

2024



CHALLENGE

CONFERENCE EDITION

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EDITORIAL

**EMILY
TYRRELL**

Editor of Challenge Magazine

My earliest memory of the ALP is the election between Howard and Latham in '04. I waited in the Prado whilst my parents voted at Ebenezer Public. For whatever reason, I was eager to ask them both who they voted for when they returned. My father shot a glare at my mum – and she stared right back at him. 'Latham, the Labor Party,' she said. He gritted his teeth and started the car, spinning its wheels in the mud as we jolted onto the road. 'Well I'm not an idiot,' he said. 'I voted for Howard'.

In retrospect that's pretty bloody funny. A radical act of female defiance was voting for Mark Latham. Anyway – I've followed the ALP ever since.

I'm a long time reader, first time writer for Challenge Magazine. I tend to be more comfortable editing for others than speaking in my own voice. But this year, I've been asked to do just that – and so it feels only necessary to write about my own experience in the Left, and the NSW Labor Party as a whole.

Growing up in a conservative part of Western Sydney meant that I didn't see much more support for Labor beyond mum's sacreilege. The priest's homily was about how divorced women shouldn't be able to come to mass, kids would parrot Jul-liar in the playground, and I don't think I knew what a union was until Year 12 Legal Studies. That is, until Susan Templeman was elected in 2016, the same year I sat my HSC. We hadn't won government, but the Hawkesbury had voted red for the first time in my life.

Susan reached out to me after I'd gotten my results - I'd done pretty well and landed in the local paper. I also had a Facebook profile picture featuring a Whitlam 'It's Time' confluence. So, whilst her outreach was to congratulate and help me find my way to University, she also pretty quickly asked if I'd thought about getting involved with the ALP. A good local member knows no bounds! I joined, and the rest is history.



Throughout my time as a member, I have constantly met people who were involved with the Macquarie campaign. People who had spent hours doorknocking my neighborhood, or handing out at the booth around the corner, or who had come to train new volunteers like me. People who believed in Susan, and who believed we could flip the suburban fringe because she was the candidate.

Being an ALP Member in Newtown whilst Labor is in government at a State and Federal level is an entirely different experience. What it means to be progressive is not as simple as campaigning for a local member. I find myself constantly questioning what we should be fighting for, how we should be doing it, who I should trust and what my role is. I am always learning about what the party is, and how it works. But at the same time, I am watching my non-political friends from home and in the city turn away from Labor. Despite many of our best efforts, they don't trust that we are the progressive choice that my mum thought she made back in '04.

The passing of time has made a joke of that previous sentence, and with hindsight we can say that the electorate could probably see through Latham's pitch as well. That did not change the fact that there were people out there, living in towns like Windsor, who needed a Labor Government.

And now that one has been delivered, we must ask ourselves; are we working for them? Is Labor making good on our promise to serve working families, to lift up the disadvantaged, and to reform our institutions so that they create an equitable, inclusive and prosperous Australia?

This year's edition of Challenge seeks to answer these questions by examining the work of our Federal and State Governments. Such work includes the largest ever investment in social and affordable housing, the first substantial industry policy in decades through the Future Made in Australia plan, and real action on climate change without abandoning mining communities.

At the same time, it is clear that there is so much more work to do. Angus McFarland and the ASU writes about the need to repeal both the Anti-Protest and Youth Bail Laws, whilst rank-and-file members advocate for what they'd like to see at the NSW Drug Summit. Ela Akyol writes about the experience of Muslim communities when witnessing the genocide in Palestine, and their expectations of the party and Government. Judith Barber from the United Workers Union writes about the



ongoing plight of school cleaners, who should be employed by the state.

And yet, I don't think many of my aforementioned apolitical friends would have heard about much of this work. Earnest, detailed policy work does not grab headlines, and neither does much of the advocacy that Left members do in their everyday life. No one is grabbing a front page or going viral because they've gotten a motion up at their branch, or because they've had a persuasive conversation on someone's doorstep.

So, we are faced with a double edged sword. We must continue to do the work within the party to deliver strong, progressive wins that benefit working people - but we cannot do so to the extent that we become hyperfactual, insular and out of touch. Simultaneously, we must cut through the echo chambers, bias and partisan pundits when championing the achievements of Labor Governments to the broader public - but we cannot do so to the extent that we ignore the progress and reform yet to be made both within our party, and in policy.

It is easy to ignore this imperative and indulge in the antics of Labor party politics. But for too long, we've been seen as a party more interested in bickering amongst ourselves than getting on with the job. That's not how I was introduced to the party, and that is not the party that I signed up to be a part of.

We must rebuild trust in our movement. We must prove that Labor Governments embody an ethic of real public service, real concern and real action. We must mean what we say.

I hope this year's edition of Challenge captures that principle.

Happy reading.

In solidarity,
Emily

WHEN THE MATCH

Dr Marianne Jauncey, the Medical Director of the Kings Cross Medically Supervised Injecting Centre, speaks with Rosie Ryan, Secretary of the NSW Left.

They spoke the same day as the Minns Government called a date for the NSW Drug Summit.

Rosie: Marianne can you tell me about how the medically supervised injecting centre came to be?

Dr Jauncey: It all began in the late 1990s when heroin use was going up and heroin overdose numbers were also going up.

Bob Carr, in quite a political masterstroke of the time, called a drug summit. It really was a seismic event for NSW drug policy.



I remember we had Ministers and MPs coming through Kings

Cross and for many of them was the very first time they'd spoken to somebody who injected drugs, visited a treatment centre or spoken to family members.

There was more than one person that got up at the end of the summit and said this is the speech that I thought I would be giving, and then ripped up the pieces of paper they had in their hands, to show that where they thought they'd be at the beginning of the summit was not where they ended up.

Rosie: That's such a rare thing in politics.

Dr Jauncey: Really rare. And people cried, there was real emotion, people were allowed to see and feel the raw humanity of the situation.

Those that shared their stories about using heroin played a crucial role, but it came at a huge personal cost for some, because of the stigma.

Something that I think we really need to keep in mind with this summit is that we have to make it a safe space.

Rosie: I only learnt for the first time today that the police were allies in getting reform, that really surprises me.

Dr Jauncey: And the reason is because their officers were the ones that were finding cold blue bodies in public toilets, hiding in a stairwell, hiding behind a tree, or a park bench, or between two parked cars, having to notify the next of kin.

I think we forget that. That's the reality of being at the front lines in an epidemic of public drug injecting and public drug overdose, is that it's not just the family dealing with the trauma of it - other people also have to pick up the pieces, and a lot of the time it was the police.

Rosie: Marianne, it's obviously many years later but have there been any other centres like yours in NSW?

Dr Jauncey: No. So we operated as a trial for a decade. As far as I'm aware, that's the longest running trial of any health intervention in the world.

Have a guess, how many clean syringes do we give out in New South Wales every year? Do you have any idea, Rosie? 15 million. Just in New South Wales. Through what's called primary and secondary needle syringe programs.

We have the lowest rate of HIV amongst the population

LAW DOESN'T REALITY

of people who inject drugs basically anywhere in the world. That is purely and simply because we were pragmatic in the 80s and introduced in a bipartisan manner a program of harm reduction within an overarching framework of harm minimisation.

Rosie: That is such a huge public health impact for everyone.

Dr Jauncey: And yet, in every pharmacy, in every building, in every hospital, in every service where we provide clean injecting equipment except at 666 Darlinghurst Road, people are provided with clean injecting equipment and then they are forced to go away.

They are turned away, away from care, away from supervision, away from anybody that is able to immediately recognise and respond to an overdose. Why? because the law demands that.

The law doesn't match reality. And people are dying as a result.

Rosie: Do you have hopes for this upcoming summit that there could be a creation of more medically supervised injecting centres?

Dr Jauncey: More than hope.

I... There has to be. It's unfathomable to imagine anything

other than that.

