and not socially distanced, being addressed by Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. That's the prize on offer if we're hungry enough for it.

LABOR MUST HOLD ITS NERVE

on climate

There's a particular energy around the movement when we feel an election around the corner. Often, it feels like we've heard the crack of the starting gun to focus our minds sharply to the task of winning.

This conference has that kind of buzz about it. Even though we're virtual, and much of the substance and theatre has been cast aside, it feels as though we are genuinely united on the importance of building the policies, candidates and campaigns that will win.

In the left, there is a steely resolve to do more than just win, but to build a platform and campaign that will deliver a generous mandate for sweeping social and economic progress.

For those of us who have been around the movement for a few of these cycles, we know that even the best crafted positions or plans can be dismantled when there is a perceived need for compromise as we get closer to polling day.

We need to be honest on what is non-negotiable amongst our movement throughout the federal election campaign. As a blue-collar unionist, the right to strike and fair bargaining laws are always front of mind. There's also the important issue of secure jobs and a healthy work/life balance – jobs we can rely on. I could write about the importance of public education and health, why we must oppose privatisation in all its forms and an approach to international trade that lifts us up, not races to the bottom.

But right now we need to think bigger about the significant challenge we face and the legacy we will leave after this election cycle is over.

Labor must hold the line on climate.

The Labour Movement should be proud of the work we've done together to make climate action and job creation central to both upcoming elections.

By organising our constituencies outside of the election cycle, we have made significant strides in shifting Labor as the logical choice if you want job creation and climate action.

We have slowly but surely evaporated the fiction of a climate culture war, and have found ways for both environmental activism and an Aussie made jobs plan to co-habitate within our party.

Labor can now talk on behalf of both groups loudly, and most importantly, proudly.

It would be a strategic misstep, and a betrayal of our base to get gun-shy about our position at the 11th hour.

It's pretty clear now exactly what our working-class blue collar base expect of us, and we know what progressive thinking environmentalists expect of us too.

The rank and file, and the broader labour movement have rolled up their sleeves and done the hard work on this.

Energy is building for change and action.

It's now over to the Parliamentary wing to hold the line.

We can have climate action and job creation.



STEVE MURPHY

Steve Murphy is the National Secretary of the AMWU.

WOMEN AND

the recovery

A year ago, we were in the middle of a recession. We were trying desperately to suppress the virus, by locking down our biggest cities. We were dealing with danger of serious illness and death and the catastrophe of unemployment and business collapse. Labor was urging the Government to adopt policies that would help us out of the mess, as quickly and as fairly as possible.

But instead of building back better, the disastrous failure of our vaccine rollout and hotel quarantine has plunged half the country into lockdown again – and has made a second recession highly likely.

This pain is being felt right across the community, but particularly in the lockdown states and particularly by workers in insecure employment. It's being felt by workers who have lost their job or kept their jobs but are losing shifts. It's being felt by overworked and stressed healthcare staff and other essential workers. It's being felt by business owners whose doors are shut again. It's being felt by kids who can't go to school with their friends.

And it's being particularly felt by women. Women have been more likely to lose work in these lockdowns, particularly in affected sectors like retail, hospitality and tertiary education. Women are more likely to have lost their job than men, and more likely to have lost hours at work. They've drawn down a higher percentage of their super balances to survive. And they've been more likely to take on extra domestic responsibilities, as whole families are working and learning from home, while childcare centres have closed and family supports have been pushed out of reach.

The economist Andrew Charlton calls this a 'triple whammy': women have lost more paid work, been burdened with more unpaid work, while receiving less income support from government.

This lack of support is a choice being made by Scott Morrison and Josh Frydenberg. They can find \$13 billion in JobKeeper for companies whose profits have increased during the pandemic, but nothing for universities where 58% of employees are women and where a shocking 35,000 jobs have been lost. There's an immense gulf between the economic pain being experienced by women, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, and the help being offered to them.

This has been made much worse by how the latest package of disaster payments has been designed. In Greater Sydney, 19% of men have received the payment, while only 12% of women have. That's despite the fact that, according to the most recent employment data, women workers accounted for 80% of the job losses. It's not a competition – but it's not fair either.



TANYA PLIBERSEK

Tanya Plibersek is the Member for Sydney and the federal Shadow Minister for Women

Scott Morrison will not solve any of these problems. It's not even clear that he knows they're problems in the first place.

Likewise, with the recovery, the bulk of infrastructure stimulus spending will support jobs in blue collar industries, while caring jobs in aged care, disability, health and education continue to be underfunded. In fact, according to research by the Australia Institute, every million dollars spent stimulating the building industry creates 0.2 jobs – while a million dollars in education creates more than ten jobs. In healthcare, the same money creates almost eight.

The Liberals' failure to properly support women during the pandemic, nor consider their need in building back, shouldn't be a surprise. A party that marginalises its own female members, fighting yesterday's war against quotas and greater representation, isn't likely to legislate in women's interests. Whether it's job security for low paid and insecure workers, or women's safety from sexual harassment at work, or affordable childcare, or women's dignity in retirement – at best, these issues have been ignored. At worst, they've been actively undermined.

After the past eighteen months we've been through, this is no way to honour the immense sacrifice Australians have made to fight the pandemic. Women have been – and still are – on the frontline of virus suppression, as nurses and doctors and cleaners and checkout workers. They've picked up the slack at home. They've watched their grandchildren grow up on video chat. They deserve better.

Labor has a plan to honour this hard work – and to offer something better on the other side. That's why Labor activists have fought

to achieve 50/50 representation in our parliaments. Not to help female politicians, but to produce the kinds of policies that will improve women's lives.

We have a plan to bring down the crippling cost of childcare, which has become unaffordable for millions of families – and which too often stops a second earner in a family from taking on extra hours of work. We have a plan to build 10,000 new social houses, including at least 4,000 for women and children escaping violence. We also have a plan to guarantee 10 days domestic violence leave – so no one has to choose between their safety and their job. And we would never make women escaping domestic violence drain their superannuation before getting help from the government as Scott Morrison tried to do.

We have a plan to give women greater workplace security and a decent pay rise again, by increasing the ability of Fair Work Australia to order pay increases in low paid, female dominated industries – and by defining casual work properly in the Fair Work Act. We'll also make companies report their gender pay gaps, so they can't get away with short-changing their women workers. And we're committed to building Working Women's Centres in every state and territory, to provide free and confidential advice about workplace issues.

We have a plan to keep women safe at work, by implementing all 55 recommendations from the Respect @ Work report – not just the six which are easiest.

