INNER SYDNEY VOICE

SUMMER 2020 · ISSUE 137

THE CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION

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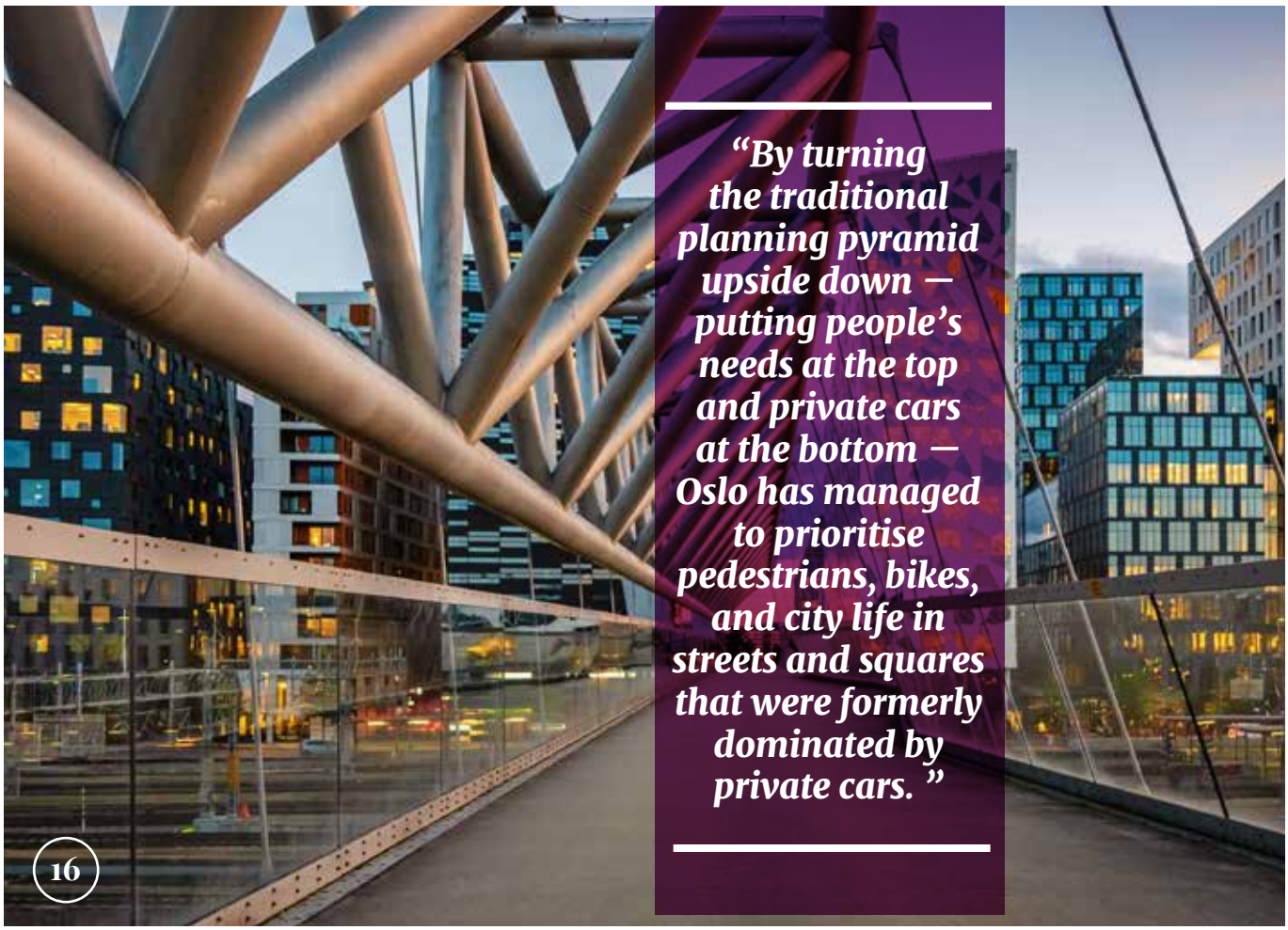

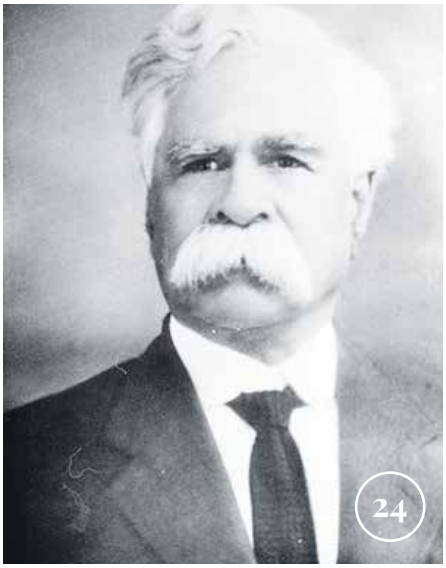

* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned this article contains an image of a deceased person.

