

Senator Claire Moore

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Phone: (07) 3252 7101; email: senator.moore@aph.gov.au;
Web: www.clairemoore.net; Twitter: www.twitter.com/SenClaireMoore;
www.facebook.com/SenatorClaireMoore;

THIS WEEK:

Wishing you all a very happy, wonderful and safe Christmas.

Enjoy the break and rest up, 2019 is shaping as a monumentally important and tough year.

Best wishes,

Claire



SENATOR CLAIRE MOORE, LABOR SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND

Senator Claire Moore
www.clairemoore.net



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

CLAIRE'S WEEKLY UPDATE NEWSLETTER

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WHAT'S BEING SAID ...



MYEFO - BOWEN-ABC RADIO NATIONAL BREAKFAST

"Well the fact of the matter is Hamish the large majority of this Budget improvement comes from international circumstances. That's the fact. If you look at the update yesterday it also shows economic growth being revised down, wages growth very concerningly down."

MYEFO - CHALMERS - SKY NEWS

"I think it's more a function of good luck than good management that we're seeing this. It's more of a function of positive global conditions. If you look at the numbers in detail, very little of this can be explained by anything that the Government's done; anything that Josh Frydenberg's done."

"In these numbers that they're releasing today, net debt for example, is \$352 billion; they inherited it at \$175 billion. So I guess the point we're making is that with all this money rolling through the door courtesy of the global economy, they've run out of excuses for this record debt that's accumulated on their watch."

MYEFO - BOWEN - ADELAIDE

"What we see in this economic update today, the Government's own update, is that growth is down. Investment growth is down. Wages growth is down. Consumption growth is down. And the only thing that's up is a term of trade, what the world is prepared to pay us for our commodities; the one thing which this Government has absolutely no influence over is up."

MYEFO - CHALMERS-ADELAIDE

"This is a government which promised a surplus in its first year, and every year, and on their own numbers is on track to deliver six consecutive deficits. They said that they would pay down debt. Instead, they've doubled the debt."

THE BUDGET - LEIGH - ABC RADIO DRIVE - MELBOURNE

"This is a government that came to office in 2013 promising a surplus in their first year and in every year after that. And they're on track, on their own numbers, to deliver six deficits and finally promising a surplus after having doubled net debt."

MYEFO - BOWEN - ADELAIDE

"The Treasurer who was unaware that the section of his own update headed 'decisions taken but not yet announced' applied to decisions that he had actually already taken."

ENERGY POLICY - BUTLER - ADELAIDE

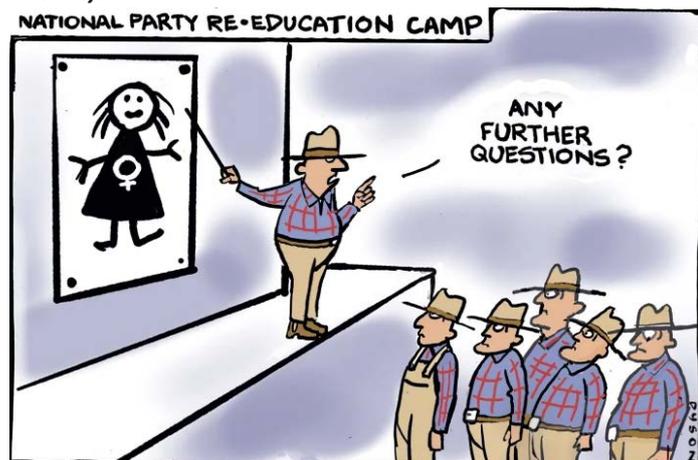
"We've seen an absolutely devastating critique of Scott Morrison's energy policy from his own New South Wales Liberal Party colleague, New South Wales Energy Minister Don Harwin. In an op-ed published in the Financial Review Minister Harwin describes Scott Morrison's failure to proceed with the National Energy Guarantee as something that would lead to higher wholesale prices and, to use Minister Harwin's words, would mean "bad news for households and for businesses."

ENERGY POLICY - BUTLER - ADELAIDE

"Scott Morrison stands completely isolated in his refusal to implement the National Energy Guarantee. Opposed by every single business group in the nation, and now deserted even by his own New South Wales Liberal Party colleagues."

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS - ALBANESE-SKY NEWS

"The truth is that the current bargaining system isn't working. That's why we are seeing record profits but real wages actually in decline. The Reserve Bank and every economist in the country has identified low wage growth as being a real problem for our national economy. I think unions play an absolutely critical role in civil society and I think a strengthening and growth of unionism would be good for our national economy."



It's the work that every one of us says we value. It's the work that Liberal politicians are very keen to associate themselves with for photo opportunities. But it is work that is clearly and disgracefully under-paid."

PAY EQUITY - PLIBERSEK - ABC NEWS 24 BREAKFAST

"If you look at women working in female dominated industries earn, on average, about \$30,000 less than the men in the most male dominated industries earn. I don't think it's a question of whether this gender pay gap really exists in female dominated industries, it's how do we determine how large it is and how best to deal with it."

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT STANDARD - CAMERON - SAA ADELAIDE

"We are just not prepared to accept that between five and six billion dollars of workers money is unpaid every year. Three million workers being ripped off. We have decided there has to be a National Employment Standard, there has to be a more efficient way of ensuring that those workers get paid what they are due and we have said that there will be a National Employment Standard, employers can be fined if they don't pay it and we will improve coordination with the tax office to make sure that you get what you are entitled to."

PAY EQUITY - PLIBERSEK - ABC NEWS 24 BREAKFAST

"We want to make sure that the Act makes it easier for underpaid women to get a pay rise and we want to make sure the Fair Work Commission has the resources and the expertise to investigate these cases properly."

PAY EQUITY - MCALLISTER - NATIONAL CONFERENCE - ADELAIDE

"After all the talk about how we could do anything as women, the endless questions about whether feminism has 'gone too far' - the gap between men and women's wages remains at 23%. Delegates, there is a white hot rage amongst women about just how unfair this is. It's the emotional labour - labour performed in childcare centres caring for other people's children, labour performed in aged care homes caring for our grandparents, labour performed in the homes of Australians with disabilities."

CLIMATE CHANGE - - BUTLER – ADELAIDE

“The Government’s own data shows that by 2030, under this Government’s policies, we are going to miss our already inadequate Paris targets by a whopping 22 or 23 per cent.”

IT’S PLANNING STUPID - ALBANESE-SKY NEWS

“The problem that we have had in our cities is that we have had housing growth without considering how people will get to work, what the social and community infrastructure is – education and health - and around that how we create a 30-minute city. We have seen also a failure to invest in public transport.”

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Three days, 400 delegates, 1000 observers, about 35 international diplomats, around 100 business people and about 140 media.



A WAGES POLICY - SHORTEN– NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“In 1983, 83 per cent of Australian workers were employed full time. Today, it’s down to 68 per cent and declining. Or put another way, in 1983 there were one million part time workers, today it’s about four million part time and casual workers. This government studiously ignores an essential ingredient of a decent economy, wages policy. Wages policy is not an issue to be side-lined or disregarded. It is not something that can simply left to the market taking us down, further every day, the road to an American style system. Wages policy is the proposition that if you work hard you should not live in poverty. If you work hard you should be able to aspire to a growing standard of living. Wages policy is the aspiration and the essential ingredient to ensure that a fair go means something when you go to work.”

WAGE BARGAINING - O’CONNOR– NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“Labor’s workplace laws will ensure every worker has an appropriate vehicle to bargain with their employer to get their fair share of economic growth. Where enterprise bargaining has failed or is failing, multi-employer bargaining should be another available option. Inequality is at a 75 year high. Corporate profits have grown six times faster than wages. When CEO’s pay has risen four times faster than average wage growth, to be 75 times the average wage, something is very wrong. No wonder that, for too many people, it seems that the link between hard work and fair reward is broken.”

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING - TERRI BUTLER - NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“In the post-‘Workchoices’ era, working people have less power than at any time since the Second World War. Collective bargaining has been undermined, and the right to strike is being strangled by what the Tories would call “red tape”. We don’t have full employment, and more than 1 million Australians are underemployed. And the lower unemployment payments are, the more catastrophic it is to lose your job, which hurts bargaining power, too. People are being forced into insecurity and low pay.”



TRUE BELIEVERS

The man in the right foreground of this photo in the white tee-shirt is John Salisbury Delegates from the ALP National Conference in Adelaide greeted him after he had just walked all the way from Melbourne in support of the rights of Palestinians.



UNDERPAYMENT - O’CONNOR– NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“Labor will significantly increase penalties for employers and related entities who systematically underpay and exploit workers. Labor will stop the unilateral termination of agreements, and employers using sham enterprise agreements. We will increase penalties for phoenixing and, superannuation will be made a workplace right.”

INEQUALITY - O’CONNOR– NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“For decades economists have told us that inequality was the price of economic progress. But that is simply not true. Inequality is not the price of economic progress, it is an impediment. Today those great international “left wing” think tanks, the IMF, the World Bank, have concluded inequality damages economic growth, stunts economic growth. Delegates, the Labor Party always knew this.”

AGED CARE - JULIE COLLINS- NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“The reality is that we are going into the Christmas period, there 127,000 older Australians waiting for a home care package on priority queue. The reality is that this Government, after 5 years, 3 Ministers and billions dollars cut from the aged care system, it is trying to patch it up and pretend that it is doing something wonderful for older Australians”

MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING - COLLINS- NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“Indeed last time there was a Labor government we increased mental health funding by around 350 percent - a very significant investment. And it was reform that we did last time, across the board. It was not piecemeal ad hoc announcements that we have seen from this Liberal government.”

ABORTION REFORM - KING- NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“Provision of services in the public health system is rare – between 80 and 90 per cent of terminations occur in private clinics, where costs can rise to \$800. Public services are often restricted to major cities – meaning women in regional and remote areas of Australia are particularly disadvantaged. One in 10 women travel and stay overnight in another city to access services. One in 20 women have to travel interstate.”

NDIS - BURNEY- NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“The NDIS promised improvement – with new and better ways of enabling the accessibility and inclusion people with disability deserve in every element of life. But as it stands, too many people are being left utterly frustrated by their experience of the NDIS. Labor will work every day to get the NDIS back on track.”

FOREIGN POLICY - WONG – NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“Unlike Scott Morrison and his Government, Labor in Government will take a responsible approach to our foreign policy. We will seek and consider the advice of our agencies. We will work with our partners and allies. We will always put the national interest first.”