If we're going to reverse the backsliding on gender equity that's happened under this government, we need it to be front of mind in all our thinking. That's why Labor will bring back a proper women's budget statement and introduce a National Strategy for Gender Equality.

Scott Morrison will not solve any of these problems. It's not even clear that he knows they're problems in the first place. For that, we need a Labor Government – because it is always Labor that delivers on gender equality.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

Rebuilding a Sick System

As Mental Health Month approached, not a day went by where we didn't see another media report on the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on our collective worsening mental health.

They highlighted the people stuck on endless waiting lists as wait times to see mental health professionals blow out. They pointed out the looming mental health crisis in young people as they suffer loss of freedom, extended social isolation, lack of connection with peers from remote learning, increased screen use and a denial of celebrating milestones. They warned of the shortage of qualified professionals and the risk of burnout in the healthcare sector due to unsustainable workforce demands.

However, as Professor Ian Hickie from Sydney University's Brain and Mind Centre has noted, these problems have been building for decades. Pre-pandemic, a quarter of Australians would experience a mental health challenge in their lives, up from an estimated one in ten about a decade ago. This has obviously placed pressure on mental health services, which have struggled to keep up with the demand, often without commensurate resourcing.

The pandemic has shone a light on existing inequities in our system. Mental health presentations are the fastest growing of any hospital admission. Once there, people stay up to twice as long as those with heart conditions – a clear sign of limited treatment and care pathways elsewhere in the system.

Issues around availability of high-quality mental health professionals and waiting times are reflected across many parts of Australia, especially rural and regional areas. The result of historical underfunding and fragmentation of the mental health system.

At the heart of this problem is the divide of funding and resourcing between the levels of government. Hospitals and some community-based services are funded through state governments, early intervention/preventative services and planning

and resourcing the mental health workforce are generally a Federal responsibility. To complicate the mix, many services on the ground are delivered by non-government and not-for-profit organisations.

The question becomes – who is responsible for people that are too unwell for early intervention services, but not unwell enough to access acute, inpatient or community-based support?

These questions are not easily answered and require a considered approach as the demands on our mental health system increase. The transition out of lockdown will be challenging for many. What is undeniable, especially for people in New South Wales and Victoria, is that levels of psychological distress have increased and our mental health has worsened. Last year, paramedics around the nation were called out 22,400 times to Australians who had attempted, or were seriously considering, ending their lives – an average of 61 calls per day. Lifeline’s three busiest days on record were all in August this year. More than half the call-outs for self-harm were in New South Wales.

What we do know is that exposure to cumulative disasters such as floods, bushfires, and cyclones, and chronic stress events like the pandemic, can disproportionately impact people already experiencing disadvantage. We can build resilience by improving emotional and material supportive strategies.

Emotional supportive strategies focus on reducing stress and transforming maladaptive behaviours to reduce emotional, social, and health problems. Material supportive strategies include policies providing easy and timely access to appropriate resources, such as drug and alcohol and domestic violence support services. We also need mental health policies, plans, and legislation that ensure the care and support of the most vulnerable and marginalised.

That includes rethinking the nation’s approach to treating mental health emergencies. An example of such a strategy is Safe Spaces, a pilot program in Blacktown, New South Wales, giving people in crisis an alternative to waiting in

Emergency. Its focus on a soothing sensory environment and peer workers is in stark contrast to competing for attention in trauma wards and waiting rooms.

The importance of early intervention in preventing or delaying the onset of mental illness is crucial. Currently, many clinicians are not able to help clients with such strategies due to wait times, putting more pressure on the system downstream.

This requires an urgent conversation around investment in and planning of the clinical workforce. The 2020-21 Budget included significant investment into new digital mental health assessment and referral platforms. A digital platform can’t replace face-to-face attention from clinical professionals, and it will be tech-savvy young people who are in danger of falling through the cracks if used without clinical oversight.

Psychiatrists are particularly in short supply, especially in rural areas and public hospitals, but demand for their care will continue long after the pandemic has passed. As Dr Omar Khorshid, President of the Australian Medical Association, identifies, the allocation of \$11m for 30 new psychiatry training places by 2023 is woefully inadequate. It means waiting two years for places to be created and that’s before the training – which can take four to nine years – even begins.

That’s a serious generational lag to delivering what we need right now.



CHARISHMA KALIYANDA

Charishma Kaliyanda is a Councillor on Liverpool Council and a youth mental health educator/worker in Southwest Sydney.



THE PANDEMIC POLITICS OF AID AND DEVELOPMENT

Nick Martin writes the short-sighted policies of successive conservative governments in cutting Australia's overseas aid program have increased the risks for Australia.

When the Abbott Government cut Australia's overseas aid program in 2013, conservative commentators and government spokespeople were quick to point to a "budget emergency" and the need to "balance the books". As the world closes another year ravaged by a global pandemic we can now see how short-sighted those cuts to the Australian aid budget were, and how they have contributed to a worsening situation throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

In total more than \$11.3 billion has been cut from the aid budget since the last Labor Budget was delivered in 2013. Most significantly, this included real reductions in health expenditure in the region. In the 2014/15 Budget year, Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) attributed to Health stood at \$684 million per



NICK MARTIN

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year. In the last Budget it stood at \$577.5 million, delivered against the backdrop of a worsening pandemic. While the “temporary and targeted” measures introduced by the government to respond to COVID-19 in the region should be and have been welcomed with a spirit of bipartisanship, levels of investment in regional health remain far too low. In addition to the cuts in health specifically, the cuts were savage in South East Asia – critical countries for our health security and Australian trade. Aid to South East Asia has been cut by 30 per cent, falling from almost \$1.3 billion in 2014/15 to just over \$900 million in 2019/20.

So what has been the impact of this? The global pandemic has revealed just how fragile health systems and economies are across the region. As the first wave of COVID-19 hit the region, many systems were battered but withstood the shock. A combination of public health measures and social distancing enabled many communities to resist large spikes in infections, and flow on cases into intensive care units. As the Delta variant crashed into the region however, we have now seen just how exposed health systems are, and how big a risk to Australia’s health security they pose.

We have seen COVID-19 infections cross the Torres Strait from Papua New Guinea. Indonesia, the world’s fourth most populous country, has faced a public health crisis for months. The Red Cross has reported that the death rate from COVID-19 across South East Asia is double that of North America. So what needs to be done to turn this around?