SAVE RADIO SKID ROW

INNER SYDNEY'S MOST RADICAL RADIO STATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT TO STAY ON THE AIRWAVES.

The future of Radio Skid Row in Sydney's inner west is under threat following the announcement by the Community Broadcast Foundation (CBF) to no longer fund the station's operational costs. "The decision makes no sense to us," says Radio Skid Row president Huna Amweero. "[The CBF] chose to kneecap the most historically and radically diverse station in NSW — maybe even Australia."

Ethnic programming makes up for more than 70 percent of Radio Skid Row's schedule. Its community language service includes programs for the Nepalese, Sierra Leonean, Macedonian, Ghanaian and Pakistani communities. Skid Row also allots airtime to various Pacific Island communities including Niuean, Cook Islander, Tongan, Melanesian, Maori, Fijian, and Samoan.

The station is home to the longest running African program in Australia — Afrika Connexions — which began just one year after the station launched and continues to broadcast pan-African news and music each week in the same Sunday lunchtime slot. This is the first time in Radio Skid Row's 38-year history that the station has received no operational support for the 47 hours of community language programs broadcast each week.

Radio Skid Row first went to air in 1982 with test broadcasts to Long Bay Jail. It received its first broadcast licence in 1983. From the outset, Radio Skid Row has supported the most marginalised communities in inner Sydney. The station's first broadcasters included members of Redfern's Indigenous community, migrant railway workers from the Eveleigh Street railyards, and just about every activist organisation in Sydney — including anti-apartheid groups, Greenpeace, the Prisoners' Action Group, the Squatters' Association, and the Unemployed Workers' Union — to name just a few.

Radio Skid Row is well known for having an impact that far outreaches its relatively small broadcast footprint. In the 1980s, Skid Row established Radio Redfern and supported a collective of Indigenous broadcasters who dreamt of running their own radio station. In the 1990s, Radio Redfern became Koori Radio which continued to broadcast on Skid Row until it was finally awarded its own licence in 2001. Muslim Family Radio began at Skid Row, too, with overnight Ramadan broadcasts. Skid Row also pioneered Pacific African community broadcasting at a time when the rest of the radio sector was virtually ignoring new and emerging communities.

The station's first broadcasters included members of Redfern's Indigenous community, migrant railway workers from the Eveleigh Street railyards, and just about every activist organisation in Sydney — including anti-apartheid groups, Greenpeace, the Prisoners' Action Group, the Squatters' Association, and the Unemployed Workers' Union

More recently, the older Skid Rowers — many of whom have been on air for more than 20 years — handed over the management of the station to a new generation of media activists. The station has since launched a number of new projects, including a BIPOC media collective. "It's an astonishing decision [to defund Skid Row] during the period of the Black Lives Matter movement and the increased calls for more diverse voices in the Australian media," says Amweero.

For much of 2020, Skid Row has focused on informing and uplifting communities through the uncertainty of a global pandemic. "Producing radio remotely was a challenge," says Amweero, "but we stayed true to our roots with the voices of the most marginalised communities on the airwaves 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

The answer to Skid Row's funding woes, says Amweero, is independence. "We need to be completely independent, free from the predominantly white bureaucracy of the sector and be supported by community if we're going to be here for the next generation. If 2020 has taught us anything, it's the need for communities to band together to survive. Radio Skid Row is fighting for its freedom so our most disadvantaged communities can continue to have a voice without the risk of being defunded. What this means in practical terms, is that we need community support to close this funding gap and invest in our vision to become a 100 percent community funded radio station. After 38 years of survival, of pioneering community radio, we know we're going to make it, but we can't do it without the community's support."

For more details of how you can help, visit radioskidrow.org.

ABOUT
Inner Sydney Voice Magazine is the journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc trading as Inner Sydney Voice. We are a non-profit organisation committed to the idea of information as a tool for community development.
The organisation defines Inner Sydney as being the local government areas of City of Sydney, Bayside, Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra, and the Inner West.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands across the areas we service, particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional custodians of the land on which our office is located. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

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Editorial

After four long years of trying to contain the howling in my soul, I could barely believe the news. Had the Trump show really reached its much-anticipated season finale? Were we really going to witness the coiffed clown exiting stage left? Well, at the time of writing, and more than three weeks on from the US election, we're still unsure. Delusional Donald remains in denial and refuses to concede defeat.

It seems the dollar-shop despot — with the help of Republican enablers and Fox News sycophants — is actually trying to engineer some kind of coup. Or, as one bright spark on Twitter remarked: "It's not actually a coup unless it comes from the coup d'état region of France, otherwise it's just a sparkling authoritarian takeover." Not so much a takeover, more of a tantrump. Ever since Biden was declared President-elect, the crybaby-in-chief has been throwing the toys out of the pram. Diddums Donny. You can all-cap all you like — YOU LOST! GET OVER IT!