PALESTINE - WONG – NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“This resolution makes clear the view of this conference is to continue to support the recognition and right of Israel and Palestine to exist as two states within secure and recognised borders. And it recognises the desire of this conference to recognise Palestine as a state”.

CHARITIES – LEIGH - NATIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE

“Over the last five years, the Liberals have been waging a war on charities. They have attempted to shut down the charities commission, the body supported by four out of five charities. When they couldn't get that legislation through parliament, they decided to appoint as its head Gary Johns. Now Gary Johns is somebody who's attacked the Indigenous charity Recognise, he's criticised 'BeyondBlue', he's described Indigenous women as “cash cows”. Putting Gary Johns in charge of the charities commission is like putting Ned Kelly in charge of bank security. It's like putting Bronwyn Bishop in charge of transport for politicians.”

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“We're not playing a game to win the next election. We are fundamentally serious and ambitious about building a better Australia.” - Andrew Leigh

Labor will write into the law of Australia, the law of the land, 10 days of paid domestic violence leave. - Bill Shorten
“As they say the safer the seat the more marginal the Member.” - Michelle Rowland (On National Party's Andrew Broad scandal and his announcement that he will not re-contest his Victorian blue ribbon seat of Mallee)

“Quite frankly, I don't know where people get the time to do this sort of thing.” - Michelle Rowland

“Here we are again; this divided, chaotic, dysfunctional Coalition government not talking about the things that matter to me and to my family”. - Kristina Keneally

“As the government lurched through another self-inflicted disaster this week, another rotten opinion poll, another bout of self-indulgence and navel-gazing, Bill Shorten was presenting a strong, coherent and unified party at Labor's delayed national conference. The contrast was deeper than just appearances, however potent they were” - Bernard Keane (Crikey)



WOMAN OF THE WEEK

Yael Stone

Australian actress

Star of 'Orange is the new Black and

Author of new allegations about sexual harassment by Geoffrey Rush

In an interview with ABC 7.30 Report this week she said “... it's become clear that it's in the public interest I talk about these matters. Whenever women, particularly, speak about issues like this, their career generally suffers. I've factored that into my calculations and if that happens I think it's worth it.”

GLIMPSES

GOOD NEWS OR ...



Brisbane's men-only Tattersall's Club has voted to allow women to become members, ending gender-specific discrimination spanning more than 150 years.
The vote was close, with 1405 members voting in favour of the change and 1368 voting against.
Tattersall's Club president Stuart Fraser said the motion received an unprecedented response from members.

“A total of 63 per cent of our membership participated in the ballot ... the highest for a motion in Tattersall's Club history,” he said.

Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.

"This is a significant for Tattersall's Club – we have been part of Queensland's history for more than 150 years, and we have evolved continuously over that time.

"We welcome the women in our families, the women in our lives, and the women in our communities."

ADANI

Ten of the world's top insurance companies, including Australian groups Suncorp and QBE and global insurer AXA, say they won't insure Indian energy group Adani's controversial \$2 billion Carmichael coal mine in Queensland, an activist group says. Market Forces, an anti-fossil fuel activist group backed by Friends of the Earth, also said AXA had indicated it would not renew its current insurance covering the Carmichael rail line when it comes up in March 2020.

ADMIRAL DUTTON

Australia's Auditor-General on Tuesday tabled a report into the nation's Cape Class vessels patrolling for illegal activity on the nation's coastline, finding multiple failures by Home Affairs to manage the fleet as it came into service. Funded with \$570 million in government spending over a decade, the boats are tasked with detecting asylum seeker arrivals, illegal activity at sea and biosecurity threats, and together were required to provide 2400 patrol days each year. Since the fleet arrived in full in 2015, Home Affairs has reported it is falling well short of its 3300 patrol-day target. Home Affairs was failing to manage support for the Cape Class boats as they remained less available for patrols than planned, and was not managing its contract with the fleet's builder Austal effectively, the audit found. The response from Home Affairs? Try to censor the report!! Home Affairs told the National Audit Office in October it would consider seeking to redact the Cape Class patrol report, saying its publication would risk national security and the government's commercial interests.



DUTTON WINS CRIKEY'S ARSEHAT OF THE YEAR AWARD AGAIN!

Every year we give Crikey readers the chance to vote for their 'Arsehat of the Year' — the person that best typified the year's affront to decency, competence or judgement. It's always a crowded and competitive field, and this year many anti-greats didn't even warrant a nomination. Our winner this year had to be a real overachiever in non-achievement.

WINNER: PETER DUTTON

In some ways, having two-time Crikey Arsehat winner Dutton in the list of nominees is like drafting [Lionel Messi](#) to a local under-12s league. Dutton's baseline skills — a [legitimately breath-taking callousness toward refugees](#), a knee-jerk tendency for inflammatory racial sentiment, and a seeming suspicion of, well, democracy — make him such a formidable competitor that it hardly seems fair.

There were [the months upon months](#) he spent as the chief mouthpiece for [the confected "African gangs crisis"](#) in Victoria; the allegations he approached former Australian Border Force commissioner Roman Quaedvlieg and pressed him to give two of Dutton's mates a job (one of whom ended up as Dutton's policy adviser); [his recent contention](#) that he has always seen parliament as a disadvantage for the government of the day; and his ongoing argument that a "moment's compassion" would be [a boon for people smugglers](#).

All solid work in the craft of wounding the tenets of our democracy, our public life, and in less grandiose terms, just helping quietly destroy lives and [in some cases, communities](#). But this is par for the course for Dutton — none of it by itself would have gotten him into the running for Arsehat of the Year. He really had to go above and beyond.

And, like all champions, he bloody did it. In August, Dutton initiated a leadership challenge against Malcolm Turnbull, strode in front of the press wearing an ill-fitting smile that still had the price tag on, and promised to "maybe show a different side" of himself. It was highly creepy. And for a few agonising days we were faced with the very real prospect that, through a backroom coup, the leader of an ever-expanding and fairly disastrous super ministry, clinging to his own seat by 1.6%, would [bully his way into The Lodge](#).

Here, we suspect, was what got him over the line; what really made him 2018's truest Arsehat. Because not only did he maintain his floor-level awfulness, but he failed, and failed and failed, at more or less everything he tried.

His Victorian race-baiting was in support of the Liberals' law and order campaign in that state, and in November's election, they were completely wiped out by Labor. Slowly, shamefully slowly, asylum seekers are being taken from the gulags he oversaw. And in his crowning failure, Dutton brought down a government and almost certainly consigned his own party to a total drubbing at the next election, [because he was so sure](#) he could be prime minister that [he didn't bother checking if he actually had the numbers](#).

Dutton typified 2018, sitting at the centre of a Venn diagram where mediocrity, incompetence and empty provocation meet. Enjoy your hat-trick Peter; you've more than earned it.

DUTY OF CARE

An Iranian child who was allegedly raped on multiple occasions while detained on Nauru is suing the federal government over an alleged failure to uphold duty of care.

[The ABC reports](#) that lawyers at Maurice Blackburn claim the child asylum seeker was assaulted three times as a 10-year-old by an older detainee in September and October 2014, and consequently suffers from suicidal tendencies and PTSD. A writ filed in the Victorian Supreme Court alleges the Commonwealth, and detention centre operators Broadspectrum and Wilson, owed the child a safe environment and failed to ensure protocols against sexual assault, a similar basis of [two recently-launched class action lawsuits](#) on behalf of all remaining detainees.

FAKE PRE-SELECTION



The Nationals' former candidate for Orange, who quit just months after she was preselected, says she was pressured to resign by party members who believed she wasn't capable of winning back the marginal seat. Yvette Quinn, 21, said she was approached four times by National Party members to discuss her potential resignation, including by NSW upper house MP Rick Colless and former senator Fiona Nash. "When you're being asked repeatedly over the course of the month, basically every week – and those people asking you are saying it's your party leader who thinks you should step down – that is a lot of



pressure," Ms Quinn said. "I was pretty annoyed that I wasn't given as much as a chance as I would have liked." Ms Quinn pulled off her surprising preselection win in June, when she was chosen by local National Party branches to contest the seat ahead of Parkes Mayor Ken Keith. But her candidacy immediately raised concerns within the broader party ranks about her inexperience and whether she was capable of reclaiming the seat from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

THE TITANIC BREAKS UP

According to [The Courier-Mail \(\\$\)](#), National Party Leader, Michael McCormack, hit the phones this week to once again shore up his leadership only to be reportedly told by some colleagues he had lost their support. Others in the Liberal Party are also allegedly plotting to convince the Nats to replace their leader, who reportedly knew aspects of Broad's dalliances during the [October leadership scare](#). Meanwhile, McCormack has delivered a blistering interview with [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) in which he defended his handling of Broad's scandal and slammed government leakers as both selfish and unfamiliar with "the cold, desolate days of opposition".

CHRISTMAS SPENDING



Australians will cumulatively spend almost \$11 billion on gifts for their friends and family this silly season, and almost one in 10 will leave their shopping until Christmas Eve. December 25 is fast approaching, but research from the Commonwealth Bank has found that more than a third of the population isn't tracking their yuletide spending, putting them at risk of a festive budget blow out. Research found the average Australian will spend \$573 on gifts for their family, friends, and workmates, creating a national gift expenditure of \$10.7 billion. And it's not just gifts that are costing us – consumer comparison site Finder.com found that when factoring in other holiday expenses (such as food and travel), the average Australian will [spend \\$1350 on Christmas this year](#). That brings the nation's total holiday-related expenditure to \$25 billion.

CHRISTMAS WEATHER

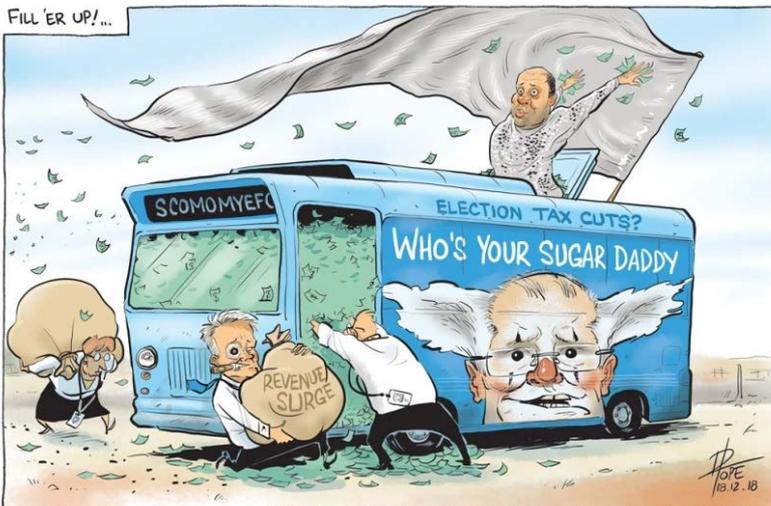
Brisbane is set for a partly cloudy day with a low of 19 degrees, a high of 29 degrees, and the chance of late showers. Northern Queensland and the Northern Territory are in for classic tropical weather, with afternoon showers and storms on the menu.