First of all, we need to restore bipartisanship around Australia’s aid program. The ideologues in the Coalition parties, who pander to the vocal minority of the Australian public opposed to aid, need to put Australia’s national interest first. None of us are safe from this global pandemic, until we are all safe. We need to ensure that a narrative that values reinvestment in aid and development in the region is broadly supported across all major political parties.

Second, we need to do more to support the global efforts to lift vaccination rates against COVID-19 in our region, before there is another mutation in the virus. We need

global vaccine justice urgently. Vietnam has reported vaccination rates as low as 11%. Countries like Indonesia and the Philippines are pushing only above 20% in recent weeks. We need commitments to long-term vaccine supply to these countries, and support to train the workforce to get jobs in arms quickly.

Third, we need long term reinvestment in health security and health resilience, particularly in our region. Australia has enormous expertise in building effective universal health coverage (Medicare) and in building diagnostic and information systems that support effective crisis management of global pandemics, and the ongoing health needs of local communities. We should leverage this and support countries in our region to build back stronger health systems.

Fourth, we need to help build a well-trained health workforce across the region that has the right clinical expertise, but is also able to deliver the most basic of health services at village or township level. These primary health workers have been shown to be critical in providing public health information and assisting in vaccine drives right across the region.

Fifth and finally, we need to help restore economic growth and jobs to the region. Living in extreme poverty is defined as living on less than USD\$1.90 a day. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) now estimates that up to 80 million people in Asia have been pushed back into extreme poverty due to the health and economic disruption caused by COVID-19. This has set back the cause of development in the region by years. Aside from the obvious appalling human tragedy, we know that a lack of economic growth in the region has an impact on Australia as a trading and export driven economy.

Labor should look to rebuild Australia’s aid program, drawing on a long history of regional engagement, support for human development, and a spirit of internationalism that has been the bedrock of Labor values for the last 150 years. Building from these core values represents the best chance of protecting Australia and securing a safe and prosperous region. Because none of us are safe until we’re all safe.

RACIAL DIVERSITY

ISN'T AN

optional extra

I remember the exact moment when Julia Gillard gave her speech as the first female Prime Minister of Australia. I watched in awe in my Year 10 history classroom at my all-girls public school. I saw a glimmer of the world as it could be: women having a place in Australian politics.

For a child of the '90s Howard era it felt like the tide was turning and the shifting demographics of our nation were finally filtering through to the halls of power. Growing up in the seat of Bennelong which was becoming a hub of multiculturalism, my high school leadership groups were representative of this cultural diversity. I spent my teenage years accustomed to a culturally diverse, feminist space expecting this to be the microcosm of the 'real world'. Little did I know that People of Colour (PoC) and Women of Colour (WoC) in particular, had a long way to go.

Nowhere has this been more starkly illustrated than in the parachuting of Kristina Keneally into the seat of Fowler, at the expense of a young, talented, rank and file, community voice, Tu Le. This moment exemplifies the harsh reality of the lack of diversity in the Australian parliamentary make-up and lack of community control we have in electing our representatives. Australia is one of the worst performing western democracies when it comes to reflecting cultural diversity in our parliaments; and unfortunately the Australian Labor Party (ALP) are complicit in this despite touting ourselves as the "party of multiculturalism".

The Sydney Policy Lab's Australian Civic Index shows that tertiary educated young people from culturally diverse backgrounds are highly likely to be the most engaged in the country. Yet many young PoC in this demographic are witnessing the Fowler preselection, being reminded of the world as it is: a world where we don't belong in politics and don't have access to power in the way our white counterparts do.

These highly engaged PoC exist in the Labor Party. They are active local councillors in Southwest Sydney who are running sessions in language and around mental health for their community during the COVID outbreak. They are staffers, organisers, union members and volunteers. But that's where it stops - with minimal representation in senior positions within the party, in parliament, and in unions. Unfortunately as the Fowler preselection demonstrates, while PoC are great to have when engaging with their communities on behalf of the Party, they are regarded as optional extras in parliament and end up as collateral damage in the deals of factional power-brokers who uphold the status quo.

Our Liberal counterparts may be acting faster on cultural diversity than we are. They have strong community groups, such as 'Liberal friends of India', which has translated to strong links to community media. On a state and territory level, Canberra Liberals voted in Elizabeth Lee as Leader and she became the first Asian-Australian leader of a major political party. In 2021, the NSW

Young Liberals elected Deyi Wu as president making her the first woman of colour to be elected as leader of a NSW youth wing of either major party.

Whilst I paint a bleak reality, I have seen and been a beneficiary of good mentorship and leadership in the union movement and the party; and I believe there is good allyship out there. A lot of folk often ask what the solutions are, once again putting the onus on communities of colour to solve the problem rather than doing the hard work themselves.

Party members, especially those with power, need to actively question their biases in who we promote, hire and pre select. Allies should be attending cultural training, educating themselves, instead of deflecting on the issue.

There are examples in Australia and internationally of actively tackling the problem of representation and we need to look at how to replicate these on a larger scale:

In Australia:

- The CPSU have a CALD staff and member network and have recently employed phenomenal young PoC climate strikers through the Democracy in Colour placement program
- Hue has been doing anti-racist consulting, training and workshops with many organisations. And have recently conducted training for Vic Greens and Australian Greens parliamentary staffers, MPs and senators.

In UK Labour, there has been:

- The establishment of 'BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) Labour' - who hold institutional power with a reserved seat on the Labour National Executive Committee (NEC) and four reserved seats on the National Policy Forum (NPF).
- Publishing of data in the following categories of candidates on gender, BAME, disability and sexuality on their website.
- Training provided by its Women's Network to diverse women and the collection of data on its training participants to track progress.



Whilst these examples are great, many were fought for, built and are sustained by PoC. Now we ask our white allies, and senior leadership to step up and be enablers. For white ALP members, the truth is, it will feel uncomfortable. The devolution of power will never be easy to grapple with - however the above examples set out a place to start which should be an integral part of electoral and internal party strategies.

The Labor Party's electoral and cultural demise is clear if we don't act fast: we will lose a voting base and the membership of Australia's most engaged cohort in civil society and miss the opportunity to create the world as it should be.



JANANIE JANARTHANA

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BUILDING TRUST

As we emerge from the pandemic and confront the economic and social challenges bequeathed to us by eight years of Liberal government, Labor should prioritise policies that restore trust – both in one another and in government.

In January this year, media outlets reported a surprising outcome.

Australia was rocketing up in the Edelman Trust Barometer. Australians' overall trust in institutions increased more than any other nation in the study.