We've had 11,500 overdoses on site and not a single death. Because if you recognise what you are doing and you know how to respond, you can absolutely prevent someone dying.

Rosie: What made the original drug summit have such an impact?

Dr Jauncey: There was a commitment from the government to genuinely doing what the summit recommended. And there was new money.

Very different to the alcohol summit that happened some years later, or the Ice Inquiry. So many recommendations have been ignored.

If you're going to go to the effort and expense of calling a summit, then as a government, it's beholden on you to listen and act on the advice that comes out of it.



DR MARIANNE JAUNCEY
Medical Director of the Kind Cross Medically Supervised Injecting Centre



ROSIE RYAN
Secretary of the NSW Left

SOLIDARITY MATTERS

GEORGE SIMON

Assistant General Secretary of the NSW Labor Party

Last month, Senator Fatima Payman crossed the floor to vote with the Greens on a motion on the recognition of Palestine. In doing so she put herself outside the Labor Party and a decision of the caucus. The actions of Senator Payman have sparked an intense debate inside and outside the Labor Party about the question of binding votes and the parameters for a free vote.

The main argument put for relaxing binding votes has been that the Party needs to be able to accommodate broad views on issues. In allowing MPs to vote with their conscience we are able to attract broader constituencies. In my view, this misunderstands the origin and purpose of binding votes.

In 2002, then Senator John Faulkner authored a paper for the ALP National Executive on the history of the conscience vote in the party. In it, he wrote the following about the origins of the binding vote:

‘In its early years Labor developed a degree of caucus discipline that contributed to the fusion of the opposition Free Traders and Protectionists and set the standard for a century of two party politics’

Early custodians of the Labor Party used caucus discipline as a tool. With it, they could unify representatives and their constituencies who agreed on fundamental values, but who had differences on specific policy issues.

Rather than destroying Labor’s broad church, the solidarity rule was central to a type of pluralist unity.

Put simply, the principle you sign up for when you agree to represent the party is a principle of solidarity. You debate your views internally and defend the majority decision that comes out. Every person seeking to represent Labor in public office signs a pledge agreeing to exactly that.



It’s not a wholly inflexible principle. The history of the party is littered with examples of exceptions to this rule. Whether it’s a conference agreeing to allow MPs a conscience vote on a matter, or the parliamentary leadership permitting an MP to express contrary personal views publicly that represent their constituency. In the main though, those exceptions have been a considered and collective decision.

In order for the principle of caucus solidarity to hold up, it must also exist in conjunction with an internal democratic structure that facilitates consultation, participation and debate.

There is no use having a principle of binding if there are not the mechanisms for people to persuade their colleagues internally. In my view, this is a legitimate area of debate from people who are frustrated about the way binding works.

The party does need to find ways to breakdown barriers to participation and facilitate debate contrary to views of leadership.

This way, our principles of solidarity will withstand the pressure of difficult political issues. However, despite that debate being legitimate, it’s hard to see how it can be relied upon to justify the actions of Senator Payman. If she had been silenced or denied opportunities to speak up inside the party, her decisions might have been understandable. But there is no evidence of those things occurring in this circumstance.

There have been some inside the Labor Party who have seen the decision of Senator Payman as cause for celebration. I find her decision deeply saddening. The debate about the binding vote exists in a difficult and urgent context. The atrocities being committed in Gaza are shocking. Nonetheless, the response to that needs to be a collective one. It requires voices inside the Labor party that can hold the leadership to account and assist in asserting international pressure towards a two state solution. The decision of Senator Payman to leave our party means that the movement for Palestinian justice inside the government has lost one of its most powerful voices. ■

HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD BE PROTECTED **NOT** ERODED

ANGUS MCFARLAND

Secretary of the Australian Services Union NSW & ACT (Services)

After more than a decade of conservative Coalition Governments in NSW, the Australian Services Union (ASU), along with unionists across the state, worked and hoped for a new Labor Government that would stand for something very different. We looked forward to a state in which everyone has a place – where human rights and our civil liberties are respected, protected and advanced.

One year on, however, regressive Coalition legislation remains on the books while new laws that strip people of rights and protections are being introduced.

These laws include:

1. Mandatory Disease Testing introduced by the last government with support from Labor, enables police to impose blood tests on children as young as fourteen for spitting at them. All this does is reinforce stereotypes and stigma about HIV. It does nothing to provide for safer workplaces or the building of trusting relationships between police and vulnerable community groups.

2. The Roads and Crimes Legislation Amendment Act 2022, known as the **NSW anti protest laws** are unnecessary and counterproductive. These repressive laws were rushed through the parliament by the Perrottet Government, supported by the then Labor Opposition. Any group of people can now face serious criminal charges simply by protesting near a public facility or causing people to be redirected around them. The legislation is a threat to everyone from school children marching for climate action to anti-war protestors with up to two years in jail and a \$22,000 fine. The NSW Supreme Court has already ruled half of these measures unconstitutional, casting a cloud over the entire legislation. These laws undermine our democracy and must be removed.

3. Earlier this year, the Labor Government introduced **new youth bail laws** – laws where the heaviest burden will fall on Aboriginal communities, reinforcing racist stereotyping and likely to increase the criminalisation and incarceration of already vulnerable and acutely disadvantaged people and communities. They are ill informed and not fit for purpose, while decades of evidence – much of it produced by on-the-ground experience of members of my union, on what actually works to build healthy communities have been ignored.

These bad laws all have a few things in common. They are not evidence based,

they have skipped community consultation, they introduce harsher penalties and greater police powers, and they privilege the interests of businesses. More than that, taken as a whole they demonstrate an unmistakable and genuinely alarming commitment by the state to oppress dissent.

Members of my own union, the ASU, work in every community legal centre and major policy and advocacy organisation across the country. Those organisations include those representing First Nations communities, people with disability, women, LGBTIQ+ communities, environmental and climate activist groups, human and animal rights organisations, overseas aid agencies, and a range of other civil liberties and law reform groups. The Union represents people who are most likely to be involved as protesters, or supporting others who are protesting on a range of issues of public concern.

The union movement has a long and very proud history of protesting against unconscionable laws and on issues of justice and equity. Protests have been essential in making fundamental and positive changes, including our own union's campaign for paid family and domestic violence leave and for NSW Labor's new legislation to deal with coercive control.

I am calling out the dangerous trend in NSW towards crushing dissent, whether that is by introducing new oppressive laws, or failing to rescind laws introduced by the last government. We must demand better from our Labor Governments.

Labor has a proud legacy of recognising and advancing human rights at a state and commonwealth level. But the recent trend casts a shadow on that legacy.

The latest trend in Government policy puts into sharp focus the need for a comprehensive Human Rights Act in NSW to provide both positive protections and enhancements of our rights in NSW.



SEIZING THE GREEN WAVE: AUSTRALIA'S PATH TO A NET-ZERO FUTURE

JENNY MCALLISTER

*Assistant Minister for Climate Change
and Energy, Senator for NSW*

Many of us can remember the impact the mining boom had on Australia's economy in the 2000s. Whether you were a tradesperson in a regional town, a white-collar professional, or running a small business in the suburbs, you could feel the effect of the mining boom. The Reserve Bank of Australia estimates it lifted Australians' disposable income by 13%.

Fuelled by the appetite for resources and energy from rapidly growing economies in Asia, it was a powerful moment of prosperity as we surfed a global wave of investment and production.

There is another wave coming. Our choice today is whether we want to ride it.

We are in one of the most important and transformative economic shifts in history as we transition to net zero emissions - locally and globally. The world is going to need a host of green products as it decarbonises. Some of these will be substitutes for existing, carbon intensive products - products like green steel and cement for buildings, green aluminium for construction and consumer goods, hydrogen to substitute for natural gas, or green ammonia to fertilise farms. Some reflect surging demand in growing markets, like the critical minerals that are needed to manufacture batteries and solar panels.