CHAOTIC LIBERALS HAVE NO PLAN FOR ECONOMY AND BUDGET- Bowen/Chalmers

This week's Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook shows the Liberals are too divided and chaotic to care about responsible Budget repair and economic management.

This is a Budget update defined by global strength and domestic weakness.



MYEFO shows that for the current financial year, economic growth is down, investment is down, and wages are down, while the terms of trade are up on the back of a stronger global economy.

This is not a Budget update based on a solid economic reform agenda, or higher productivity or stronger wages. This is a Budget update courtesy of a stronger global economy, with no input from a Government riven by chaos and without a domestic reform agenda.

Adding to the five years of Liberal Party confusion and chaos, the Treasurer was today unable to confirm whether hidden tax cuts mean an early election and the Finance Minister was unable to explain why he's broken his own fiscal rules.

MYEFO also shows:

- Net debt has more than doubled under the Liberals to \$352 billion this year, and gross debt is \$542 billion having crashed through half-a-trillion dollars for the first time ever on their watch;

- No new money for early childhood education, which means that as it stands, there are cuts to universal access to early childhood education for four-year-olds;
- Of the \$31 billion in parameter Budget improvements, the Government has obliterated its own Budget rules and spent more than half of it; and
- The tax take is \$108 billion higher than it was in 2013, with tax-to-GDP now expected to be over 23 per cent for the entire forward estimates period, something not seen since the Howard era.

Labor has said for some time, the Government is simply not doing enough to capitalise on the good times.

The Government is claiming victory on the Budget before it's even made it to the finish line.

As the IMF and others have been arguing - while global conditions hold up, it's time to rebuild fiscal buffers and save for a rainy day.

This is exactly why Labor has made the difficult calls and will deliver a stronger Budget while economic circumstances allow. Our responsible reforms allow us to fund important public investments while also paying down debt.

LABOR GETS THE BIG ECONOMIC CALLS RIGHT (AGAIN) - Leigh

The budget bottom line is almost \$1 billion better off thanks to Labor.

Yesterday we learnt that last month's \$529 million settlement between BHP and the Australian Tax Office would not have been possible without two bills introduced by Labor in 2012 and 2013.

Today, we discover that it was Labor again responsible for saving taxpayers \$425 million through our opposition to a reckless intangible asset depreciation measure put forward by the Coalition.

The Government has effectively credited Labor for this saving in its Mid-Year Economic Financial Outlook, stating:

'Given the lack of parliamentary support the Government has decided not to proceed with this measure...'

Unlike the Coalition, Labor could see the budgetary risk of this measure.

As I told Parliament on 21 June 2017: **'This bill has revenue implications, and that is why Labor will not be supporting schedule 2 of the bill. ... In good fiscal times—if we had the rivers of gold that flowed during the Howard and Costello years, in which there were a series of fiscally profligate decisions made by the Liberals—maybe you could give an argument for supporting this. Labor believes we have to carefully scrutinise any widening of corporate tax concessions. Treasury were unable to offer guidance on the medium-term fiscal impact of this measure.'**

Once again, Labor is pleased to have been able to save the Coalition from themselves.

MYEFO SHOWS COALITION FAILURES

'The Coalition can take no credit for these results. And they don't follow their own Budget rules.'

If the Government wants to point to the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook as a sign of its strong economic management, it should think again. The midyear update confirmed that the government has not for the first time given up on its own imposed fiscal rules and is too divided and chaotic to care about responsible budget repair and economic management. And when it comes to talking about a surplus, the Government is trying to declare victory before getting to the finish line.



The politics of the mid-year budget were there for all to see: hidden income tax cuts and doubts over whether the government would even make it to their early budget next year. If there was ever a sign the government was in chaos, it's announcing a pre-election budget for April, and within weeks hiding away billions of dollars in prospective tax cuts if they don't even make it back for another week of Parliament.

The Government was also quick off the mark this week trying to point out that MYEFO demonstrated strong economic management and that their so called plans for a strong economy were on track. Unfortunately, it's a mirage. This is clearly not a Budget update based on a solid economic reform agenda, or higher productivity or stronger wages. This is a Budget update defined by global strength and domestic weakness.

The Government's own forecasts tell the real story. MYEFO shows that for the current financial year, economic growth is down, investment is down, and wages growth is down, while the terms of trade are up on the back of a stronger global economy. The government likes to trumpet its direct role in the improved budget figures, but they are figures delivered from the one thing out of their control, with the price other countries pay for our exports and associated bumper corporate profits boosting government coffers.

Of course, MYEFO follows the recent worrying national accounts which showed a significant deceleration of economic growth in the September quarter on the back of the weakest consumption growth in more than five years. And something you won't hear much about from the government about is their recent record on productivity. Under the Liberals productivity has completely flat lined, with productivity growth coming in negative 7 of the last 9 quarters. No wonder that record low wages growth has been the hallmark of the current Liberal Government.

But pushing aside the failed economic agenda, MYEFO also confirms what we already know. Net debt has more than doubled under the Liberals to \$352 billion this year, and gross debt is \$542 billion having crashed through half-a-trillion dollars for the first time ever on their watch. Remember these are the achievements of a Government which promised to fix the so called debt and deficit emergency.

Meanwhile the government's own fiscal and budget rules remain in tatters. As part of its budget repair strategy, the government has committed that 'the overall impact of shifts in receipts and payments due to changes in the economy will be banked as an improvement to the budget bottom line, if this impact is positive'. But of the massive \$31 billion in parameter Budget improvements in this MYEFO, the Government has blown more than half of it despite the budget remaining in deficit this financial year. Even the Finance Minister couldn't defend this clear breach of their rules when asked about it.

And in what can only be described as embarrassing for a government that likes to campaign on lower taxes, MYEFO showed that the tax take is \$108 billion higher than it was when the Liberals came to power in 2013. In fact, the overall tax take as a proportion of the economy is now expected to be over 23 per cent for the entire forward estimates period, something not seen since the Howard era.

The International Monetary Fund and others have been rightly arguing that while global conditions hold up, it's time to rebuild fiscal buffers and save for a rainy day. Unfortunately, the government hasn't been heeding this advice and is simply not doing enough to capitalise on the good times which won't last forever.

This is exactly why Labor has made the difficult calls like reigning in unsustainable tax concessions like negative gearing and capital gains that will help deliver a stronger Budget while economic circumstances allow. Our responsible Budget and tax reforms allow us to fund important public investments while running bigger budget surpluses to provide a buffer for international economic circumstances and pay down debt. We have a plan for the economy and the budget, a plan we have announced well before the election and will seek a mandate to deliver.

This opinion piece was first published in the Australian Financial Review on Wednesday 19 December 2018.

HOW THE FAT DUCK SLIMMED ITS TAX BILL - Andrew Leigh

In the 1600s, Louis XIV's finance minister famously described the art of taxation as being to get the maximum amount of feathers from the goose, with the least amount of hissing. At London's Fat Duck restaurant, they've taken a different approach. By using tax havens, Heston Blumenthal's restaurants appear to have goosed the tax authorities. By flying the profits to the tax haven of Nevis, which charges no company tax on the profits of foreign companies, the famous restaurant chain seems to have feathered its own nest at the expense of the rest of us.

Heston Blumenthal, who also operates the Dinner restaurant at Melbourne's Southbank, isn't the only one apparently using tax havens. By one estimate, four out of every ten dollars of multinational profits are now routed through tax havens. Dubbed 'Treasure Islands' by one expert, places like Panama and Bermuda have become infamous for their willingness to house companies and their unwillingness to share information about them.

But what we do know is pretty worrying. According to a recent report, the Cayman Islands now has 106,291 active companies, which is almost twice as many companies as people (by comparison, Australia has one company for every ten residents). The vast majority of these firms have zero staff, zero floor space, and zero local sales. The reason they're there? They want to pay zero tax.



Those in tax havens are hanging around with some distinctly unsavoury types. Drug lords? Check. Extortionists? Check. Terrorists? Check. As the Panama Papers and Luxembourg Leaks have revealed, tax havens have become a hiding ground for some of the most nefarious people on the planet.

So what can Australia do about it? For starters, we can stop people claiming a tax break for flying to tax havens to check on their investments. Under a Shorten Government, if you want a tax deduction for travel to a tax haven, you'll have to prove it was related to creating taxable income in Australia. No more getting a tax break to dodge tax.

If you're a firm that's listed on the share market, you'll be required to disclose to your shareholders your tax haven shenanigans as a 'material tax risk'. Because it is.

Want to get a government tender? If the contract is for more than \$200,000, prepare to tell us your firm's country of tax domicile. As a recent report by the Centre for Corporate Tax Accountability and Research points out, major recipients of Australian government work do not have a perfect track record of paying tax.

Another area in which more transparency will help drive better behaviour is in corporate ownership. Our share registry is famously opaque, with complex structures and sham ownership obscuring who actually holds firms. A publicly accessible registry of beneficial ownership will show who truly owns Australian companies.

We also need to ensure that superannuation funds are doing the right thing with their \$2.7 trillion in investments. A Shorten Government will task the Australian Tax Office – in collaboration with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority – to develop guidelines for responsible investment by superannuation funds.

There are good moral reasons why millionaires and multinationals shouldn't be allowed to use tax havens to avoid paying their fair share. Most of us pay our taxes not because we're scared of being caught out, but because we think it's the right thing to do. When people start to see the tax system as biased or broken, it can lead to a downward spiral. Tax dodging by the few erodes trust by the many.

But we also need to stop the abuse of tax havens in order to fund the fair go. Since the Coalition came to office, debt has doubled, with net government debt now topping \$13,000 for every Australian. With inequality as high as it's been in two generations, it would be unjust and unreasonable to balance the budget off the backs of the poorest.