On the surface it was a surprising result. We've become used to data on trust in Australia pointing in the wrong direction – with as many as 25% of Australians indifferent to whether or not we are a democracy, and a seemingly bottomless fall in confidence that our political leaders can be trusted to “do the right thing”.

Indeed, by May this year, the figures on trust were once again heading in the wrong direction, stripping back the gains made in 2020 by more than half.

What happened in 2020 to reverse decades of decline in trust in our most important public institutions? And why were those gains so short lived?

A simple answer is that it reflects the comparatively strong and successful early response of Australia's institutions to the pandemic at the time the data was collected in October 2020.

A more complex answer would recognise the character of that early response, which leveraged the best of our collectivist instincts.

Our traditions of solidarity, along with the institutions that reflect them, insulated us early on from the worst impacts of the virus, despite the reluctance of our Liberal-National government to act. Our universal Medicare system – after years of Liberal attacks – still provided a bedrock of confidence that our health needs would be met. Labor's successful prosecution of a wage subsidy scheme – JobKeeper – in tandem with a powerful public campaign from our unions – meant that the economic risks to working people were actively managed in the early phases of the pandemic. And state and territory leaders refused to ‘let it rip’, an instead advocating public health measures to protect the health of our most vulnerable citizens.

We were all in this together.

However, as 2021 has graphically demonstrated, there should have been no room for complacency.

The pandemic laid bare the precarious existence of the many Australians in casual or short-term work, and the vulnerability of households with crowded rooms and many occupants. Coalition neglect of our public health capability has exposed some of our most vulnerable communities to unacceptable costs and risks; witness the tragic consequences this year for First Nations communities here in NSW, the differential treatment of western Sydney

residents, and the shameful failure last year by the Commonwealth government to protect residents in residential aged care.

What's more, the Prime Minister's tone changed, aggressively reverting to politics-as-usual to attack state Premiers as he fumbled the vaccine roll out, and stubbornly refusing accountability for the treatment of women in the parliament and beyond.

And if the overall numbers are falling, "trust inequality" is worse and worsening. Well informed adults in the top income and educational brackets are 30 points more likely to trust government than the general population. On this measure, Australia records the largest trust inequality anywhere in the world.

It's not difficult to connect these findings with growing support for parties on the fringes. Both the far left and the far right actively advocate against trust in our political system to maximise their electoral position.

Labor should challenge these arguments, whatever their origin. Progressive politics demands trust in government, and trust in one another. It's in our national interest to build and support the conditions for trust.

Labor's support for a National Anti-Corruption Commission matters. Every state and territory in Australia has one. The Morrison government's opposition to a properly empowered commonwealth body raises serious questions. State and territory commissions have shown time and again that no one is too big to be held accountable. Their very existence serves as a check on unethical behaviour.

But our support for an economy that works for all Australians matters as well. The Scanlon Survey tells us that trust is strongly correlated with one's position in the economy. Just 29 percent of people who are struggling to pay their bills agree that "generally speaking, most people can be trusted", in contrast to 60 percent of people who are prosperous or very comfortable. Those in our community who bear all the risks of precarious, low-income living are understandably sceptical that our society and its institutions will respond to their needs.

Australians have risen to the challenge of the pandemic. Young people have made enormous sacrifices to protect more vulnerable older people. In every public discussion, our community overwhelmingly backs protections for people with disabilities and those rendered more vulnerable to poor health by poverty or discrimination. Arguments that elevate the economy above the lives of our most vulnerable have been rejected. For all the discussion about the anti-vaccination movement, just 7 percent of Australians say they'll never be vaccinated. It's almost twice that number in the United States.

We should nurture the generous instincts that have seen people make sacrifices and prioritise support for our most vulnerable over the last eighteen months. As we contemplate our post-pandemic future, Labor's commitments to secure work, to supporting women's participation in the workforce through reducing the costs of childcare, to building social housing and to a National Reconstruction Fund are crucial building blocks to trust.

The more secure we feel, the more willing we are to extend empathy and trust to others. And the more willing we'll be to invest in the collective infrastructure that secures opportunity and fairness for our people. Restoring trust is a matter of national priority.



JENNY MCALLISTER

Jenny McAllister is a Senator for NSW.

SAFER, CLEANER, FAIRER TRANSPORT

for the future

Pandemics have a way of focusing our minds on the future. In the 1480s, while the plague ravaged Europe, Leonardo da Vinci put forward the plan of an ideal city. Here in present day NSW, Andrew Constance and the Liberals haven't been as constructive.

The pandemic has exposed long-standing inequality across Sydney, with Western and South-Western Sydney left behind and further marginalised. Our regions are too often an after-thought.

We've been forced further apart than we ever thought possible, but also come to a greater awareness of what we value in our cities and towns.

We want our communities to be more efficient, more equitable, to offer more opportunity and to be better connected to each other and to the wider world.

For some, public transport has been less of a priority of late, the daily commute replaced with the shuffle from kitchen to make-shift home office. And for many who can't work from home, especially essential workers heading to our hospitals, schools and depots, what was once a routine trip to and from work has become much more complicated.

But for all of us - whether we are still commuting or working from home - reimagining and upgrading our public transport network is one of the things we can do to build a better, more equal, more efficient and more connected society.

Public transport should be affordable, dependable and safe. It should also embrace innovation and drive our progress towards action on climate change and towards a clean energy future.

We need to be bold in building the infrastructure our city needs to make sure everyone has access to transport. The goal of a 30 minute city is an

The pandemic has exposed many truths: One of them is that the NSW Government is asleep at the wheel in planning better transport for our future.

admirable one, but still, far too many people in the greater Sydney Region do not have access to public transport.

The goal of electrifying our buses and ferries is also a good one, but behind the Government's announcements, the truth is there is little money to get it done.

Similarly, turbocharging investment in electric vehicles is the right thing to do. By 2030, three quarters of all new car sales need to be electric vehicles if we are to achieve net zero emissions in Australia by 2035. But where is the plan to back in local manufacturers of charging infrastructure, battery manufacturing and refurbishment, software development and to upskill mechanics and other automotive workers?

In 2020, cycling rates rose by around 40% as people turned to active transport and micro-mobility. But at the same time, the Government has stopped talking about its Principal Bike Network and said that they were "not in the mood" for trialling electric scooters.

The pandemic has exposed many truths: One of them is that the NSW Government is asleep at the wheel in planning better transport for our future.

A Labor vision for our future transport is one rooted in public ownership and one that acknowledges the value and skills of our workers. We must build our ferries, trains, trams and buses here.