The key to producing so many of these products is plentiful renewable energy. That means that Australia is perfectly positioned to benefit. We have a continent with abundant renewable energy and mineral resources. We have a secure, stable investment environment and skilful, innovative people.

However, these endowments alone are not



enough. We know that other countries can see the economic opportunities that will flow from the global net zero transformation. Australia needs to act now if we want to be part of this prosperity and avoid being left behind.

That's why this year's Budget invests over \$22 billion in our Future Made in Australia plan. This investment will kickstart green industries, like hydrogen, green metals, critical minerals, ammonia, and solar. It will drive investment, strengthen our regions, and help train the workforce of the future.

Economist Rod Sims calculates that Australia over time can achieve additional export revenue of \$250-300bn per annum through green energy exports, which could also reduce global emissions by 6-9%. These measures are designed to maximise the economic and industrial benefits of the move to net zero and secure our place in a changing global economy. They'll help us to become a renewable energy superpower - all while generating good local jobs.

This is a key building block in the work the Albanese Government has been doing since we got elected to make up for the lost decade under the previous Liberal National government.

We have set a clear direction with legislated emission reduction targets.

We've re-established Australia as a positive contributor in the international community. We've established the Net Zero Economy Agency to facilitate investment, support workforce transition, coordinate policy, and engage with the community to promote orderly and positive net zero economic transformation. The revised Safeguard Mechanism now requires Australia's highest emitting facilities to reduce their emissions in line with Australia's emission reduction targets. The Capacity Investment Scheme will help bring new dispatchable renewables online to replace the coal-fired power plants that are nearing the end of the lives and are due to retire. We've invested \$1.7 billion to improve the energy performance of homes, businesses, and local government facilities.

Together, this work signals clear direction to industry and private investors, unlocking additional innovation and funds necessary for the clean energy transformation.

Choosing nuclear puts all of this at risk. It means turning our back on the global energy transition. It means giving up the opportunity to be the supplier of green steel or hydrogen to the growing economies in our region. It means saying no to our chance to deliver more secure, well-paying jobs to regional Australians.

A DIGITAL WORLD FOR ALL?

CHARISHMA KALIYANDA

NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, Youth Justice, Customer Service, and Digital Government, Member for Liverpool



There was a time when the overriding stereotype of government and technology and innovation was of a Venn diagram with two distinct circles. But this is no longer the case as governments across Australia have made strides, particularly over the last couple of decades, in understanding that digital public infrastructure is just as important to delivery of public services as physical, social and community infrastructure.

Australia has been on the road to digital transformation in government for at least a quarter of a century. Digital technology is changing the way that governments everywhere support their citizens – indeed digital technologies play a central and often empowering role in our lives. However, we know that not all members of our community have been able to fully participate, leading to a growing digital divide. Inclusion and equity must be placed at the heart of how we move forward.

Reconceiving public services by digitising them is in many ways a logical extension of the state's long-standing role in physical infrastructure. Digital identity, data

exchanges and financial payment networks have become crucial to the functioning of society and commerce. Just as we built roads, highways, and airports in the 20th century, we must now build a digital infrastructure that is open, accessible, and empowers everyone.

We also know that it is imperative that governments regulate or own these services to prioritise access and prevent rent extraction.

Recently, Australia debuted in the top 5 of the OECD Digital Government Index. Australia's commitment to cybersecurity of digital public infrastructure, leadership in developing a skilled digital workforce, and facilitation of international collaboration were recognised.

In an era where people unironically select Wi-Fi or a digital device as one of the few items they would take with them to a deserted island, we take it for granted that access to technology and digital infrastructure is quick, reliable and affordable.

However, it is also true that:

- **60% of Australians feel like they can't keep up with rapid changes in technology,**
- **\$66 million was stolen by online scammers from Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with a disability in 2021 alone, and**
- **46% of Australians say the rising cost of living has affected their ability to get online.**

While many people are benefitting from the increased role technology is playing in society, many Australians are digitally excluded, lacking affordable connectivity, the ability, or devices to utilise technology. Access to digital infrastructure is an emerging frontier of poverty.

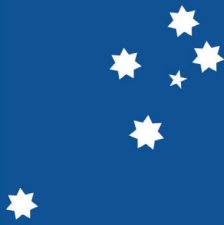
We must recognise that digital technologies – and the ability to confidently and safely

use them – are required for all Australians in contemporary society. This includes being able to access essential services such as health, education and the myriad government services accessible online, along with finding and undertaking employment, as well as being socially connected.

According to the 2021 Digital Quality of Life Index, which measures the impact of internet affordability, internet quality, e-infrastructure, e-security, and e-government, Australia is currently ranked 17th out of 110 countries, behind the US, China, Japan, France, Germany and the United Kingdom and others.

The NSW Government is developing its first Digital Inclusion Strategy to try and address this. It will look at how everyone in NSW can access, afford and engage with digital technologies, services and resources – regardless of where they live, their age, race, gender identity and socio-economic status, or if they live with a disability.

The real test of digital transformation is not about how many apps or clever buzzwords are deployed by governments – but about the time, money and effort we invest to make a material difference to the delivery of government services in a changed and changing world.



ONLY LABOR CAN END THE HOUSING AND RENTAL CRISIS

BOLD IDEAS WILL GET US THERE

ROSE JACKSON

NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Youth, and the North Coast, NSW MLC



At the last NSW Labor Conference I spoke about our broken housing system and what 12 years of Liberal and Nationals failure had done to create it. It is and was an issue that touched the lives of almost everyone in the room.

Every single person is either struggling to get by in this broken housing system or knows someone experiencing extreme housing or rental stress.

Most young people I know have given up on the dream of buying a home, many people in public housing feel desperate while the social housing waiting list grows every single day.

I spoke about all of this because it was important to me as the Shadow Minister for Housing that Labor listened and had a bold plan to address one of the biggest crises of our generation.

Now, less than 2 years later, as the Minister for Housing in a new NSW Labor Government we announced the single biggest investment in housing in NSW's history - Building Homes for NSW. It was truly a big moment for our state and the movement - a plan to build 30,000 homes right across NSW to confront the housing crisis.

While this is only the first step along the journey to fixing this crisis it is bold propositions like this, delivered by Labor Governments and progressives, that will help dig us out of this crisis.

So how will this program help?

Despite what people want you to believe, the housing system is quite complex and fiddly - there are a lot of moving parts and finding simple solutions isn't always easy. It is my view that you have to look at every opportunity and leave no stone unturned and I think for the most part the NSW Government is doing that.

We know we have issues across the spectrum, planning rules, Short Term Rental rules, workforce and construction, to name a few.

In my patch, public housing, we have been left with a crumbling system. There aren't enough public homes and too many of them are below acceptable standards of maintenance. It was clear to me that we needed a program that builds thousands of public homes while undertaking the biggest ever maintenance blitz in history.

This will mean that vulnerable people will get access to safe housing while taking pressure off the housing market and increasing the supply of homes. It will also create thousands of good jobs across our state.

Where to from here?

So now that the "easy" part is out of the way we have to get on with the job of actually building these homes for people to live in and our problem at the start will be finding the people and material to actually build these homes - something we are actively thinking about.

We're taking a system that in some years sold more homes than they built, to building over 8,000 good quality public homes - it's going to be a real muck in and get to work kind of effort.

We are also going to have to grapple cumbersome planning rules as well as NIMBYs and Liberal MPs who don't want public housing in their backyards. This will require the movement and the community to reflect and reject some of these fringe elements, because public housing should be built all across our cities and towns.

And we also have to keep up the fight and the pressure.

I have been clear, this is the beginning and running a marathon starts by taking the first step. We will need more money, more homes and more reform to solve this crisis but I hope we have proven that we are committed and determined to get it done.