To ensure that every community has quality public schools and hospitals, we need resources to restore funding cut by the Liberals and Nationals. To ease pressure on family budgets, we need to end the Medicare freeze and give tax breaks to middle-income and low-income workers. To build new infrastructure and restore apprenticeships, we need to stop the lurks and close the loopholes.

*The era of tax havens must come to an end for the ultra-rich, for multinationals, and even for international restaurant chains. Because no matter how enticing your entrees, you shouldn't be able to duck taxes. **This opinion piece was first published by The Age on Wednesday, 19 December 2018.***

WORKERS

LABOR'S FAIR GO PLAN TO HELP CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP - Shorten/Plibersek

Labor will deliver a fair go for Australian women by strengthening the ability of the Fair Work Commission to order pay increases for workers in female dominated industries such as early childhood, aged care, and disability services.

Labor will change the Fair Work Act to make it clear that the Commission must consider pay equity a central objective of the workplace relations system.

Labor will give the Commission greater capacity and funding to conduct Pay Equity Reviews and order pay increases in undervalued feminised industries. Low paid workers should not have to rely on fighting complex, expensive legal cases to secure a decent wage rise.

Pay Equity Reviews will be conducted by a new Presidential member of the Commission, supported by an expert Pay Equity Panel.

We don't need to compare female dominated jobs with male dominated jobs to know that female dominated industries are often poorly paid – that's just a fact. So we will change the Fair Work Act to make it clear that establishing undervaluation of female dominated industries does not require a male comparator.

These reforms are an important part of Labor's plan to close the gender pay gap.

A fair go for all Australians means fair pay and conditions for Australian women.

The gender pay gap is one of the most persistent forms of inequality in the Australian economy. When you consider total remuneration, women still get paid about 23 per cent less than men.

One of the key drivers of the gap is the fact work in traditionally female dominated industries is undervalued.

The average woman working in the most feminised industries such as health care, social assistance and education is paid around \$30,000 less than the average man working in the most male dominated industries such as mining and construction.

Australia's equal pay laws are not working well enough to tackle this problem. Of the 21 applications made since 1994, only one equal remuneration order has been made by the Fair Work Commission.

The Commission's President, Iain Ross, recently said "it is likely [the gender pay gap] will widen again absent any measures to stop it."

That's why Labor will:

- Make gender pay equity an object of the Fair Work Act;
- Establish a statutory Equal Remuneration Principle, to guide the Fair Work Commission's consideration of whether feminised industries are paid fairly;
- Establish a new Pay Equity Panel within the Commission led by a new Presidential Member with specific expertise in gender pay equity; and
- Fund the Commission to establish a Pay Equity Unit that will provide expert research support during equal remuneration matters, and more generally.

This announcement builds on commitments Labor has already made to tackle the gender pay gap, including:

- Reversing cuts to penalty rates, which disproportionately impact women;
- Investing \$400 million to boost women's superannuation balances;
- Setting staged and progressive targets to close the gender pay gap, and making an annual statement to Parliament on progress;
- Legislating so companies with more than 1,000 employees have to report their gender pay gap publicly;
- Changing the Fair Work Act to prohibit pay secrecy clauses and give employees the right to disclose (or not disclose) their pay;
- Requiring the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to publish a list that shows whether a company has undertaken a gender pay gap audit and reported the results to its board; and
- Requiring all Australian Government departments and agencies to conduct gender pay audits within the first year of a Labor Government.

UNDEREMPLOYMENT RISES; WAGES STAGNATE – O'Connor

This week's Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force figures, reinforce the underlying structural problems of high underemployment and stagnant wages growth under this Liberal Government.

Unemployment increased to 5.1 per cent, while underemployment increased to 8.5 per cent. There are now more than 1.8 million Australian looking for work or more work, but unable to find it.

Of concern, the youth unemployment rate, which is more than double the national average, also increased, to 11.5 per cent.

When private sector wages growth is struggling to keep up with the cost of living, at 2.1 per cent, Australian are feeling the pinch this Christmas.

It's clear that Scott Morrison and Kelly O'Dwyer are so out of touch that they have no idea what too many Australian workers are experiencing – insecure work, stagnant wages and skyrocketing costs of living pressures.

When it comes to secure jobs with decent wages, Australians know that they only party they can trust is Labor.

LABOR TO INTRODUCE AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICESHIP ADVOCATE- Plibersek/Cameron
A Shorten Labor government will appoint an Apprenticeship Advocate to improve the quality of apprenticeships, address exploitation and improve apprentice safety.

The Advocate will also facilitate partnerships to increase the uptake of quality apprenticeships and traineeships.

The Apprentice Advocate program will cost \$5.4 million over three years.

There are 140,000 fewer Australian apprenticeships since the Coalition were elected.

Women have been impacted disproportionately by the Coalition's inaction with a 41 per cent decline in women taking up apprenticeships since 2013, compared to a drop of 24 per cent for men.

The last time trade training rates were this low was 20 years ago under John Howard's Coalition government.

The appointment of the Advocate will immediately address the unacceptable decline in apprenticeships and enhance Labor's other apprenticeship policies including:

- That one in 10 jobs on Commonwealth priority projects goes to an Australian apprentice
- Creating 10,000 pre-apprenticeships for young people wanting to learn a trade
- Establishing 20,000 advanced entry adult apprenticeships for older workers who want to or need to retrain.

The Advocate will coordinate state and territory apprenticeship regulation to eliminate inconsistencies that inhibit uptake and portability of quality skills training and jobs.

The Advocate will also monitor and report on international best practice so apprentices have the skills the Australian economy needs.

The Coalition has cut \$3 billion from vocational education since being elected, TAFE enrolments have plummeted by 24.5 per cent, thousands of students have accrued bad debts and dodgy private training providers flourished.

It cut a further \$270 million from apprenticeships in the last Budget and have wasted \$24 million on the failed Australian Apprenticeship Management System.

GOVT WAR ON THE POOR

JEREMY POXON Media Officer for the Unemployed Australian Worker's Union



This year, job seekers and social security recipients have endured an interminable series of nightmares needlessly and heartlessly inflicted upon us by our government.

Although Australia wields [the toughest compliance system in the developed world](#), the Coalition inflicted even more punishments and demands on unemployed workers — who now receive [the second-lowest level of income support in the entire OECD](#).

This year, our new prime minister has displayed contempt for social security recipients. In the lead-up to Anti-Poverty Week, Scott Morrison revealed plans [to force job seekers out of their homes and communities to perform farm labour](#) — in order to “justify” their receipt of entitlements.

Moreover, we learned that the disastrous Community Development Program (CDP) has punished rural, Indigenous participants in record numbers — imposing a record [740% more financial penalties](#) for “non-compliance”.

Through their [Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill](#), the LNP gave job agencies new, unprecedented powers to impose “[demerit point](#)” punishments which continue to strip job seekers of payments. Now, privately owned job agencies are cutting Australians off Newstart with no review from Centrelink — a move designed to keep job seekers utterly powerless to resist punishments.

Through the same bill, the Coalition also ramped up activity demands for older job seekers — who have become [the fastest growing group of Newstart recipients](#). Since July, unemployed Australians aged 50-59 have been forced to perform 30 hours of activities a fortnight (up from 15) to keep their paltry entitlements.

Through “welfare” programs like Work for the Dole and CDP, more and more poor Australians are being turned into cash cows for private corporations. For example, Indue's Cashless Debit Card (CDC) ultimately nets the company \$10,000 per participant. This year, we've seen countless reports that the CDC is [disempowering remote communities](#), and contributing to [a rise in family and domestic violence](#).

All the while, unfair and illegal Centrelink debt collections (“Robo-debts”) continue [to push vulnerable Australians to the point of suicide](#).

For a large number of low-income Australians, every year may seem like an annus horribilis — but 2018 has surely felt like the worst year in recent memory. Australia's income support service has essentially morphed into a ruthless system of digital algorithms, which targets and punishes our poorest citizens.

To give Labor some credit, it thankfully [announced plans to abolish the CDP program](#) — which will bring welcome relief to Indigenous communities all across the country. This was a great win for [The First Nations Workers Alliance](#) — a new union of Indigenous advocates whose tireless lobbying and campaigning put much needed pressure on Labor to axe the scheme. In what has been an incredibly gruelling year, low-income advocates have [triggered a Senate inquiry into Jobactive](#), lobbied more than 20 local councils [to advocate for a raised Newstart](#), and galvanised communities to [fight back against the Coalition's attacks on their welfare](#). It's an uphill battle, but groups like the 'The First Nations Workers Alliance', 'Anti-Poverty Network' and 'Australian Unemployed Workers' Union' have set out to reclaim the original promise and intent of social security: a system of dignified and unconditional support for every Australian who needs it. Despite all the attacks levelled at them, social security recipients are organising themselves from the margins, [building their power and capacity to change policy for the better](#).

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

LABOR TO REBUILD AUSTRALIA'S PROUD RECORD ON AID — Wong/Moore

A Shorten Labor Government will increase Official Development Assistance as a percentage of Gross National Income every year that we are in office, starting with our first Budget.

In government, Labor will rebuild and grow Australia's international development program and increase Official Development Assistance.

Labor believes Australia should do its fair share internationally, and work with the international community to achieve the longstanding funding targets set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

When Labor was last in power, Australia's development assistance budget rose every year — reaching around 0.35 per cent of Gross National Income.

Under the current government it has fallen every year with more than \$11 billion slashed from the aid budget to just 0.22 per cent of GNI — the lowest level on record.

And on the current budget trajectory, it is forecast to drop to as low as just 0.16 per cent.

The Coalition's unprecedented cuts to development assistance of the last four years have caused great harm to some of the poorest people in our region.

They have both impugned our reputation internationally, and have undermined our national interests.

They have harmed our efforts to alleviate poverty, and make our region safer and more secure. They have diminished our standing in the region.

They are also at odds with the generous spirit of the Australian people.

Labor can, and must, do better.

That is why rebuilding Australia's international development assistance program is a core element of Labor's foreign policy.

Labor believes Australia can show humanity, decency and compassion to ensure a fair go for all — at home, on our doorstep, and abroad.

ENVIRONMENT

STATE OF THE CLIMATE REPORT 2018 — Mark Butler

The fifth, biennial [State of the Climate report](#) produced by the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO shows just how serious the climate emergency is.