It's a plan that recognises every citizen has the right to access public transport that is affordable, dependable and safe, no matter where they live.

The Labor vision also recognises the transformative role our transport network plays in driving a low-emissions future, and understands the critical importance workers play in both building and operating low-emissions transport.

While restrictions will lift shortly, we must acknowledge that the lack of access to public transport will mean many continue to experience isolation and disconnection.

When we look back at this time, let's point to it as the moment we took stock and reimagined our cities and transport network to be safer, cleaner and fairer.

Labor has started that work.



JO HAYLEN

Jo Haylen is the NSW Shadow Minister for Transport.



FIONA PHILLIPS

Fiona Phillips is the Federal Member for Gilmore.

One disaster after another is how you could view the last couple of years for people in the federal electorate of Gilmore on the NSW South Coast. Drought, bushfires, floods, ongoing bushfire recovery and the COVID-19 pandemic have taken an enormous toll on people, small businesses, workers, the elderly and vulnerable.

The prolonged impact of these disasters over years has been devastating.

But we're a strong lot. We're country, and we look after each other.

Health will always be number one in the regions. It's good health that lets us get on with life, whether it's for family and work, or to travel, and to visit the kids and grandkids.

More than ever healthcare in the regions has been under attack by the Coalition governments.

We see it every day. It's difficult to find a GP and our public hospitals are stretched to the max.

More recently, hundreds and hundreds of local people have contacted me and shared their personal stories about how they have found it difficult to access a local GP. Retiring GPs are just not being replaced, or GPs books are closed, or it just takes so long to get an appointment.

With the second highest number of aged pensioners in Australia, our elderly and vulnerable in particular

Make no mistake, the extended lockdowns in regional areas and across Australia that we have all lived through have been unnecessarily extended due to the Morrison government's most fundamental failure of public administration to secure enough vaccines.

are impacted. It is extremely difficult now to find GPs that will visit residents in nursing homes, not because they don't want to, but because the system is broken. Labor proudly brought in Medicare, a universal health care system for all, but the Morrison Government continues to dismantle it and just doesn't get regional Australia.

I have been working with a number of local GPs, and community members to highlight the growing problem of access to GPs in our regional area. I have been blown away by the response.

I have raised their real and raw stories in the Australian Parliament and will continue to advocate with people on this issue.

I am proud that Labor has initiated a Senate Inquiry into regional and rural GP shortages. This will provide further opportunity for people to share their stories and for the Committee to come up with positive recommendations to help improve access to GPs and health services in regional areas.

During all the disasters, our GPs and health workers have been there every step of the way, doing their absolute best to care for people's health and mental health, and looking after our most vulnerable.

With the pandemic, our GPs, health workers and pharmacists have continued to work around the clock to vaccinate against COVID-19, test for COVID-19 and to keep people safe. Our health workers all deserve our thanks and support.

Make no mistake, the extended lockdowns in regional areas and across Australia that we have all lived through have been unnecessarily extended due to the Morrison government's most fundamental failure of public administration to secure enough vaccines.

It's beyond time for the Government to listen to the loud cries for help from our regions.

Your postcode should never determine your access to basic medical services and quality of life.

THE PANDEMIC REMINDS US OF THE NEED FOR A FIRST NATIONS VOICE TO PARLIAMENT.

Here's why:

From the very beginning of the pandemic last year, the Government was warned that First Nations people were particularly vulnerable to serious infection from COVID-19. The spread of the Delta variant throughout First Nations communities has demonstrated the real-world consequences of the neglect by government in failing to prepare and protect us.

But more than this, it has further exposed the great disparity which exists between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians: the overcrowded housing; the lack of access to health services; food insecurity; challenges of geography and remoteness; and the communications gap between government and First Nations communities.

The Government's knee-jerk reaction to First Nations COVID cases has revealed the Government's complete lack of understanding of First Nations perspectives; historical interactions with government and authorities, and the mistrust that has arisen.

It began in March last year when a prominent Aboriginal medical service wrote to the federal Government of the unique geographic, social and cultural challenges in protecting First Nations communities.

The Prime Minister promised that First Nations Australians would be a priority, at the front of the line. But almost seven months after the vaccine rollout commenced, First Nations people continue to lag behind, with First Nations doses 25 per cent behind the general population. And that gap continues to widen.

The Government's First Nations vaccination program is set to go down as one of the greatest failures of public administration of our time. One that was completely avoidable – if only the government was willing to listen, engage and work with First Nations communities.

First Nations organisations, health experts and community leaders have been telling the Government what is needed to lift First Nations vaccination rates for months. They have the capacity and they have the

willingness, they just need the backing from government. It is a broader symptom of the Government's unwillingness to empower First Nations people and foster self-determination.

For over two centuries of colonisation, dispossession and misguided and paternalistic policies, First Nations people have not been the master of our own destinies. If we want to see real progress and lasting progress in ending the disparity, we must trust First Nations people are best placed to understand and address the issues and challenges that affect us.

The Government's botching of the First Nations vaccine rollout reminds us why Labor must continue to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full.

It's been almost four and a half years since the delivery of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, in which First Nations leaders and communities called for a First Nations voice to the parliament enshrined in the constitution; as well as a national process for treaty-making and Truth-Telling.

In its essence, the Uluru Statement from the Heart helps us understand and explain the causes of inequality and injustice, and enables us to work together to fix them, by placing First Nations people at the very centre of decision making on the issues that affect us.

It could very well have played an important role in advising the government in its response to the spread of COVID in First Nations communities.

Treaty-making and Truth-Telling are critical to understanding that the injustices of the past did not simply remain in the past. The consequences and trauma of those injustices have transcended generations can still be seen and felt today. This brings into light the legal structures, policies and programs that have dispossessed and oppressed First Nations peoples.

And a constitutionally enshrined voice to the parliament will give our people a greater say in the decisions, policies and laws that affect us.

The Government continues to dismiss the very reasonable and generous aspirations outlined by First Nations people. And cynically, they continue to string First Nations people along, kicking the can of constitutional recognition and co-design of a voice to government down the road.

While the Government refuses to step up, Labor remains ready to realise the desires of the Uluru Statement in full. From the very beginning, Labor has been committed to a First Nations voice to the parliament, protected in our constitution, and safe and secure from the whims of the government of the day.

But we will also make the Treaty and Truth elements of Uluru a priority in government. An Albanese Labor Government will establish a Makarrata Commission. It would have oversight of Truth-Telling and would include inquiring into matters of national significance, from colonisation to present day, as well as supporting local Truth-Telling projects with local government and community organisation.