SCHOOL CLEANERS' LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE HAS AN END IN SIGHT



JUDITH BARBER

On Saturday May 11, I made the 1,000km return trip from the Mid-North Coast to Parramatta with a bus full of fellow cleaners and union members. It was a 3am start and we hit torrential rain on the way down, but nothing was going to stop us from joining the United Workers Union rally calling on the NSW Labor Government to end the privatisation of school and government cleaning.

As tough as the drive was, the journey to win decent, safe and secure jobs for cleaners has been even harder.

Government cleaning services were privatised 30 years ago by the Liberal Government. I started on the job in 2004. I've worked for different contractors at multiple sites, including Bowraville Central School, where I work today. Over the years I've seen the consequences of a contracting model that puts profits over workers and services. There have been cuts to hours, understaffing, supplies haven't been replaced and equipment is in disrepair. As a delegate, I take calls from members all over the state who have had the same experience.

Cleaners feel the brunt of this broken system. We pay the price with our knees, our backs and our shoulders. Incredibly, as an occupational group, contracted school cleaners have the fifth highest workers compensation premium in NSW.

During this cost-of-living crisis, cleaners are struggling. In a recent survey by our union, 54.5% of cleaners said that they had missed meals because they'd run out of money and 75.8% said that they had delayed medical

treatment for their family. The nature of the contracting model means that it's impossible to bargain with individual employers for fair wage increases, and to make it worse, each time the contracts expire, cleaners are faced with uncertainty over their jobs, hours and accrued entitlements.

It's clear who does benefit from this system though. The current whole-of-government cleaning contracts, which cover our state's more than 2,000 public schools, as well as TAFE campuses, police and ambulance stations, electorate offices, court houses and other state government buildings, are worth more than \$518 million per year combined. The companies that hold the contracts include massive multi-national and Australian corporations. Even a conservative estimate of profits would see these companies walking away with tens of millions of dollars of public money.

Things are badly in need of change.

With the election of the Minns Labor Government, we have our best chance in a generation to finally fix this mess. The current contracts expire at the end of this year and the government has fulfilled their election commitment to review the contracting model – a process I was pleased to participate in as a union delegate and one I'm confident has shone a light on the current system's failures.

Cleaners know what's at stake and we've been making our voices heard.

We've been in the papers and on the news, in parliament knocking on doors, and working within the party - passing motions at Country Conference and now gearing up to take a stand at State Conference.

The support from across the union movement has been incredible. On that rainy day in Parramatta we had the Teachers Federation, the Police Association, The Public Services Association and Unions

NSW standing should-to-shoulder with cleaners. These unions know how valuable the work we do is to keep the workplaces of their members safe and clean.

This Labor Government has already shown its willingness to bring public services back into public hands with the decisions on Juneec Correctional Center and Social Housing Maintenance. School and Government cleaning must be next.

Direct employment could be life changing for the state's estimated 7,000 cleaners. It would get us off the endless wheel on contract cycles and would enable cleaners, and our union, to bargain directly with our employer. We are a low wage, majority women workforce that is hugely ethnically diverse. We deserve the same chance to negotiate over pay and conditions as the teachers, police officers and paramedics that we work alongside.

Creating, secure, decent family sustaining jobs for cleaners makes sense on so many levels – it's a responsible use of public money, it supports our regions, and it can improve cleaning standards in our schools and public buildings.

It also goes to the core of who our party fights for and our belief in the capacity of government to directly deliver quality services.

At this State Conference we look forward to securing a commitment from the Minns Labor Government to end the privatization of school and government cleaning and to set us on a new path towards a sustainable model of direct employment.

Judith Barber is an ALP member, United Workers Union Member, and cleaner at Bowraville Central School.

THE FUTURE OF OUR REGION, MADE IN AUSTRALIA

**TIM
AYRES**

*Assistant Minister for Trade and
Manufacturing, NSW Senator*



There is no room for complacency. Australia faces a much more threatening environment in our region in the next thirty years than ever before. We are confronted by the twin challenges of a heating climate and the energy transition. Moreover, we find ourselves in a far less certain geo-strategic situation that undermines the peace and security of Australia and the region, whilst our neighbours seek to move from low and middle income economies to middle and high income economies.

There is much to lose, but enormous potential for Australia in this less stable environment. With significant natural advantages - wind, solar, landmass and mineral resources - and our skilled,

adaptable people, stable governance and strong middle power relations, Australia, with the right leadership, should be in the box seat to contribute to the development of a safer, more prosperous and equal Southeast Asian region.

But that requires sustained and disciplined strategy - all the tools of statecraft must be deployed to make Australia a renewable energy superpower, protect our energy security, build a safer, more interdependent region, secure peace and ensure good jobs and equal opportunities for Australia's regions and outer cities, as well as our CBDs and inner cities.

That is what the Albanese Government's Future Made in Australia strategy is directed towards.

Its implementation will deliver a reindustrialised economy with all of the industrial capabilities that Australia needs to safely navigate a more uncertain 21st century.

From offshore wind, to manufacturing solar panels, to green iron and steel, to making battery storage here and everything in between, Future Made in Australia is about having a big, bold vision to make things here as we continue our transformation from a high emissions

economy to a low emissions economy.

Future Made in Australia, as a \$23 billion package that sits alongside the \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund, makes up the biggest pro-manufacturing investment in Australia's history. By using mechanisms like production tax credits, we can drive the vital investment in manufacturing and renewables in Australia that will power our industrial diversification.

This investment will generate thousands of jobs, jobs for school leavers in apprenticeships and engineering cadetships, in regions like the Hunter, the Illawarra, the Pilbara and Central and Far North Queensland, regions that have a deep tradition and history of powering our economy.

As a former leader of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, I'm proud to be part of a government that is leading the way on meeting these unique challenges in a way that all good Labor Governments should - with workers and good jobs for working people at the centre of its approach.

However, in Peter Dutton and Barnaby Joyce's Coalition, Australia is presented with a starkly different path. It is full of characters like Andrew Constance, the Liberal candidate for Gilmore, who was determined to destroy the rail manufacturing industry when he was NSW Transport Minister. Peter Dutton's Liberal-National



LOCAL RENEWABLES: THE KEY TO OUR INDUSTRIAL FUTURE

Coalition wants to see zero investment in manufacturing and renewables in Australia.

Instead, they want to see coal-fired power stations stay open for longer, with nowhere for workers in these industries to go when they eventually close, and to force their untested, uncoded and expensive nuclear plan on Australia.

Australia can have a Future Made in Australia, with good manufacturing and engineering jobs and a net zero economy, but only an Albanese Labor Government will deliver it.

STEVE MURPHY
National Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union



It's hard to imagine that 112 years ago, the coal mining community of Maitland in NSW's Hunter Valley woke up to a story in their local newspaper about the future impact on our living environment and climate from burning coal in furnaces which was releasing millions of tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere.

We have watched for more than a decade as climate culture wars have divided our communities and delayed climate action and job creation.

Now coal-reliant communities, such as those in the Hunter, anxiously face the imminent decline of Australia's coal-fired power stations – with 90% due to shut down in the next decade. This provides us little time to be distracted from planning for the future of our energy regions.

Workers are rightly worried as they have watched our energy industries change, and

big businesses shift their investments to protect their profits and CEO bonuses.

By working together, we can forge a future from the shift to renewable energy manufacturing here in Australia. It would bring good, secure, well-paid, unionised jobs for workers now and for generations to come, and we won't have to move from the places we call home.

There is a pathway to a sustainable future, as we pay down our carbon debt that will lift Australia up the value chain. We can be much more than a quarry, a farm, and a nice place to visit.

Australia has significant natural advantage that we must leverage with necessary speed so that we win the jobs and industries for future Australians to benefit from.

From solar panels and batteries to wind towers and heavy vehicles, these jobs are up for the taking right now. We have the skilled workers and the ideas that can create tens of thousands of good quality manufacturing jobs.