The key findings show:

- Australia's climate has warmed by just over 1 °C since 1910, leading to an increase in the frequency of extreme heat events.
 - Sea levels are rising around Australia, increasing the risk of inundation.
 - There has been a long-term increase in extreme fire weather, and in the length of the fire season, across large parts of Australia.
 - Australia is projected to experience:
 - Further increases in sea and air temperatures, with more hot days and marine heatwaves, and fewer cool extremes.
 - Further sea level rise and ocean acidification.
 - Decreases in rainfall across southern Australia with more time in drought, but an increase in intense heavy rainfall throughout Australia.
- Yet under Scott Morrison's Government there is no effective climate



policy. The Government's own data shows that under the Liberals' already inadequate emissions reduction targets, carbon emissions are now at their highest level since 2011 and they will continue to rise all the way to 2030.

In the face of all this data, Energy Minister Angus Taylor proudly deceives Australians, saying there is no need to reduce emissions because the ["mission \(is\) accomplished."](#)

The NSW Liberal Government is right; Scott Morrison and the Liberals are out of touch when it comes to dealing with the dire consequences of climate change.

Taking action on climate change will be a priority for a Shorten Labor Government. It is our promise, if elected, to future generations.

LIBERAL CLIMATE LIES CONTINUE— Mark Butler

[Once again](#) the Liberals have repeated the lie that they will meet their inadequate Paris climate targets.

Energy Minister Angus Taylor is blatantly ignoring the fact the Government's own data shows that carbon emissions are now at their highest level since 2011 and they will continue to rise all the way to 2030.

Australians are sick of the ignorant lies that come from the Liberals when it comes to taking action to start to bring down pollution and grapple with the climate emergency.

Scott Morrison and the Liberals have no plan to reduce emissions in the land, industrial, transport or other sectors of the economy.

Emissions are only coming down in the electricity sector because of Labor's Renewable Energy Target but under Scott Morrison's anti-renewable Liberals their only energy plan is to spend billions of taxpayers' dollars on new coal-fired power stations that are fundamentally inconsistent with our climate change obligations.

Australia is one of the few countries that is making no real progress on improving energy efficiency in manufacturing and industry, according to [new analysis by international research firm Climate Analytics](#).

Climate Analytics' research, released by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), finds:

- Climate pollution from industry make up almost a third of Australia's total emissions.
- Australian industry's energy efficiency is ranked worst of the developed countries on a list of the world's top 25 energy consuming nations.
- Australia has no effective policy to cut climate pollution from the industrial sector.

"Not only are we among the worst in the developed world when it comes to industry using energy efficiently, but this analysis shows we're actually going backwards," said ACF Climate Change Campaigner Suzanne Harter.

"If the Morrison Government is serious about meeting Australia's international commitments, it will need to set policy that brings down rising pollution from industry.

"Australia ranks poorly because we have no policy forcing down industrial pollution like an economy-wide carbon price or a robust emissions intensity scheme. So-called national 'safeguards' established by the Coalition are riddled with holes and have not capped pollution.

"This analysis highlights the growing problem of pollution from liquefied natural gas, with LNG processing for export one of the fastest-growing sources of domestic emissions. This is made even worse by the potent fugitive emissions that are released during LNG extraction.

"Australia has everything it needs to become a renewable energy superpower, exporting 'green' renewable hydrogen to our neighbours and using it to power local industry.

"Western Australia is pursuing a renewable hydrogen industry, but to make the most of it we need the Federal Government to grab hold of this massive opportunity," she said. **The fact sheet can be downloaded [here](#).**

THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ACT TO STOP WHALING –Burke/Dreyfus

Reports that Japan will withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) need to be immediately verified by the Government and legal advice needs to be sought as to what this means for the moratorium on commercial whaling.



Labor has stood firm against Japan's so called 'scientific whaling' and supported the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling established in 1982.

It was Labor who took Japan to International Court of Justice and won – a ruling that means whaling in the Southern Ocean is illegal.

Today Labor reaffirms its commitment to seek to end Japanese so called 'scientific' whaling and calls on the government to seek legal advice on the implications of Japan walking away from the IWC.

The truth is Japan never stopped commercial whaling. There was never anything scientific about harpooning a whale, cutting it up and putting it on a plate.

The Japanese whaling fleet left for the Southern Ocean in November and may already be slaughtering whales.

This needs to end.

Labor has long denounced this cruel practice, and was particularly frustrated to hear reports in May 2018 of Japanese whaling boats slaughtering 122 pregnant female minke whales, in an apparent effort to measure fertility rates. The total catch and kill for the 2017-18 season was over 330 minke whales, many of which were still calves.

Japan threatened to leave the IWC at the last meeting in Brazil after it lost a vote on the issue of commercial whaling.

The government needs to immediately seek advice on these latest reports.

The moratorium on commercial whaling was one of the great environmental reforms of the last century.

[Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.](#)

While Australia's actions have been focused on the Southern Ocean, Labor also condemns Japanese whaling in the northwest Pacific.

Our bilateral relationship with Japan is one of our closest and most significant, represented through deep engagement economically, through trade, defence, security ties and shared democratic ideals.

However, this does not mean we will agree on all issues, and Labor has consistently and strongly campaigned against Japanese whaling. Both Australia and Japan have recognised that this issue should not and will not affect our broader relationship.

The revolving door of the Abbott Turnbull Morrison Government has shown no leadership on the issue of whaling.

Only Labor will do what it takes to protect our environment and the precious and endangered wildlife that inhabit it, for the benefit of current and future generations.



GOVT'S ENERGY ADVISER SLAMS THEIR ENERGY POLICY - Mark Butler

After another year of Liberal energy policy chaos, the Government's chief energy policy advising agency, the Liberal government's own Energy Security Board, has slammed the Morrison Government's chaotic approach to energy policy.

Confirming that the threats, chaos and ad-hoc interventions that have characterised energy policy in 2018 are no substitute for real energy policy, the ESB has said ***"The risks to delivering a coherent and coordinated approach to energy policy in the NEM have increased during 2018"***

Whether its affordability, reliability, security, emissions reductions or governance, the ESB is clear the Government's incoherent approach is making the situation worse not better.

The ESB points out the Governments approach is threatening and undermining the new investment we need to modernise the system, replace ageing coal generators, and lower prices and pollution, saying; ***"The risk of Government intervention and distortion of the drivers for future investment remain real, which in turn increases the likelihood of negative impacts on competition, reliability, pricing and investment decisions."***

It is simply unprecedented for a State of the NEM report to take such a strong position against current government policy.

The ESB was established by the Liberal Government, to help end the Liberal's energy crisis. The ESB State of the NEM report was informed by the Australian Energy Market Operator, the Australian Energy Market's Commission and the Australian Energy Regulator.

Its advice couldn't be clearer; the Morrison government isn't the solution, it's the problem.

This comes after a disastrous COAG Energy Council meeting on Wednesday which saw states, led by the NSW Liberal Government, slam the Morrison Government for abandoning emission reduction as a pillar of energy policy.

Australian states, big energy users, energy companies, and now even the government's own energy market agencies are in open revolt against the Morrison government's energy policy chaos.

Slogans like 'big stick' and 'fair dinkum power' don't constitute the sensible, pro-investment, credible energy policy Australia so desperately needs. But they do constitute the entirety of the government's broken approach to energy.

The Liberals have failed. Australia deserves so much better.

LIBERALS GAS CRISIS WILL COST MANUFACTURING JOBS – Mark Butler

Scott Morrison and the Liberals failure to handle the extraordinary energy crisis that has emerged under their government can only be matched by their complete inability to fix the gas crisis.

For two years skyrocketing gas prices have meant Australian manufacturers are failing to secure affordable gas contracts.

Once again the [ACCC interim gas inquiry report](#) has found prices are still too high – about two or three times higher than the historical average.

Against these findings ACCC Chair Rod Sims has warned today in the [Financial Review](#), *"I have no doubt that some manufacturing companies will close because of gas prices at the current level. I have no doubt about that."*

With Energy Users Association of Australia Chief Executive, Andrew Richards adding, *"We know of many companies who are actively considering their future in Australia. They are being driven out by high energy prices, particularly gas."*

A Shorten Labor Government will ensure Australia's energy needs are put first, introducing measures to boost local gas supply, put downward pressure on gas prices and protect Australian jobs.

INNOVATION

GO SLOW SLOMO FINALLY RELEASES DIGITAL ECONOMY STRATEGY – Rowland/Husic
Capping off a litany of fails in the digital economy, the Liberal Government has finally released its underwhelming digital economy strategy: “Australia’s Tech Future”.

Looking more like a promotional brochure than serious strategy, it simply describes initiatives already in train, is vague on targets and outcomes - and, importantly, offers no bold vision to drive growth in our digital economy.

It makes you wonder: after all the delay in getting this done, was it worth the wait?

“To sneak out a long-promised strategy within a breath of Christmas tells you how seriously the Coalition takes this issue,” said Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy, Ed Husic.

“Releasing it - and its small business digital engagement plans - so late in the year suggests the government is more interested in ticking off a long-avoided item on its to-do list, as opposed to developing a serious strategy to drive the digital economy.

“With few performance targets - and in parts scant detail on serious policy challenges around digital regulation - it fails to tackle the biggest challenge to our digital economy: crippling skills shortages.

“It’s been estimated Australia needs 100,000 more digitally-enabled workers, yet this government has proposed little in terms of investment or new money to help respond to the demands of industry and our digital economy,” Mr Husic said.

“On digital infrastructure, the so-called strategy speaks of ‘planning to meet future needs’, even as this Government rolls out a second-rate copper NBN that fails to deliver small businesses with fast and reliable internet in 2018, let alone provide for their future growth and sustainability in a world powered by 5G and AI,” said Shadow Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland.

“On digital inclusion, there is acknowledgement that Indigenous Australians and people with a disability are amongst the most digitally excluded, but little is offered to address those gaps as the digital divide widens under the Liberals and Nationals.

“Undertaking to ‘track Australia’s performance’ without a clearly defined set of targets, it’s clear this Government’s heart just isn’t in it,” Ms Rowland said.

The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government has had one consistent thread in this critical policy space: they are announcement addicted and performance deficient. This report exemplifies that completely.

This visionless government can't prepare a strategy for the digital future - and so it didn't, but our economy deserves a better shot at its digital future for the benefit of all Australians.