And it would have oversight of Treaty and would include developing a framework for federal treaty-making, taking into account existing state and territory processes.

The future of a more reconciled Australia depends on putting voice, treaty and truth into practice. Not only in the context of this pandemic, but for the sake of the broader and unacceptable gap that exists between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians.



LINDA BURNEY

Linda Burney is the federal Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians.

WOMEN AT WORK

The experience of women at work has been at the forefront of national politics this year.

These issues were thrust into the national spotlight with revelation after revelation about workplace conduct in Parliament House.

This conversation may have started in Parliament House, but women in every workplace and every home around the nation know the same fear.

At the very heart of who we are in the Labor Party and the values we stand for are workers' rights, and human rights, and the rights we as women have to safely and equally participate in our society.

Yet our nation is failing women and girls, and our government is too busy talking to take any action.

Around the country today, far too often women go to work, go about their everyday lives facing the risk of sexual harassment and sexual abuse, from people they know and people they don't.

And at every step, the Morrison Government has proved entirely unequal to the task of keeping women safe.

Whether it was sitting on the Respect at Work Report for over a year, or ignoring calls for sexual harassment policy for their own staff. This government only has something to say about women's safety when it is a perceived political issue.



MELISSA DONNELLY

Melissa Donnelly is the CPSU National Secretary.

CPSU members working in Parliament House have been at the epicentre of the current revelations and debate, where instances of sexual harassment and sexual assault unreported and unpunished have too often gone unreported and unpunished.

Yet we have a Prime Minister who can only relate as a father or a husband, who sees women only in reference to himself, and sees the pervasive problem of violence and harassment and assault of women as a problem to be politically managed.

After years of parliamentary workers calling for recognition and change, it was only after marches and sustained anger from women right across the nation, that the Morrison Government was forced to commit to implementing the Respect at Work report and a wholesale review of parliamentary workplaces.

But the Morrison Government demonstrated once again its capacity to disappoint.

The Prime Minister held a press conference where he smiled and said that his government accepted the report of Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins – and then passed, with the support of One Nation, legislation that ignored the most important reforms.

The legislation failed to:

- Expressly prohibit sexual harassment;
- Put a positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace;
- Introduce a quick and easy complaints process in the Fair Work Act; and
- Broaden the powers of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to instigate inquiries.

In addition, both the Government and One Nation voted down an amendment to include 10 days' paid Family and Domestic Violence leave in the National Employment Standards.

It is difficult to understand why the Morrison Government was not prepared to accept these practical recommendations. And since the Morrison Government did not have the vision to do so, can workers really expect them to have the courage to reform its own workplace? To have those hard conversations with their parliamentary colleagues about behaviour that is no longer and should never have been acceptable? To lead by example?

We've already seen political posturing from all the likely contenders, with Senator Gerard Rennick loudly proclaiming he will not participate in the measly hour-long training on workplace sexual harassment.

It seems this Prime Minister can't or won't even make his own party room members pretend to take these issues seriously.

And as the nation looked towards the Women's Safety Summit, so many had been hopeful that this will be the moment. But the round tables and summit left advocates and sectors that deal with women's safety every day confused and unsatisfied. And the government refused invitations to any representation from unions, or workplace

organisations.

We continue to be hopeful and continue to represent members' voices, and their right to safe workplaces. But we know the Prime Minister will not say what he means or do what he says.

Respect and safety at work are non-negotiable. Our members across all departments, and especially those that work in parliament have had enough, and they are demanding action for safe workplaces. Women are sceptical, about Scott Morrison's motives, and his commitment to change. And we know that, regardless of what women deserve, what women demand, and what the times call for, that this Government is not up to the job.

Our Party must offer a better way forward:

- one that endorses that all workers' rights to be safe at work,
- a government that leads by example and is a model employer,
- that legislates domestic violence leave,
- that takes issues of workplace harassment and assault seriously with a proper approach to investigation and reporting, and
- one that resources the sectors that fight to keep women safe.

Women deserve a better government, and that's why we need to see an Albanese Labor Government.

But in the meantime, our members will never stop advocating for safety at work. It's the very least that all women, in all workplaces, deserve.

HOME CARE

Jobs for the future

Low paid, female dominated and deregulated. That's Homecare in a snapshot.

CARE WORKERS

Care workers have places of work, rather than workplaces; some are employees engaged by non-government organisations that receive funding to deliver care, others are sole traders being connected to clients via gig economy platforms. Some are both.

Precarious insecure work is the primary model through which home care is delivered to our loved ones all around the country, in fact all around the world, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

So how do we as unions and the party of workers position care work as a job for the future while prosecuting an agenda that seeks secure and well-paid work and a strong industrial relations system. We do this by leading and stepping out into the unknown, rather than retreating into the relative safety of the business-as-usual life support model of the past. We have to engage care workers in a conversation about how they can build collective power in a deregulated environment and by providing them the tools and skills development to do this.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL

This is what we have been doing in our union, the United Workers Union, and formerly in our legacy union, United Voice. Care workers are some of our most digitally literate members. Smart phones have been used by providers and digital disrupters to train and roster care workers and to deliver them crucial policy and safety information. They are also being used by our member leaders to identify issues and potential leaders and to build their union.

Our member leaders are adept at using Facebook, Slack, thru texting and Zoom. Some train other care workers in using platforms such as thru text, others are UnionSmart experts (UnionSmart being the bot we have built to enable care worker members to know their rights). These are the tools and platforms via which they connect with each-other and organise other care workers.

Care workers love to get together in person and when they do (which is rare in this COVID world we are living in) they share stories and connect deeply. As with all distributed organising, the occasional face to face meet up pays dividends for months to come.

Our staff team and care worker member leaders run welcome calls for new members, many of whom become more involved in their union as a result.

If we find a way to lift the value of these jobs and further localise care work, the care economy could provide secure jobs for workers and their families impacted by both automation and climate change.

FOREVER INDUSTRIES

Our members are part of the care economy, a part of the broader economy that is female dominated and that touches every family and community in every part of the country. And while the logistics and mechanics of scheduling care work can be and are being automated, care work is low carbon work that cannot be fully automated. Geographical communities that have relied on coal and gas for jobs and economic prosperity would do well to think about the role the care economy could play in their economic futures.