NSW must stake its claim on these jobs of the future. With billions of dollars of support from the Albanese Government to invest in our renewable manufacturing capacity, NSW is well placed to secure its slice of a manufacturing future with the skills our local workers have.

For the workers who have powered our homes and our economy for generations, this is the moment for us to show that we will look after them.



THE CASE FOR INSOURCING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

MELISSA DONNELLY

National Secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)

Australia's employment services system has found itself under a microscope over the past 12 months, and rightfully so. From unethical behaviour by service providers, through to lectures from the millionaires who own them telling people to just 'get a job' - the system has never felt more ineffective or out of touch.

It's also expensive. The scheme is expected to cost taxpayers \$9.5 billion over the next four years and is the single biggest Commonwealth procurement outside of Defence. So, are we getting bang for those almost ten billion bucks?

Anyone who has encountered this system is shouting no, right about now.

The employment services system that exists today isn't the community driven, decentralised model the Howard Government had in mind when they privatised the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) in 1998.

It is dominated by just a handful of profit driven multinational businesses, and with their profit-maximising motives, have come problems.

Some providers are getting caught engaging in unethical behaviour, gouging as much money as they can from their already highly lucrative government contracts.

Whistleblowers have revealed that providers are falsely claiming credit for job seekers who have secured themselves a job, enabling them to claim taxpayer dollars for doing absolutely nothing.

Media reports have uncovered that more than \$40 million a year is being pocketed by these providers for shuffling job seekers through jobs and training programs within their own companies.

And there is evidence suggesting that these large multinationals, such as Max Solutions and APM, have made hundreds of millions if not billions in revenue from employment services. But paid next to nothing in tax.



Job seekers, the community and government share the same goal, but employment service providers have a wildly different one. And that's where things are falling apart.

Job service providers are businesses. Their goal is to make a profit. And that goal is fed by the mutual obligations framework that underpins the entire system.

It's important to note that our calls for insourcing have always come alongside the call for the immediate suspension of mutual obligations requirements.

These requirements are a series of tasks and activities that jobseekers need to complete in order to keep receiving their welfare payments - applying for jobs, agreeing to a job plan, and undertaking training or education.

Employment service providers conveniently provide all of this in one place, clipping their ticket every single time.

The longer they keep someone in that cycle of unemployment and coming back through their doors, the more money they make.

It's simple: finding someone a secure and long-term job is bad for business.

Insourcing employment services through the creation of a modern, fit for purpose CES, would give multinationals the boot and put the public service back at the heart of this system.

A parliamentary review last year backed in the CPSU's calls for insourcing and detailed the myriad ways the current system is letting people down.

It recommended the government develop and publish a plan to transition across to a Commonwealth Employment Services system - a can that has been kicked down the road ever since.

This party prides itself as being the party of big reforms, long lasting and significant changes to benefit the lives of all Australians, especially those doing it tough - and that's exactly what this is.

But for some unknown reason, this issue is languishing on the backburner.

The Government's recent response to the Rebuilding Employment Services Report confirmed that. It's light on detail, delays action and fails to address the ongoing damage caused by mutual obligations.

Meanwhile, jobseekers in big city centres, regional towns and rural outposts are jumping through the hoops they are being asked to jump through. They are ticking boxes, doing courses and showing up time and time again, with the promise of a secure job and stable income just through that next hoop.

But it never comes, and it never will, because the system isn't built for that. ■

FRONT AND CENTRE: THE ROLE OF VICTIM-SURVIVORS IN REFORMING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**MATILDA
COOPER-AYRES**
NSW Young Labor Delegate



The voices of victim survivors must be amplified to reform the criminal justice system

The criminal justice system failed me, and continues to fail thousands of victim survivors daily.

I, like many of my friends, have experienced first hand how ineffective and inaccessible the criminal justice system is. It is deeply depressing to say that my experience is not a one off, rather it is incredibly common. I was only a teenager when I tried to seek justice and support from the legal system.

People that have shared my experiences saw this year as a turning point. Thousands of women turned up to rallies across the country, they took over every headline with their demands, and we saw our leaders across state and federal governments enter crisis talks to address what they called ‘an epidemic of violence’.

But - we’ve reached these so-called turning points before. As if on a loop, women repeatedly rally, march, write and scream that the system is not working. And, until we critically examine this system, we cannot hope to break such a disappointing cycle.

The system itself is broken.

This article hopes to do some of that examination. In it, I will step through what

a victim survivor faces when engaging with the criminal justice system, whilst critiquing what does and doesn’t work. Through this analysis, it will become clear that there are far too many barriers that prevent victim-survivors from achieving justice - and that we must act now to ensure these are torn down.

Victim-survivors meet their first hurdle when trying to report what they’ve experienced to authorities. During reporting, complainants are met with a severe absence of empathy from police officers. Many are made to feel like they are not believed, or that their experience is not a serious crime. The initial interaction with police officers is a large deterrent for victim survivors to continue down legal avenues of justice. The way in which questioning is conducted is invasive and dismissive, the physical nature of a police station is not a welcoming environment. All of this culminates in the fact that 92% of women do not contact law enforcement after being sexually assaulted.

Victim survivors should be met with a supportive environment where their experiences are considered as urgent and important.

Then, victim survivors undergo the arduous process of collecting evidence. On the one hand much of the important evidence is lost at the scene of the crime as for many victims, they do not realise what they have undergone until a later date. On the other hand, repeatedly retelling their experience to a police officer, who is prioritising the investigation rather than welfare, is an additional trauma.

On top of this, the onus is often on victim survivors to understand what evidence is needed. This is unfair. Instead, they should be provided with appropriate resources and should be supported through this process.

There is very little in terms of support services for victim survivors throughout the process. Things like counselling, legal aid and social workers are criminally underfunded. This only makes a complex system more lonely and confusing. Often people who would ordinarily be a source of support for victim survivors, such as family and friends, are called to give evidence in their criminal trial. This means that victim survivors cannot discuss court matters with them. This creates a highly isolating experience that has severe impacts upon

mental health and wellbeing. The NSW Government must invest in providing a higher level of support networks to victim survivors.

If the matter reaches trial, court room procedures themselves are not fit to deal with matters relating to sexual assault. The process is not trauma informed and often takes away agency from victim survivors who are already feeling powerless. For example, the cross-examination process is a humiliating experience that leaves victim survivors feeling as if they are on trial, not the person who committed the crime. They are cross examined on their memory, sexual history, credibility and motive. Additionally, in many cases victim survivors are left in the dark about the progress of their trial, and what they may face in the courtroom because they cannot easily access legal counsel.

The only way to fix these problems is to centre the voices of victim-survivors who have lived through the criminal justice system. They are already posing solutions to these problems -we just need to listen.

Anna Coutts-Trotter, Cofounder of The Survivor Hub, an organisation that aims to support, inform and empower survivors of sexual violence, spoke to me about why this is so important:

“The legal process as it currently stands is retraumatising, dehumanising and victim-blaming.... To rebuild the legal process so survivors can safely engage and hope for “justice”, we need consultation from those who know it best. The survivors forced to endure the process. Who endure it hoping to achieve a shred of “justice”.”

A one size fits all approach is not fit for matters relating to sexual assault, it must adapt to address the specific requirements of the crime, and the victim survivors at the centre of it.

As NSW Labor members we must commit ourselves to fighting for a more humane criminal justice system.

We must affirm our belief and support for victim survivors, we must be the party of change and of justice.

NUCLEAR **NO HELP** TO COAL POWER WORKERS

GRAHAME KELLY

General Secretary of the Mining and Energy Union



Workers in NSW coal fired power stations need job pathways much sooner than the 20-year timeline required to build nuclear power plants.