RESEARCH A BIG CASUALTY IN LIBERALS’ ECONOMIC UPDATE – Plibersek/Carr/Pratt
Outstanding Australian research is at serious risk thanks to the Liberals’ \$328 million of cuts, revealed today in their mid-year economic update.

Australian researchers have produced some incredible inventions such as the cochlear ear implant, Wi-Fi, and a vaccine for cervical cancer.

But the Liberals’ cuts will damage Australia’s capacity to make exciting new discoveries, and create the industries of the future.

These cuts to the research block grants scheme will cost jobs at Australian universities and research institutes.

Today’s research cuts come on top of the Liberals’ \$2.2 billion of university cuts.

Only Labor will ensure our universities have a secure future. Our nearly \$10 billion investment will see an extra 200,000 Australians get the opportunity of a university education.

Science, Research and Innovation budget tables, released in October, showed the Liberals have reduced spending on science, research and innovation by \$1.1 billion in real terms — a cut of 10 per cent over the past five years.

The Abbott/Turnbull/Morrison Government talks a big book on science and research, but the facts are very different. Bill Shorten has declared that if Labor wins the federal election, which must be held within the next six months, we will end the Coalition’s war on science and research.



Labor understands that universities, science and research are fundamental to Australia’s future.

Universities Australia says government and business have ignored economy’s ‘backbone’

Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.

THE POWER OF RESEARCH

Michael McGowan

Australia has fallen well behind the rest of the developed world when it comes to research funding, the peak lobbying body for universities has warned.

Ahead of a parliamentary inquiry into research funding, Universities Australia has complained that government and business have ignored a key part of higher education - which it called the "backbone" of the economy - by allowing overall funding for research and development to fall to below 2% of the total economy.

Figures from the OECD released by Universities Australia show that gross expenditure on research and development as a percentage of GDP fell dramatically from 2.11% in 2013-14 to 1.88% in 2015-16.

That is well below the OECD average of 2.38% and marks the first time that Australia's overall spend has gone backwards. The UK government this year promised to lift R&D funding to 2.4% over the next decade.

LABOR WELCOMES GOVERNMENT BACKFLIP ON OECD SKILLS SURVEY - Cameron

Labor welcomes the Morrison Government's latest backflip, reversing the decision to withdraw Australia from the [OECD Survey of Adult Skills](#).

Labor received advice in November that the Government was withdrawing from the survey that collects international quantitative data which determines the literacy, numeracy and problem solving capacity of Australian adults.

The data is relied on by governments, academics and advocates for research and to inform policy development on skill formation.

The Government was forced to change its position after Labor and vocational education stakeholders raised the issue last month.

It is critical we have reliable data and analysis so we can create policies that assist adult learners.

It is unfortunate that yet again the Government has had to be forced to act sensibly on the most basic of policy matters.

If we do not participate in the survey, there is no way of benchmarking Australia internationally, or assessing whether we are meeting national targets.

This latest backflip by the Government further demonstrates its incompetence and failure to develop and implement good policy on skills formation.

One of the first acts of the Coalition Government was to close the Australian Workplace Productivity Agency which was charged with undertaking analysis and research on how to build Australia's skill base.

The Coalition also closed the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program, cut funding to the Skills for Education and Employment Program and is mismanaging the Adult Migrant English Program.

This Government has damaged adult and community education through its \$3 billion cuts to vocational education and skills.

This backflip is another demonstration that the Coalition is completely out of touch and incompetent. Appointing a failed and disgraced Minister, Senator Michaelia Cash, to this portfolio highlights the Coalition's disregard for adult education and skill development for working class Australians.

EDUCATION

MYEFO DELIVERS NOTHING FOR PRESCHOOLERS - Rishworth

This week's MYEFO once again delivers nothing for our pre-schoolers.

Under the Liberals there is no funding for preschool after 2019 and MYEFO reiterates this. There is only 12 months left of funding - but this government couldn't care less.

Whilst the Liberals can't be bothered to fund our youngest citizens, Labor has solidified our commitment to permanent funding for early education and preschool for three and four year olds in our National Platform, recognising our National Preschool and Kindy Program as fundamental to children's development.

The difference couldn't be starker. Only Labor is committed to providing quality early childhood education to all of our Australian children.

HEALTH

MORRISON'S PRIVATE HEALTH HIKE EVEN WORSE THAN FEARED - King

Millions of Australians will face another above-inflation private health insurance hike next year because Scott Morrison has failed to stand up to his insurer mates and get prices under control.

Premiums have already risen more than \$1,000 a year under the Liberals – up 27 per cent since 2014.

Today's confirmation of a 3.25 per cent increase in 2019 brings the total under the Liberals to over 30 per cent and will cost families more than an extra \$100 a year.

It is also further evidence of a Government in chaos, with the Liberals [telling journalists](#) just 10 days ago that the increase would be less than 3 per cent.

If Scott Morrison expects the Australian people to thank him for another above-inflation price increase it shows just how out-of-touch he really

[Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.](#)

is.

The Liberals' so-called private health insurance "reforms" - designed hand-in-hand with the industry while Mr Morrison was Treasurer - have failed to get prices under control.

This latest Liberal health hike will be a major hit to the family budget and force more people to abandon their cover.

Already, Australians are downgrading or ditching their private health cover in record numbers in response to relentless price rises, soaring out-of-pocket costs and growing exclusions.

A recent ACCC report found that as of June 2018, 45.1 per cent of the Australian population held hospital-only or combined health insurance cover – the lowest level since 2009.

Wage growth is low and family budgets are already under strain given the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government's failure to rein in living costs, from health insurance to electricity. The Liberals promised to make insurance more affordable – but all they've done is make it more profitable for the big insurers.

Today's news shows why Labor's policies are so sorely needed. Labor will cap premium price increases at 2 per cent for two years, delivering families an average saving of \$340. We will also task the Productivity Commission with a sweeping review to identify long-term sustainable ways to bring down costs and improve quality.

Labor is currently inviting consumers, experts and the private health sector to have their say on how to improve the value, affordability and quality of private health insurance.

Labor has released an [issues paper](#) and is inviting submissions to inform the terms of reference and structure of the Productivity Commission inquiry.

Only with these policies can we shift the balance back in favour of consumers and get this industry back on track.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Based on Canstar averages for combined hospital/general cover, an average* 3.25% increase will mean an extra:

\$64 for young singles

\$122 for couples/families with obstetrics

\$159 for older couples

*** These are only average increases, with costs set to rise by much more for many people.**

MORRISON GOVT FAILS TO ADDRESS THE CITY-COUNTRY HEALTH DISPARITY -Zappia

The Third Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation report confirms the nation's city and country health divide, with access to some essential medical screening many times higher in city areas than rural and remote parts of Australia.



The rate of myocardial perfusion scans for 18 year olds and over was up to 57 times higher in some city areas than in the lowest country area, whilst for stress echocardiography the figure was 47 times.

Regional, rural and remote Australians have much higher levels of serious illness, chronic disease and lower life expectancy than city dwellers.

The differences can often be directly attributed to poorer access to health services including early detection of illness through widely used screening tests.

After more than five years in office there has been little change in the health disparity between country and city Australians

The city-country divide has been known for years and the Morrison Government has failed to bridge the gap whilst it banks the savings made because country people per capita are a much lower burden on the public health system. Country people deserve better and the evidence is clear.

SENIORS

MORRISON CAN'T COVER UP HIS CUTS TO AGED CARE - Collins

Scott Morrison's announcement on home care for older Australians is too little too late, and doesn't make up for his cuts to aged care.



There are more than 120,000 older Australians stuck on a waiting list for a home care package – today's announcement is a drop in the ocean.

Morrison cut \$1.2 billion from aged care in his first budget as Treasurer. This doesn't even reverse Morrison's cuts.

The Government said it solved this problem in the May Budget – this funding is a concession that it hasn't even scratched the surface of the growing crisis under its watch..

When Christmas comes around, there will still be 127,000 older Australians waiting for the home care package they have been approved for.

Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.

Many older Australians have been languishing on the wait list for their approved home care for a year or more while the Liberals ignored the problem.

Scott Morrison did nothing when the waitlist for home care packages hit 108,000 in August. He did nothing when the list reached 121,000 in September.

As this home care waitlist kept growing, Scott Morrison and the Liberals did nothing.

They have been too distracted by dysfunction and division.

Labor said the packages announced in the Budget would be woefully inadequate and today's announcement sadly proves it.

SOCIAL SERVICES

GOVERNMENT CAUGHT OUT FUDGING DSP WAIT TIMES – Burney/Husic/Brown/Hill

A report by the Auditor General has exposed the Government hiding the truth about excessive Disability Support Pension (DSP) wait times.

The [Auditor General's report](#) has revealed that **claims that take more than 84 days to process are simply not counted towards the average processing time** – this means that the public figures of average wait times are simply not true.

The departments of Human Services and Social Services agreed in 2015 that this measure should be changed, yet as at September 2018 the Government had still not come clean on the true state of the DSP backlog.

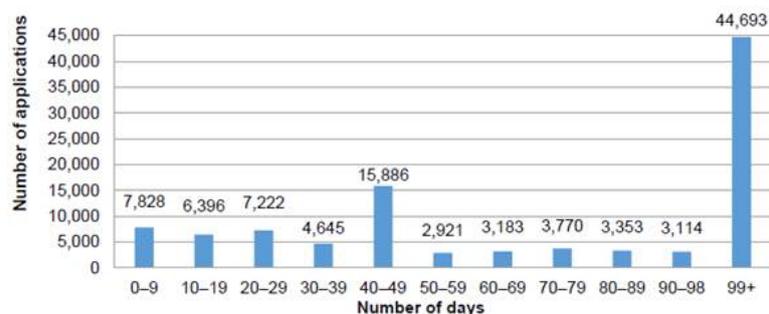
Thousands of vulnerable Australians waiting for their DSP claim to be processed may rightly ask why the Government is trying to hide the true extent of the problem.

Over the last four years the Government has cut thousands of staff from DHS and started the privatisation of Centrelink, and the proportion of DSP claims taking more than 84 days has quadrupled.

“A large proportion of claims each quarter take more than 84 days to be finalised. Between Q3 2016–17 and Q4 2017–18 this accounted for about 40 to 60 per cent of all claims finalised, compared to around 10 to 20 per cent in 2014–15 when the exclusion was agreed.”