But for this to be viable care workers need to organise and build the power needed to win better pay and security in a deregulated world. The experiment we are doing in the United Workers Union matters as what we win for care workers will flow on for other distributed workers. If we find a way to lift the value of these jobs and further localise care work, the care economy could provide secure jobs for workers and their families impacted by both automation and climate change. Australia has an ageing population & as we all get older the desire to age in place in our own homes grows – creating demand for more and more care economy jobs, making this an industry worth fighting to get right.

Service industry jobs of the future are people centred jobs that require strong emotional resilience and emotional intelligence, qualities we see in abundance in United Workers Union members working in home care, disability & aged care and early childhood education. While the mechanisms through which work and information are delivered are likely to become increasingly digital and distributed, the work itself needs to be delivered by humans and the more locally the better. Future ALP governments need to invest in care workers and the care economy, both financially and strategically. A forever industry that touches the lives of everyone deserves our attention.



MEL GATFIELD

Mel Gatfield is the National Director – Food & Beverages and the NSW State Secretary of the UWU.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

and this is too serious to get wrong

We have a Prime Minister and a Premier who are famously all spin and no substance.

So, when they and their fellow travellers in the Murdoch media machine tell us that our recent economic woes are the result of a 'COVID-Recession' - as if it all has nothing to do with them, we need to make sure that the truth is out there. We need a different position put by Labor that is clear and coherent - and has substance. Anything less is the very worst sort of disrespect to those who need Labor to be in government at all levels and who we ask to vote for us.

In fact, we know that even before a summer of natural disasters, an ongoing drought and the outbreak of COVID, the NSW economy was already in decline. Wages were at a record low and under attack from radical conservative federal and state treasurers and increasingly militant employers, who felt their arm strengthened by new anti-worker legislation and the promise of even more constraints on the rights of working people to organise and take action in support of their own and their families' safety and financial security.

Of course, the worst impact of our economic decline, those natural disasters and the pandemic have been felt by those in precarious employment - those workers and their families who must rely upon insecure, low-wage work. As the unions in those sectors dominated by insecure work will tell you, the growth of precarious employment is far from a coincidence. The long-standing desire by some employers, and certainly

our current federal and state governments to evade and avoid their employment responsibilities have driven this change, hoping to seize the opportunity of the recent natural disasters and current pandemic to secure a more fearful and compliant workforce, while shifting costs and risks to those same workers.

While the impact of insecure work is perilous for any worker and their family, it is often more common in those sectors that are largely feminised. It is a painful irony that the worst impact of insecure work includes those frontline workers who have helped us to survive and will help us to rebuild after the pandemic: community and disability workers, healthcare, hospitality, and retail workers; jobs which are all undervalued and more likely to be insecure and low paid. As a matter of fact, these are also the fastest growing workforces in the state and in the country.

Yet despite what we know to be the truth, when the NSW Liberal-Nationals Government talk about jobs and infrastructure, there is only one kind of job they ever seem to really want to discuss: the sort of job that comes with a photo opportunity, high-vis vest and a hard hat.

No one doubts that construction and physical infrastructure jobs are vital to our community and to our economy. But these are not the only jobs that people do in NSW, and it is not the only work that people need to have done.

Work in construction and physical infrastructure provide good jobs that are skilled and well paid. The people who work in those industries help to build our communities: homes, schools, places of worship, aged care facilities, recreation facilities, roads, bridges, manufacturing hubs, shopping centres and childcare centres.

It is an old adage that we live in a society, not just an economy and it is a truth that communities are not only constructed but are also built by other highly skilled workers including those in the health, community and disability sectors. These are skilled professionals, including disability support workers, nurses, refuge and housing workers, youth workers, aged-services workers, counsellors, early childhood educators, cleaners, social workers, and mental health workers to name only a few. They build independence, safety, mental and physical health, social cohesion, dignity in the way lives are lived, and a sense of community.

We need investment in both physical and social infrastructure jobs for our communities to work well. This is something that Labor understands very well – just look at the way the Whitlam, Hawke, Keating, Gillard and Rudd Governments invested to see how to make a difference.

Despite being the fastest growing workforce in Australia and NSW, there have been virtually no announcements in recent federal or state budgets about job creation, workforce development, training or major funding for the largely feminised health, community and disability sectors. Currently one in eight jobs in our State comes from that sector. The workforce is growing exponentially, and it is estimated that by 2050 it will make up over one-quarter of our labour market. Yet the Liberal-Nationals in NSW and federally are missing in action. Their jobs announcements are invariably short on detail and often presented by a minister uncomfortably donning a hard hat. In the wake of the aged care royal commission and now the disability royal commission, the State Government should be looking towards these sectors to not only enrich

our communities, but also to grow our economies and deliver good, secure, stable and skilled jobs.

These jobs are particularly critical for western Sydney and regional NSW, where there has been a recent surge in the services sector workforce, led by the community and disability sector. Government investment in social infrastructure in the health, community and disability sectors stimulates jobs and better conditions, provides economic stimulus to all other sectors of our community and the economy, and specifically addresses the historic feminised economic disadvantage that has been highlighted during COVID.

In terms of jobs, investment in the health, community and disability sectors outperforms the multiplier effect of most other industries with modelling by Victoria University showing \$1 billion of net investment lifting economic activity in New South Wales by \$10 billion per year. Yet in a recent round of budget estimates the NSW Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney could not even name the largest growing workforce in western Sydney, much less talk coherently about issues of workforce development or the economic impact of this sector and his own agency's report claimed it to be a declining sector with a reducing workforce! Every reputable source in the country knows the truth and provides regular and detailed data and information that is directly opposite to what the Minister claims.

We must provide investment and funding for both physical and social infrastructure and the jobs that they generate for the sake of our communities, our economy and the real jobs that we need. This is far too serious to get wrong.



PETER PRIMROSE

Peter Primrose is a Member of the Legislative Council in NSW.



INSIDE OUT: ON BEING AND BEING

Labor
Left

NSW Left Secretary Rosie Ryan sits down with Dr Meredith Burgmann AM, activist and former President of the NSW Legislative Council, to discuss party activism and the intersection with the broader left.

What has been your experience of the intersections of being active in the party, and in broader movements for social change?

I totally accept that the Labor Party is the best way to get important social and economic change, and to change the direction of the country and make the world a better place, that is why I am in the Labor Party.

Sometimes I think that we in the Labor Party get so caught up working within the Labor Party that we forget the broad left is out there. We also sometimes get so caught up in factional and fractional disputes and these can be very time consuming, so you don't really have the bandwidth to go out and be involved in the rest of the world.