Opposition Leader Peter Dutton's proposal to build nuclear power plants on the sites of current and former coal fired power stations comes with the suggestion that existing workforces could simply transition from coal to nuclear power. But the timing just doesn't stack up. The focus on nuclear is a distraction from getting on with building the new industries our workers and communities need in the next five to ten years.

Two of Dutton's seven proposed nuclear sites are in NSW. One is AGL's Liddell site at Muswellbrook which ceased operating last year. AGL has commenced work to convert the site into a low carbon industrial hub with solar panel manufacturing, which would be backed by Federal Government investment through the Solar SunShot Program.

The other proposed nuclear site is Energy Australia's Mt Piper Power station at Lithgow. Mt Piper is NSW's youngest power

station and although its current announced closure date is 2040, we have consistently seen closure timelines for power stations brought forward.

Mr Dutton says that two of the seven nuclear plants proposed nationally could be delivered by 2037. This timeline is highly unlikely, given the raft of obstacles noted by experts and commentators. These include lack of support from site owners, state and federal nuclear bans and international experience on the length of time it takes to build nuclear power stations. On top of that, the Coalition has not told us which two would be built first.

Neither of them may be in NSW at all, leaving the state hanging until the 2040s and beyond.

The need to begin securing job pathways for NSW coal power workers is urgent. Even with the two-year extension recently secured to ensure energy security and keep prices lower, the Eraring power station at Lake Macquarie is due to close in 2027. Bayswater power station - the sister site to Liddell - is scheduled to close in 2033. Vales Point at Lake Macquarie will also close in 2033.

This means we cannot wait until the 2040s to get new industries up and running.

If nuclear ever did become part of our energy mix in future, our Union would go about organising the workforce and ensuring good pay and safe conditions.

We just don't believe it will happen.

If we could turn back the clock 15 years, there may have been a time when it made sense to pursue a long-term nuclear energy strategy. But now, trusted sources like the CSIRO say that nuclear power is the most expensive form of energy and it will take too long to build.

It speaks volumes that no investors are putting their hands up wanting to invest in nuclear.

Our coal fired power station members are sick of being used as political footballs to fight elections, and create distractions. Politicians should be working to come up with genuine solutions for energy security, jobs and the well-being of our communities.

Peter Dutton was part of a Coalition Government that oversaw the closure of a succession of coal fired power stations without lifting a finger to help those workers or support their communities. They pretended to workers staring down the barrel of closures that the energy transition wasn't happening. Now, they are pretending they can simply move into nuclear jobs when nothing about their plan stacks up.

Workers at Eraring and Vales Point and Bayswater and Mt Piper and their captured coal mining comrades deserve to be reassured that there's a jobs plan for them and their communities.

The imminent passage of the Net Zero Economy Authority through the Federal Parliament will be an important step. We will have a federal body tasked specifically with supporting these workers into new jobs and driving investment and economic diversification in energy communities.

We cannot wait until the 2040s, this work must start now. ■

DUTTON'S NUCLEAR FANTASY IS A DISTRACTION FROM CLIMATE ACTION

PENNY SHARPE

Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Heritage, NSW MLC



The left of the Labor Party has always been against nuclear energy. We have led the fight for action on climate change and economic justice to ensure that the planet we leave our children is better than the one we inherited. We are again being called upon to stand up and make sure we live up to our aspirations for the future.

At this Federal election, there are two clear choices facing the Australian people. A future where cheap, reliable energy is the foundation for a fair and prosperous economy built on the free clean inputs of the sun and the wind...or Peter Dutton's nuclear fantasy. Under Labor Governments, the work to tackle climate change, decarbonise our electricity grid, diversify our economy and build good, secure jobs is well underway. We have the plan. We have the technology. And we are making good progress. Until recently, at least in NSW, we had the bipartisanship needed to do this work.

When Tony Abbott pressed the political button against action on climate change, Australia wasted 10 long years fighting climate wars while the planet got hotter and the need for action became more urgent. In 2024, Dutton is doing the same. This time households, workers, communities, businesses, our economy and our ecosystems can't afford to play this dangerous game. In NSW, there is so much to lose. Affordable, reliable power from coal-fired electricity

generation has supported NSW to build a strong economy. We owe those who have produced it a great debt, but the clock is ticking, with our four remaining coal fired power stations set to close within 15 years.

And that's where the opportunities (and risks) lie for NSW. The build out of a reliable and abundant supply of low-cost, renewable energy will power NSW homes and businesses, as well as underpin a revitalised low carbon manufacturing sector. It is a once in a generation economic change that will not come around again. This transformation will see billions of dollars of investment into our state, particularly in our regional communities. As well as reliable, low-cost power, this will deliver lasting benefits like improved infrastructure, housing, jobs and training.

In NSW we are almost halfway to our 2030 target for renewable energy generation, we are a quarter of the way to securing long term storage needs and the first transmission project for a renewable energy zone has been approved. Dutton's nuclear ploy puts all this at risk. It's designed to. The Liberal & National parties tell communities that they believe in acting on climate change - just not through renewables. They say nuclear is the silver bullet that can solve all our challenges.

But pretending that nuclear is a serious proposal ignores the reality. The cost to build nuclear reactors is enormous and unknown - the best example being the Hinkley Point C reactor in the UK coming in at around \$92 billion and running years late. We don't have a regulatory regime. We would need to build processing infrastructure, a supply chain, and train a skilled workforce - all of this is expensive and it's decades away. Then there is the inconvenient truth of there being no safe solution to deal with the waste.

Even if these issues could be overcome (and they can't), the kicker is that nuclear reactors would lock in the most expensive form of electricity for households, businesses and industry for decades.

Peter Dutton's efforts are a return to the climate wars hidden behind a fig leaf called nuclear. Each of us will again be drawn into the campaign to maintain the support for action on climate change.

Our communities, our economy and our planet do not have the luxury of waiting another decade for action.

ON PALESTINE

When we elected a Labor Government in 2022, we had hope. Hope that said government would bring progressive social and economic change to Australia. We had hope that it would represent party members and uplift marginalised people. When we look at the issue of Palestine, many feel like that flame of hope is diminishing.

The genocide in Gaza is not merely a distant conflict; it resonates deeply with our community here in Australia. Each news update, each image of innocent civilians suffering, each video of an orphaned child is a heartbreaking reminder of the atrocities happening overseas. We come together as a community feeling completely helpless and hopeless with humanity.

The current death toll in Gaza is estimated to be 38,000 people, with the medical journal the Lancet claiming the final figure could be 186,000. That's potentially 186,000 innocent civilians massacred, permanently injured, made homeless and made sick because of actions of Israeli Defence Force, and the decisions of the Israeli state.

The Australian government's response to this ongoing genocide has been utterly disappointing, not just to me, but for the thousands of Muslim voters who had hope in a Labor Government.

Nearly every human rights organisation agrees that Israel is an apartheid state. Amnesty International's investigation demonstrated that Israel imposes a system of oppression and domination against Palestinians across all areas under its control: in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and against Palestinian refugees, in order to benefit Jewish Israelis. This amounts to apartheid as prohibited in international law. Laws, policies and

practices which are intended to maintain a cruel system of control over Palestinians, have left them fragmented geographically and politically, frequently impoverished, and in a constant state of fear and insecurity.

The Australian government's reaction to the South African apartheid, much like the rest of the world, was to economically sanction South Africa. Due to the economic sanctions and pressure South Africa ceased to be an apartheid state. Australia must undertake the same action to see an end to Palestinian oppression in Israel. Words alone are not enough, we need to see action.

As a young Muslim voter and Labor party member I implore the party to listen to members like me.

The rank-and-file have come out in numbers in support of Palestine campaigning tirelessly within their branches by passing pro-Palestine motions and on the streets; at protests and student encampments. I no longer want to see my fellow Muslim brothers and sisters feeling disillusioned and alienated from the party. This alienation will lead to devastating consequences for the ALP's electoral prospects particularly in seats with high Muslim populations.