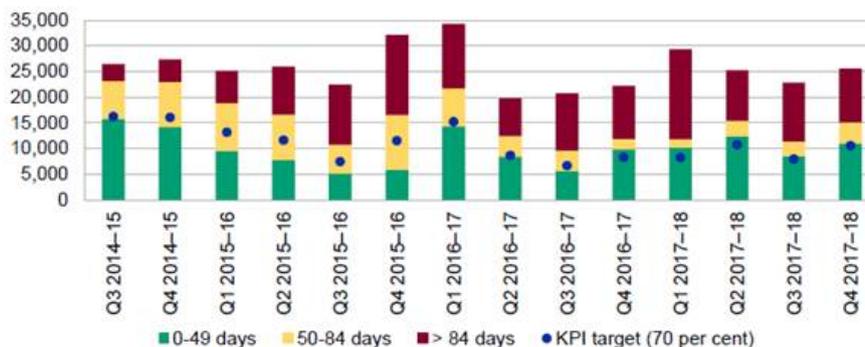
[Auditor General Report No. 13, 2018-19, p54]

Figure 4.1: Days taken to complete DSP applications in 2017–18



Source: ANAO analysis.

Figure 4.2: Timeliness of DSP new claims finalised, by quarter



Note: The blue dot on each column indicates the KPM marker of 70 per cent of claims processed within 49 days (excluding claims that exceed 84 days). If the dot is placed in green (the lowest bar), the KPM was met.

Source: ANAO analysis of Human Services data.

The exclusion of claims taking more than 84 days to complete from the departments' measure has created a perverse incentive for Centrelink to drag out DSP applications in order to fudge its key performance marker (KPM) figures.

The Government needs to come clean on the extent to which DSP applications are being delayed.

This report only confirms what too many Australians who rely on the DSP already know – they are waiting many more months than the Government is willing to admit.

Over the past two years, the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Liberal Government have cut and outsourced 2,500 Centrelink jobs. Over that time, Australians are waiting longer and longer for their income support payments.

Income support is complex. This is why Labor has committed to boosting Centrelink with 1,200 permanent staff who are qualified and experienced to manage the complex circumstances facing income support recipients, including Australians with a disability.

GOVERNMENT BACKFLIPS ON DISABILITY SUPPORT PENSION - Burney/Brown

Labor welcomes the Government's latest backflip on its changes to the Disability Support Pension (DSP) for people leaving prison.

Advocates, people with disability and the Australian Labor Party had been calling for the Government to reverse its decision, announced in this year's budget.

The Senate [called on the Government](#) to overturn its decision earlier this month and after sustained pressure, it back flipped on this budget thought bubble.

This latest backflip shows just how divided and dysfunctional this Government is.

The proposed measure was cruel and counterproductive, and would have put vulnerable people at risk of recidivism or homelessness upon exiting prison.

COMMUNICATIONS

MORRISON GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO COME CLEAN ON HFC CONTRACTS - Rowland

The Morrison Government needs to [stop obfuscating and come clean](#) on the extent to which Australian taxpayers have been fleeced by the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government's flawed decision to use HFC as part of its second-rate NBN.

In April 2016 [it was reported](#) NBNCo had reached a \$1.6 billion deal with Telstra to support aspects of the HFC rollout. At the time of the announcement, NBNCo was planning to deploy HFC to 4.0 million homes.

However, due to ongoing reliability issues and cost blowouts, NBNCo is now planning to deploy HFC to only 2.5 million homes.

Given the 37.5 per cent reduction in the number of proposed premises passed by HFC, it would be reasonable to assume the cost of the Telstra HFC deal should have also decreased.

The Senate has given NBNCo several opportunities to clarify this has occurred - but NBNCo [has so far refused to do so](#).

The underlying build cost of HFC on the NBN has increased by a staggering 64 per cent since 2015.

In contrast, over the same period, countries such as New Zealand, the UK and the US have reduced the cost of deploying Fibre to the Premises by between 40 and 50 per cent.

On every measure, the Liberals' disastrous decision to adopt HFC has left taxpayers and consumer worse off.

It's time the Morrison Government came clean about what the true scope of the impact is.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS FLYING HIGH FOLLOWING ACCC RULING – Madeleine King



Labor welcomes the ACCC's win today over domestic airlines, securing court-enforceable undertakings to ensure airlines' refund policies and practices comply with Australian Consumer Law.

This is a significant win for Australian consumers and – as people fly home for the holidays to see their loved ones – it could not have come at a better time.

No longer will Australian consumers have to accept they can't get a refund for their delayed flight and no longer will Australian consumers be forced to pay an administration fee to get their money back.

Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs, Madeleine King MP, applauds the ACCC for their efforts.

"Australian's don't always know their consumer rights when they're faced up against large

Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.

corporations,” said Ms King.

“The ACCC continues to demonstrate the importance of strong, effective institutions in protecting Australian consumers’ interests.”

And, in even better news, the changes will be applied retrospectively. This means if you were recently refused a refund on your delayed flight, you may now be entitled to one.

The ACCC has published new guidance to help consumers [understand their rights in relation to flight delays and cancellations](#).

ALP REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO ROAD SAFETY AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE - Sterle

This week, the Australian Labor Party held its 48th National Conference in Adelaide where the leadership team and delegates from across the country came together to set our policy platform which will deliver a fair go for all Australians under a Shorten Labor Government.

Over the last 6 months since my appointment as Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety, I have been particularly proud to work closely with Anthony Albanese MP, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport on policy relating to that portfolio.

I was therefore pleased to move amendments this week to our existing policies on Road Safety which reaffirms the commitment that the Labor Party has to reducing road trauma and improving road safety more generally.

At the conference, I was proud to move the following motions which were unanimously endorsed by the Conference delegates:

- *After decades of decline, the road toll is again heading in the wrong direction.*
- *Labor will establish a National Office of Road Safety. This dedicated unit within the Department of Infrastructure will be tasked with improving data collection, promoting best practice research, and leading the development of the next ten-year National Road Safety Strategy, which will commence in 2021. Labor will ensure the strategy draws on the findings of the Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, and is developed in partnership with state and territory governments, law enforcement, motoring organisations, experts, research bodies and other relevant stakeholders.*
- *Labor will ensure that the national safety standards applying to motor vehicles are up to date and fit for purpose. The role of the national government is to ensure the latest road safety technology features are in new vehicles, including electronic stability control and autonomous emergency braking. Labor will work with industry and stakeholders to promote vehicle safety ratings and to amend the Australian Design Rules to mandate proven vehicle safety technologies in new vehicles.*

I was also very pleased to work with Anthony, Brendan O’Connor MP and the Transport Workers Union of Australia to negotiate an amendment to the platform that would see a Shorten Labor Government re-legislate Safe Rates for workers in the transport industry. I have had many conversations with this group recently as well as with industry stakeholders about what a future Safe Rates system would look like as I believed that consultation was the best way to achieve a solid outcome for all. I was therefore proud to support the following motion on Safe Rates legislation at the conference which was moved by Michael Kaine, National Secretary of the Transport Workers Union:

“A Federal Labor Government will, as a matter of urgency, legislate for a national system of Safe Rates consisting of an independent body with responsibility for safe standards of work including fair payments and conditions. This task has become more pressing given the emergence of new technology and the gig economy in passenger and freight transport which has accelerated the downward spiral throughout the transport industry.”

The system will ensure implementation of the following principles:

- 1. Universal application of a system of binding, enforceable and safe standards. The standards will cover all parties in the transport supply chain / contract networks to ensure safe performance, planning and appropriate payments. The standards will focus on eliminating economic and contractual practices that place undue pressure on transport supply chains / contract networks;**
- 2. Appropriate, enforceable payments and related conditions for all operators and workers, regardless of label;**
- 3. The capacity to resolve (including where necessary through binding decisions) transport supply chain / contract networks disputes;**
- 4. Appropriate and adequate enforcement regime; and**
- 5. Appropriate resourcing of supply chain / contract networks auditing, training and education through an industry fund.**

It was a terrific conference which not only outlined Labor’s positive plans for the future of Australia but also highlighted how unified the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party is under the leadership of Bill Shorten.

I look forward to continuing to work with stakeholders, research experts, unions, industry bodies and the leadership team of the ALP in my capacity as Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety in order to draw more attention to this very important issue.

IMMIGRATION

LABOR WILL HELP THE GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS-Neumann

A Shorten Labor Government will ensure our nation can do our part to resettle genuine refugees facing persecution and in need of protection.

While the global humanitarian crisis has continued to grow, with over 25 million refugees worldwide, the Liberals have failed to improve Australia’s humanitarian response on the international stage.

Labor will commit \$500 million to the work of the UNHCR, to deliver stronger asylum seeker assessment and resettlement processes across the region and closer to source countries – an important measure to ensure vulnerable people are not exploited by people smugglers to travel by

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boat.

This funding delivered over five years will help make sure regional processing and resettlement is implemented in an orderly and structured way through the UNHCR – by building capacity such as boosting staff, facilities and training throughout the region.

It is in addition to \$30 million in urgent humanitarian relief announced to address the pressing humanitarian crises in the Palestinian Territories as well as Myanmar and Bangladesh.

A Labor Government will also work more cooperatively with community, faith based and business groups to responsibly support and expand community sponsorship of refugees.

We will reform the Community Sponsored Refugee Program to, over time, allow up to 5000 refugees to resettle in Australia annually.

This model – akin to the successful program in Canada – will mean groups such as state and local governments, community organisations, businesses, unions, and faith-based organisations – will be able to sponsor humanitarian entrants into Australia. This program does not have a budget impact.

Support for community sponsorship of refugees has been growing in recent years – including community and faith based groups, who are raising funds and actively supporting the settlement and integration of refugees into the community and businesses supporting refugees by securing jobs for humanitarian entrants.

Labor will also appoint a Special Envoy for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Issues to advance Australia's interests and leadership on refugee issues within the region, secure third country resettlement agreements, develop an Australian Refugee Commission, and provide policy advice for Australia's Humanitarian Program.

This comprehensive suite of measures are underpinned by a commitment to maintain Australia's strong borders – to ensure people smugglers are never able to exploit vulnerable people ever again.

Labor is getting the balance right – we will maintain strong borders, keep the people smugglers out of business, and do our part to address the global humanitarian crisis. Labor's policies ensure Australia does its fair share to meet humanitarian need, plays a leadership role in our region, and treats genuine refugees with dignity and humanity.