Albo always used to say, I'm in the Labor Party, because I'm in the Left. And the people we were fighting at the time, he used to say, they're in the Left because they are in the Labor Party. And he saw that as a big distinction.

Often, we were criticised for not doing enough work within the party, when I'd be off being

convenor of the National Pay Equity Coalition and involved in anti-racism movements. And I was often criticised for that, as we all were.

I find that very limited thinking because it's not understanding that the role of Labor Party activists and left activists is to make the world a better place.

I think that attitude is absolutely still there...

It's totally still there. It's sort of like you can only be rewarded within the Labor Party for being a good apparatchik and that's short sighted. I also think it's really short sighted to vacate the space and leave the broad left out there, often with no Labor Party comrades involved in the struggle.

And it's not because they're not interested in Timor Leste or South Africa or the environment. It's just they're so involved with what's happening within the Labor Party that they're not involved, in say the refugee movement.

Yes and if you're a Labor activist and you understand how things work within the party and within the parliament you are very useful to these campaigns. That has been my experience in feminist and abortion decriminalisation campaigning. You go into these spaces and realise you have a skill-set that not everyone shares....

Absolutely, we forget what our skills sets are, we forget not everyone understands that there's always a duty MLC or Senator or, you know, the most important thing to do when you go to see a Minister is to be nice to their administrative staff, because they're the ones that actually make the decisions.

You gain a lot by working with groups outside of the Labor party and the Labor Party gains a lot with them.

Many of my closest friends I made through work with the broader left. In fact, one of the first things I've organised when lockdown finishes is lunch with the lovely footballers that refused to play that Springbok game 50 years ago.

Do you see the model of groups such as LEAN or Rainbow Labor can be a good gateway into that broader movement work as party activists?

I think Rainbow Labor and LEAN and Labor for Refugees have done fantastic jobs, and they're really important. They just have to get out there and work with the broader movement, or those people will think that there's no one inside the Labor Party that cares about these issues. You've got to get out and show your wares and we're just not that good at that.

I remember those early refugee marches there were no Labor Party banners, even though half the march was probably Labor Party people, because we never thought to label ourselves and that it did a lot of damage. A lot of people left the Labor Party or joined the Greens or said they'd never vote Labor again, because we weren't seen as being active enough on an issue when really there was a lot of, you know, paddling under the water.

You've been talking about how the Labor Party often doesn't value someone's membership because they've been out there advocating in different spaces. Do you think this also feeds into the issue of a lack of diversity in representation when we are finding candidates for positions?

I think we are often in danger of seeing work within the party as being the only way that

you can be a good candidate for public office. And sometimes we end up having to find candidates from outside the party because we haven't encouraged that sort of public participation in our own people.

I do think we should be pursuing community activity for no reason other than we should be doing it.

Our knowledge and experience can be really helpful in those groups, but as can showing up and showing the flag. And also, I'm not saying go out there and recruit but that is how you encourage really good people you find out there to be active in the Labor Party and make it a better party!

I find in activist, especially feminist spaces, there can be a bit of intergenerational hand-wringing about young people not being activists anymore, or taking wins secured by previous generations for granted. What do you make of that?

Oh I think the young of today are terrific. They might be choosing different issues, like so many of them are involved with climate change, well why wouldn't you be?

I think one of the differences now is that university students can be less involved simply because they have different circumstances. They have continuous assessments where in my day you just had to do a couple of essays during the year so the rest of the time was your own. We didn't have jobs, because we had scholarships that gave you a small stipend that you could more or less live on, very poorly, but we did live on it. And there was cheap housing around the universities you could live in whereas now cheap housing barely exists so students are mostly living at home and commuting.

I just think students circumstances are so different today, I'm full of wonder that any of them have time to be active. But you only had to go those climate demonstrations with thousands of people that were wonderful. Or the Black Lives Matter demonstration or the Women's March 4Justice. I hardly recognised anyone, because they were all young people who were being involved.

VOX POPS

*What do you want
to see from the next
NSW Labor Government?*



KUN HUANG

Auburn

I would like to see a State Labor Government that increases funding for multicultural services and make government services accessible for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.



BAILEY RILEY

Glebe

I would like the NSW Labor government to introduce stronger protections for the LGBTQ+ Community and actively pushback against discriminatory members of parliament.



HELEN WATT AND CARMEL PERKS

Port Macquaire

A person who is terminally ill and experiencing intolerable suffering should have the right to choose to die, painlessly and with dignity.

We would want NSW Labor Parliamentarians to demonstrate compassion and their own Labor membership pledge to ensure the 'Dying with Dignity Bill' is legislated as soon as possible.



JOLENE DOHERTY

Redfern

The Government needs to better fund our public institutions so we have better healthcare and research, including infectious diseases so we're better prepared for the next pandemic.



LUKA HARRISON

Maitland

I want to see a NSW Labor Government implement anti-discrimination legislation that actually protects people of colour and other minorities and proactively promotes equality.



MICK LAWLER

Tamworth

The greatest challenge to humanity in the 21st Century is global warming, so to counter this we would like a future Labor Government in NSW to implement a strategy to give every NSW household the opportunity to have solar panels and a battery supplied by the State Government, paid back to the Government at the average electricity payment per month until finalised.



Top five

with **Mich-Elle Myers**
ALP National Junior Vice-President

1. *Top Film*

The Man from Snowy River. I have seen it hundreds of times, I can recite the whole script and when I was a kid I wanted to live in Craig's Hut and ride Denny. Favourite line "You wouldn't dare break the spirit of that retched colt the way you just crushed your own daughter".

2. *Top Music*

I am a die hard U2 and Midnight Oil fan. I've seen U2 live 8 times and Midnight Oil many times too. I was very lucky to be in London a few years ago with the ITF (International Transport Workers Federation) and the Oils were playing at the Apollo. Took along a Kiwi friend and it was epic. Although it was topped by the recent Makarrata Live tour at Hope Estate, that was incredible. The first time I met Peter Garrett at an ALP event I was so excited.

3. *Top Book*

It has to be Finding the Heart of the Nation by my comrade Thomas Mayor. It's a beautifully written book about Thomas' journey with the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the stories of the people along the journey. Michael O'Connor once described Thomas' writing as "his words are like silk" if you haven't read it I ask that you do. It's a very special piece.

4. *Top Magazine*

Challenge Magazine of course and The Monthly. I cannot stand trash magazines and take old copies of good mags to the hairdresser and drop them off so they have something better to offer people. I have no interest in the Kardashians or what the latest royal beat up is.

5. *Top Website*

I only ever go to the ABC or the Guardian.

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