Despite these challenges, the resilience of our community shines through. From grassroots activism to community-led initiatives, Australian Muslims are actively engaged in raising awareness, advocating for Palestinian liberation and providing humanitarian aid to those affected by the genocide in Gaza. I feel extremely proud of

my community in the Illawarra for tirelessly turning out every weekend to protest for Gaza and holding fundraising events like our community Iftar to continue raising funds for Palestine.

The liberation of Palestine is ultimately linked to other liberation movements across the globe. It is a movement based on the notions of anti-war and pro-peace.

I hope in my lifetime I can see a free Palestine. Nobody is free until we are all free.



ELA AKYOL
*National Union of Students
Women's Officer*

CHANGES NEED TO BACK IN WORKERS' SAFETY

PAUL GARRETT

*Deputy Secretary of the
Maritime Union of Australia (Sydney)*



Trade unions fight for dignified wages and conditions, secure employment and a workplace where workers can go to do their day's work and then come home safely. In too many workplaces, however, safety is a forgotten component, or a nice to have.

Since 1 January 2012, when the work health and safety (WHS) legislation came into force, workers have been left to suffer at the hands of a safety regulator that has not had worker safety at the core element of its function. Ten years of a Liberal Government and their failure to take worker safety seriously has seen SafeWork NSW become a dilapidated and bureaucratic agency, intertwined as a subordinate function of the 'Better Services' agency in NSW Government. Ironically, workers get inferior service as they struggle through the 'triaging' call centre and are generally left worse off when it comes to support on safety issues.

The recent achievement of the NSW Government to deliver industrial manslaughter legislation is a significant step in the right direction. This has come as the

result of endless campaigning over many decades, particularly by the trade union movement.

To give credit where it is due, NSW Labor has not only refocussed on safety, but has stepped away from having it as the poor cousin of the Industrial Relations portfolio and instead created a standalone Work Health & Safety portfolio in the Ministry. Furthermore, it is reassuring to have a Minister that is trying to achieve real change in this area as well. There is always more work to be done though and workers expect a safety regulator that is given the resources and funding it needs to do the job.

Safe systems of work are inherently important in any job. Proper procedure based on proper risk assessments and safety controls that have been consulted on with workers is a fundamental must.

But there is a compliance issue that needs better focus as well. When fatalities occur on the job, it also means there has been a raft of missed opportunities beforehand to stop and address the safety breaches that have happened in the lead up to these unnecessary and horrible workplace tragedies. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but with every fatality and every serious incident that leaves workers injured is the knowledge that it is nearly always the case that after the investigations have been finalised, these safety incidents could have been avoided if proactive steps on safety were taken by the companies beforehand.

And why do some of these bosses flaunt their requirements under safety legislation? Firstly, because it is cheaper and secondly, because they can. Why would bosses

go out of their way on safety when they know that the worst consequence is being slapped with a notice equivalent to the slap of a wet lettuce leaf? We have companies conditioned to appeal to SafeWork NSW to suspend Provisional Improvement Notices issued by workplace Health and Safety Representatives because there is a chance they may overturn them on a technicality. This is in stark contrast to the intention of WHS legislation, where companies are supposed to get involved with their workers and their union, consult on safety issues and implement safety controls to fix those issues.

Working people need a safety regulator with teeth that acts in the best interest of workers. One that is well funded that can put more inspectors out in the field, backing in workers and holding recalcitrant companies to account. One that can deliver inspectors with specialised skill sets that reflects on the workplaces and the industry that they are investigating. One that has a proper compliance and enforcement arm that can go after bosses that flaunt the law and put workers lives at risk.

Along with our trade union comrades, the Maritime Union of Australia will continue the fight for safe workplaces.

Decent jobs. Decent pay. Secure employment. Safe workplaces. These should remain eternal labour values for the political party of working people.

SMASHING THE GENDER PAY GAP

ANGELA BUDAI

National Policy Officer of the Finance Sector Union (FSU)



It's been a big year for finance workers. We're seeing some positive Albanese Government changes flow through the system but we're still fighting to ensure the government hears the voices of workers.

The gender pay gap data is now publicly available from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) which means that the big end of town can no longer get away with publishing annual reports suggesting they don't have a pay gap when WGEA tells us that it's as high as 29% (we're looking at you, CBA!).

So, what's driving this gap and making it so much higher than the national gap that has fallen?

Gender segregation in the finance industry is stark.

The finance industry is 50:50 male/female but women make up less than half of the top two pay quartiles and over 60% of the lower two pay quartiles. Traditionally, female dominated sections of the industry, such as the retail branch networks, are shedding jobs by the thousands and our workforce is aging.

The FSU and local communities have been campaigning to ensure access to banking. Over 2,100 bank branches closed in the last six years, resulting in metropolitan branches reducing by 40% and regional branches by 35%. Bank branch closures devastate local communities.

In 2023, the 4 big banks made profits of over \$45 billion.

In one year.

They are one of the most profitable sectors of our economy and they need to wear the cost of providing retail banking services, NOT taxpayers.

The Senate Committee report into bank closures in regional Australia was recently released in May 2024. It recommended the Government declare access to financial services as an essential service as well as develop a mandatory Banking Code of Conduct or Customer Service Code which incorporates a robust branch closure process administered by a regulator. We support these recommendations. They would ensure that we could say goodbye to the days of self-regulation by the Banks that saw the prioritisation of profit over community.

The FSU welcomes the establishment of a regulator that has the authority to approve or defer branch closures and apply meaningful penalties should the banks fail to comply. We recently met with Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services Stephen Jones and look forward to working with him to implement these recommendations.

Finance workers are aging, their jobs are disappearing, and remember that enormous gender pay gap? It's all connected, and the FSU is determined to do something about it.

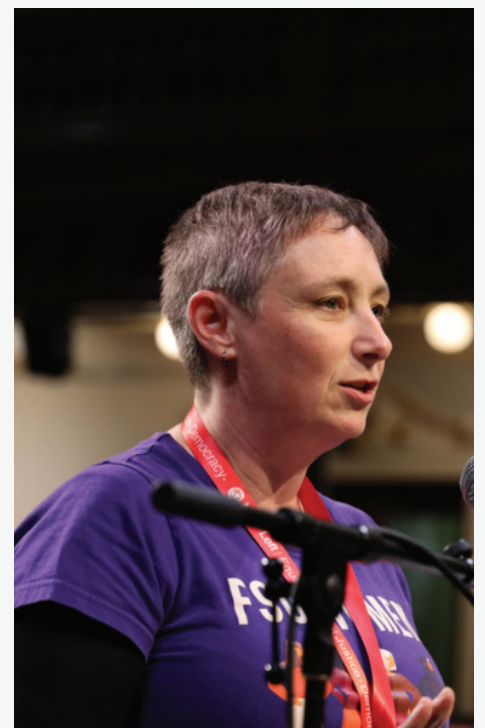
We asked finance workers, half of whom may experience menopause or menstrual symptoms, to tell us about how these symptoms impact them at work.

Over 35% of respondents told us that they considered retiring early, rather than disclosing their menopause status and asking for assistance to manage the impact of their symptoms. An astonishing 52% of respondents were holding themselves back from promotional opportunities due to their menopausal symptoms.

When you think about these statistics, it's no wonder that we've got a gender pay gap and gender segmentation in the finance industry. It's clear that one of the solutions to fixing the gender pay gap is to retain these workers. It's not hard.

We need to ensure these workers can access flexible work when they need it - including working from home - and when their symptoms are severe provide them with paid leave, so they aren't exhausting their sick leave to manage the menopausal transition.

The FSU is leading the way negotiating



AI PORN DEEPFAKES ARE COMING. HERE'S HOW TO STOP THEM.

menopause and menstrual clauses in private sector Enterprise Agreements (EAs). This year marks three years since the first clause was introduced into the CBUS EA in 2021. In that time the workplace culture has changed and it's no longer taboo to talk about menopause and menstrual symptoms at work.