LABOR'S COMMITMENT TO STRONG BORDER PROTECTION – Neumann/O'Neil

A Shorten Labor Government will strengthen Australia's border security with new measures to disrupt and deter people smugglers from preying on vulnerable people throughout the region.

Labor will **triple** the number of Australian Federal Police officers overseas dedicated to working cooperatively with partner nations to deter and disrupt people smuggling operations at their source.

These officers are critical in the fight against people smugglers, by preventing risky boat ventures before they start and stopping people drowning at sea.

“The first aim is to deter and disrupt the ventures from taking to the water in the first instance. That's a lot more effective; it has a lot less risk, particularly for the people who want to use the people smugglers, so that's always our preference.” - Outgoing Operation Sovereign Borders Commander, Air Vice-Marshal Stephen Osborne 21 May 2018

The Liberals' cuts and chaos mean they have slashed the number of officers to just four dedicated officers covering the entire region. This is putting our border protection framework at risk.

Labor has committed \$8.5 million to establish an additional eight dedicated AFP officers throughout the region to support Australia's regional neighbours and prevent people smuggling journeys.

Peter Dutton and Scott Morrison have risked Australia's border security by ordering the Australian Border Force Fleet to stop patrols to save money on fuel and have cut frontline ABF staff at Australian airports over the Christmas period.

Labor will keep the people smugglers out of business and maintain Australia's strong borders, ensuring they are never able to exploit the lives of vulnerable people again.

Labor is committed to strong borders, turn backs when safe to do so, offshore processing and regional resettlement because we know it saves lives at sea.

Unlike the Liberals, Labor will not make cuts to border protection. Under Labor, Operation Sovereign Borders will be fully resourced, we will maintain Australia's strong border protection measures and strengthen them even further with these new measures to stop people smugglers in their tracks.

FIRST PEOPLE

A PATHWAY TO FIRST NATIONS RECOGNITION –Shorten/Burney/Dodson/McCarthy

A Shorten Labor Government will become the first political party to put in place a Reconciliation Action Plan – committing our party to practical measures to give First Australians a voice in our party, in our parliament, and in our society.

For Labor, reconciliation and recognition is about ensuring that First Nations people have the same rights, opportunities and outcomes as every other Australian.

Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.

Labor's Reconciliation Action Plan includes strategies to work to better understand how to improve the current involvement of, and relationships with, First Nations People.

Labor recognizes its role in building a more equitable relationship - one in which the rights and obligations flow both ways. This includes a commitment to establishing a Voice and enshrining it in the Constitution. It is our first priority for Constitutional change.

Labor's Reconciliation Action Plan is a practical plan with measurable timeframes – ensuring that at every level of our party we are constantly building our understanding of the issues that affect First Nations People's equality and aspirations, and developing practical ideas for achieving sustainable change.

These goals have eluded us as a nation for more than two centuries. It is time for that to change – and Labor wants to lead this change.

Reconciliation and recognition is about acknowledging – and celebrating – the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people and custodians of Australia and recognising the need for change through real partnerships.

In doing this Labor can continue to lead the way on our nation's path to Recognition, Reconciliation and Justice.

A fair go for Australia also means a fair go for First Nations People.

More information on Labor's Reconciliation Action Plan can be found [here](#).



POWERFUL STORIES OF DOWRY ABUSE AND IDEAS FOR CHANGE – Neumann/Hill

Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Shayne Neumann MP and Julian Hill MP visited the Sahara Women's Refuge in Brisbane and heard first hand from victims and survivors of dowry related family violence.



The specialist refuge is unique in Australia and supports vulnerable women who have experienced family violence – including numerous cases of dowry related abuse.

Dowry extortion has been recognised as a direct cause of family violence including horrific murders and suicides.

Victims and survivors of dowry-related abuse shared their stories, and ideas for change in family violence legislation, police and service responses, and Australia's visa and migration system.

"I was thankful to hear these brave women shared their personal stories about the confronting challenges they have faced. The Government must guarantee the integrity of Australia's migration program and ensure it does not allow this egregious exploitation of vulnerable women to continue," Mr Neumann said.

Many women who have married Australians but who are living in Australia on temporary visas are not able to access family violence or other support which is an issue requiring further consideration by the Government.

A [Senate Inquiry](#) has been established to raise awareness of the issue in the wider community, and has already heard that current laws and responses may need changes such as the inclusion of dowry related abuse as a specified form of abuse in the Family Law Act.

To date the inquiry has received more than 80 submissions from across Australia and the India-Australia community that show the extent of concern and point the way to changes that may be needed in family law, criminal law, migration systems and policing responses.

The inquiry has heard directly from women and support services with horrific stories of abuse, and numerous suggestions for change which would help prevent dowry abuse and family violence, allow women to make more informed decisions when marrying an Australian man, know their rights to seek help and make prosecution easier if things go wrong.

Dowry or 'bride price' perpetuates a culture of ownership of women, which runs against the cause of equality, a fundamental value in modern Australia.

"Most Australians would be shocked to learn that marriage has become a lucrative market, with Australian citizenship in effect being sold for \$100,000 or more," Mr Hill said.

Dowry abuse and family violence have a terrible impact on women and families and it is crucial the Government does more to help vulnerable women and families suffering because of dowry abuse.

The final report to the Senate is due in early 2019 and submissions can be [made here](#).

Labor is taking this issue seriously and looks forward to the outcomes of this important inquiry.

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SPORT

AN NRL TEAM FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Marles

A practical step, but no so small, though.



In Papua New Guinea, do you know what the three most significant days of the year are? It's not Christmas. It's not Easter. It's not Independence Day. It is the three days of the State of Origin between New South Wales and Queensland.

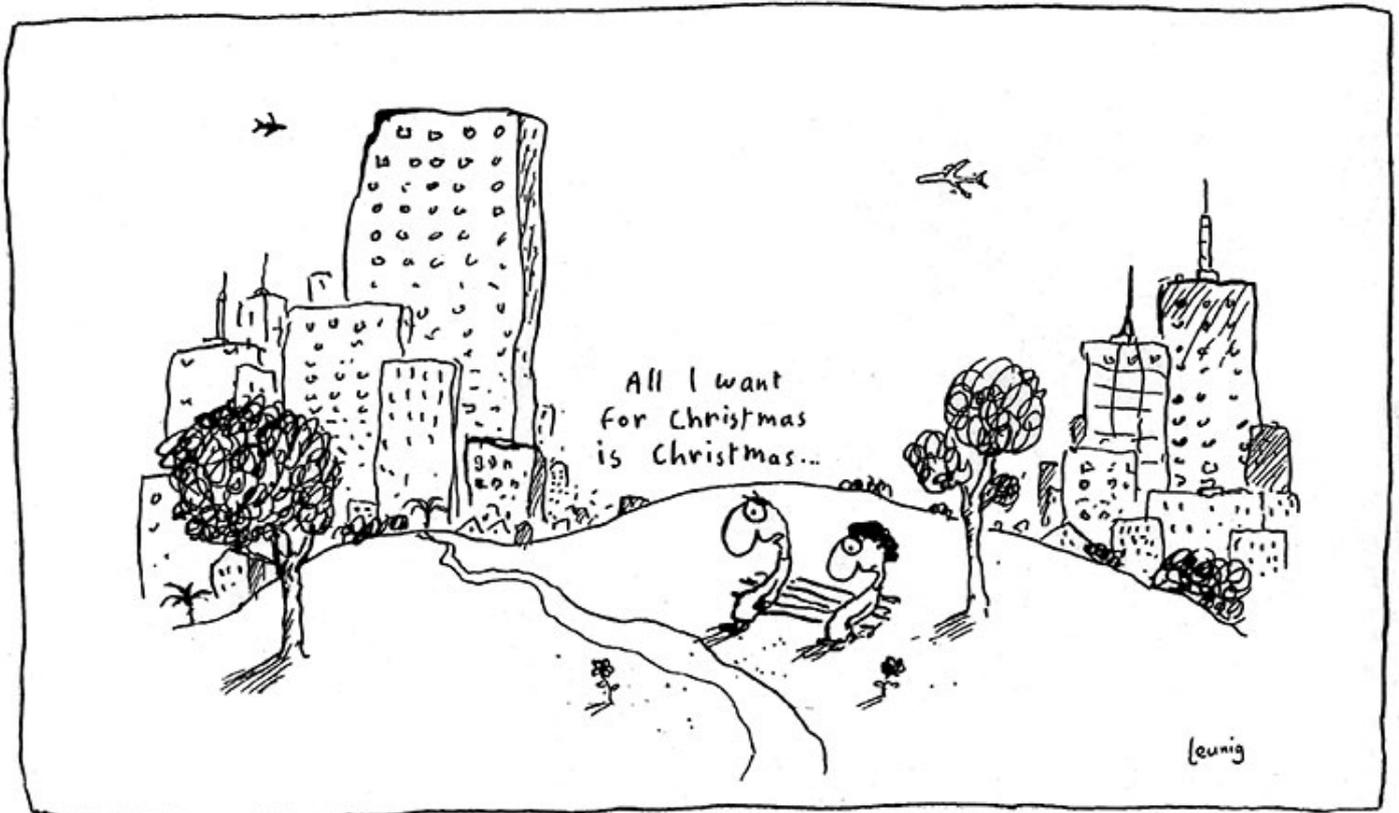
You can fire a cannon down the main street in Port Moresby on those days and you will not hit a soul. About 60 percent of the people are wearing a maroon top; about 40 are representing a light blue top. It is a country which is absolutely mad about this game.

You know what? This is actually a really important resolution. It's a really important resolution because when you think about how we engage with the countries of the Pacific, the most significant thing that we can do is build upon the natural affinity which exists in the Pacific for our nation here in Australia. This is a perfect example of it.

They want a team in the NRL. They should have a team in the NRL.

It would say to everyone in Australia 'you know what, there is actually a country north of Cape York.' You would get to see Papua New Guineans running around a ground doing what they do with absolute passion. I've had the privilege to go to the opening game of the Digicel Cup in Port Moresby, and I'm telling you they do this game unlike anyone else. You could see all of that and it would let Australians know about this country again.

We actually had a deeper affinity with Papua New Guinea, going back decades prior to independence when many more Australians lived in that part of the world. A Papua New Guinean Team in the NRL would do more to re-introduce PNG to Australian popular thought than anything else we could do, which is why we should be supporting this motion and making sure that a future Shorten Labor government does everything it can to make this happen.



Merry Christmas! Have a safe and festive holiday season.

Authorised by Senator Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, 421 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.