The sky didn't fall in.

This CBUS worker sums it up pretty well:

"It's essential though, that a policy or a leave entitlement is supported by a culture that creates a safe space for employees to utilise it, without fear of judgement.

I am supported by a manager, team and organisation who choose to believe pain they can't see, empathise, and create a flexible work environment that allows me to manage my pain in the best way possible".

Laurelle – Cbus worker

There's still work to do, but we're determined to smash the finance industry's gender pay gap.

Find out more about our work on the FSU website.



TANYA PLIBERSEK *Minister for the Environment and Water, Member for Sydney*

For many parents, navigating their child's teenage years can be a challenge. This challenge is multiplied with the popularity and prevalence of social media. It is one thing to equip your child with the ability to cope with wonders and difficulties of life in the real world – but now, in addition, our children are having to navigate the more treacherous waters of social media.

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland is reviewing the Online Safety Act to strengthen it, and the government has quadrupled funding to the eSafety Commissioner to help her keep our kids safe online.

But we know online bullying can follow a child home from school and can torment them into the night. Porn is available in their pockets – with young kids seeing violent and degrading sex before they've even had their first kiss.

Research is coming to light about how social media can rewire our children's brains and lead to greater anxiety and depression. And now there is a new threat – one that the Albanese Labor Government is taking very seriously.

Artificial intelligence is advancing in leaps and bounds – and with it, the capacity to create realistic looking deep fake material without a person's consent. You feed a photo of a real person into the app, which then spits out an ultra-realistic nude picture or video of that person. Funnily enough, some of the most popular apps don't work on male bodies. Just young girls and women.

Already young people – the majority of them girls – have been severely distressed and sometimes suicidal when their images have been manipulated by these apps and shared in group chats or online.

The government is acting. Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus has introduced legislation this

week targeting use of generative AI to create non-consensual, sexually explicit deepfake material. This legislation will create a new criminal offence of sharing, without consent, sexually explicit images that have been digitally created using AI or other forms of technology. Our government is getting top of emerging technology, rather than waiting until the horse has bolted.

We are in a crucial hinge moment in history. AI is a game changer for everything – from how we deliver medical care to how we complete menial administrative tasks. It's crucial that we harness the power of this technology. But we also have to recognise and rein it in when it can do harm.

These laws are amongst the first of their kind in the world. And once passed, the new laws will make it illegal to share any non-consensual deepfake material online.

This will not only protect the people whose images have been manipulated without their consent – but will go some way to stamping out the culture of misogyny that exists in many corners of the internet. The change aims to enable the law to catch up with technology – what my colleague Mark Dreyfus calls a “damaging and deeply distressing form of abuse.”



This opinion piece was originally published by the Daily Telegraph on 12 June 2024 and has been republished here with permission.

VOX POP: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AT THE NSW DRUG SUMMIT?



MATT MARTIN
Country Labor Deputy Chair

I'd like to see the decriminalisation of marijuana, because the fact that we're locking poor people up for possession is a scourge on our state. I'd like to see regional people be given access to not only alcohol addiction treatment, but substance dependency too. Ice is still a huge problem, and it needs to be confronted head on. Finally, I'd like to see addiction treated for what it is – a health issue, rather than a criminal issue.



D'ARCY HORAM
Community and Public Sector Union Delegate

I'd like to see the NSW Drug Summit be an opportunity to engage with communities on drug use as a health issue rather than a legal issue. I hope the Summit can lead to some tangible outcomes, like improving access to affordable treatment services and working to destigmatise addiction.



RIZWAN CHOWDHURY
United Workers Union Delegate

The NSW drug summit is a chance to involve the community in the policy making process to build political and community consensus about future directions in drug policy.



PAMELA SMITH
Mitchell FEC Delegate

Drug issues affect almost all families and communities in NSW. Real action on drug law reform and harm minimisation is urgently needed. The NSW Drug Summit must therefore be inclusive of input from diverse community groups and from experts in areas such as health, education and the legal and justice sectors. People with lived experience must be at the heart of the Drug Summit. Following the Summit, there must be a commitment to funding and resourcing the recommendations of the Summit to ensure effective outcomes into the future.



ROSE DONNELLY
General Secretary of the University of Sydney SRC

I want to see a Drug Summit agenda that focuses on harm minimisation; full implementation of pill testing, the decriminalisation of cannabis and the creation of a new rehabilitative framework that the NSW government will adopt. For too long, fear mongering by conservative governments has influenced our community responses to illicit drugs. If we want outcomes, we need to treat drug use as a health issue. I hope the Drug Summit is a chance to change that.



AMBER JACOBUS
Cowper FEC Delegate

I'd like to see the Government being open to evidence based, harm reduction measures that will help people rather than punish them.



MICHELLE MIRAN
South Coast SEC Delegate

Any drug legislation should be guided by harm minimisation, not by punitive laws that do not address serious addiction issues. Accordingly, the Drug Summit should focus on drug addiction first as a health issue, and then determine appropriate harm minimisation programs like pill testing, increasing needle exchange centre and legalising cannabis as has already been done in many jurisdictions around the world. As long as NSW focusses on penalties rather than harm minimisation we will fail.



GRACE BRACKS & KRISTIE MARSHALL
Hawkesbury SEC Delegates

From the drug summit we want to see: A focus on harm minimisation including mandatory safe spaces at all music festivals and events, with pill testing and an emphasis on education and access to naloxone.



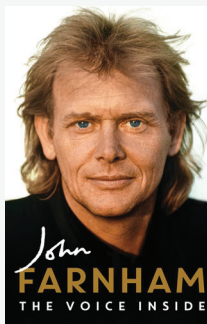
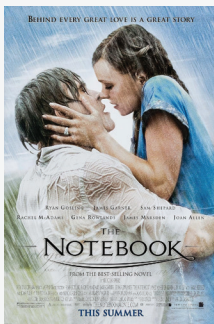
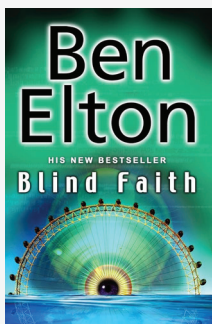
JASPER THATCHER
Maritime Union of Australia Delegate

I would like to see the decriminalisation of narcotics and potential taxation and regulation addressed. It makes no sense clogging up our courts system with drug related offences and punishing people with an addiction as you shouldn't have to become a criminal for a medical condition. The savings on court costs alone should be an incentive but the regulation and taxation of narcotics would be a huge income stream for state and federal governments just like tobacco and alcohol. The collapse of underworld drug trade would further take pressure off police and greatly reduce the income stream of organised crime.

MY TOP FIVE

KYLIE WILKINSON

Member for East Hills



TOP MAGAZINE

The New York Times Magazine. I love the NYT Magazine because it combines amazing stories with incredible photography. The articles dive deep into interesting topics and offer fresh perspectives, making it a go-to for staying informed and entertained.

TOP BOOK

Ben Elton's *Blind Faith* (2007). A fantastic book that I read many years ago, before social media was taking off, and I really appreciated the strange relevance to an interesting future.

TOP MOVIE

The 2004 film 'The Notebook', directed by Nick Cassavetes, is definitely my favourite film. It's a movie I have watched many times, over many years, and I still enjoy it each time.

TOP MUSIC

I really enjoy singing along to any music I know the words to, and I have a lot of appreciation for talented singers, so my favourite singers would be Whitney Houston, John Farnham, Neil Diamond, Queen, as well as ABBA of course!

TOP WEBSITE

The Conversation. The Conversation is my favourite website because it provides well-researched, insightful articles by academics and experts, covering diverse topics. It offers reliable, engaging content that deepens my understanding of the world.

We respectfully acknowledge that this magazine was designed on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and printed on the lands of the Bidjigal people of the Dharug Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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