The overriding feeling, the world over, is a massive sense of relief. Finally, we can exhale. With a Biden administration there will be a return to normalcy. Remember normalcy? And, most crucially, action on climate change. Biden's climate plan has been described as the most ambitious of any US president yet. One of his first acts as he settles into the Oval Office — besides removing the swastika from the front of the resolute desk — will be to re-join the Paris Agreement that Trump walked out on three years ago. Biden also intends to expand climate action beyond the directive of environmental agencies. He views climate change as an all-encompassing government agenda — influencing domestic, foreign, and economic policy. Among Biden's core pledges is to remove carbon from the US power sector by 2035.

Our Asian neighbours — South Korea and Japan — have also begun to shift their own environmental policies away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy. Even China — which burns half the world's coal and produces 30 percent of the world's CO_2 emissions — is aiming to reach "carbon neutrality" before 2060.

And then there's Australia.

In spite of strong support for climate action (page 18) and an overwhelming economic case for embracing renewables, the Morrison Government remains inert on the issue. When it comes to climate change, the Coalition has displayed all the urgency of a koala on Quaaludes. Despite last year's apocalyptic summer (page 32), remarkably, Australia still has no effective climate policy. In order to lift Australia out of the COVID doldrums, rather than a green-led recovery, the Federal Government has initiated a gas-led recovery. It has no intention of updating Australia's Paris Agreement goals (already deemed insufficient) nor (unlike 100 countries worldwide) adopting an emissions target. Indeed, the Prime Minister has flatly ruled this out. All the while, Morrison clings to coal like a junkie to a crack pipe.

So where does this leave us? As Tim Flannery writes (page 34), in the face of the Australian Government's negligence we must look elsewhere for leadership — to the states and territories, for instance. And when it comes to climate action, NSW is one of the nation's best performers. Among the Berejiklian Government's initiatives: a ten-year plan to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 and a commitment to electrify the state's 8,000-strong bus fleet. Local councils are playing their part, too, by planting trees, promoting solar panels and introducing FOGO recycling schemes (page 9). But if we really want to see action on climate change, we must look to ourselves. As individuals we can make a real difference. Our choices matter. Collectively, small steps can become leaps and bounds. In order to make our voices heard, though, we need to ramp up the volume in our demands for climate action. The pollies need to understand that inaction is no longer an option. There is no more time to waste. Because while Morrison's thumbs twiddle, the country burns.

Christopher Kelly
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NEWS

• CLEAN ENERGY

JobSeeker extended but reduced (again)

From later this month, unemployed Australians will see their JobSeeker COVID supplement cut by $100 a fortnight. Due to end at Christmas, the lifeline has been extended to March but reduced from $815 a fortnight to $715. Announcing the adjustment in November, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said: "Changes to the JobSeeker payment will see more Australians graduate from the economic supports so essential over these many months."

In response, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) said the Federal Government's decision to further cut income support at the end of the year is a "cruel and damaging mistake that will come as a crushing blow to millions". ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie added: "The reduced rate from January to March is only $10 a day more than the unliveable Newstart rate." With Australia facing record-high unemployment and the holiday season often the most expensive time for families, Goldie warned that, "Christmas is going to be a really hard one for millions".

Greens Senator, Rachel Siewert, agreed, tweeting: "It is dehumanising to keep pushing people further into poverty at Christmas. This decision is purely ideological. It is not fair, does not make economic sense and is extremely harmful." Meanwhile, Rachel Colvin, spokesperson for the Everybody's Home campaign — which calls for housing reform — said: "Cutting $100 a fortnight when median rent for one-bedroom units in Sydney is $500, means there will be no way for people to rent and eat. This will drive huge growth in homelessness." The January JobSeeker cut will be the second reduction since September when the supplement was slashed by half.

• FEDERAL FUNDING

Education funding favours privilege over disadvantage

The Federal Government has abandoned public education and is blatantly favouring private schools with special billion-dollar funding deals over the next decade, that's according to Trevor Cobbold, national convenor of education equity advocates Save Our Schools (SOS). This, says Cobbold, writing for Michael West Media, "will ensure that the existing resource gap between public and private schools will widen dramatically".

Yet, as Cobbold points out, public schools enrol more than 80 percent of the nation's disadvantaged students — those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, Indigenous students, those with a disability and students living in remote areas. Furthermore, 95 percent of disadvantaged schools are public schools.

The Australian Government's massive funding bias coincides with continuing gaps in achievement between rich and poor. The latest study by the Program for International Student Assessment shows that low socio-economic status and Indigenous students are two to three years or more behind their high socio-economic status peers — a disparity barely changed in 14 years.

Photo by Sardaka Wikimedia Commons

"A critical factor behind this social inequity," said Cobbold, "is that government funding increases have not been fully targeted at need." As Cobbold points out, since 2009, after adjusting for inflation, recurrent funding per student by the Commonwealth and state governments increased by 25 percent for Independent schools, 21 percent for Catholic schools, and just three percent for public schools (recurrent funding pays teachers' salaries and finances school maintenance etc).

"Massive funding increases for private schools planned by the Federal Government to 2029 will only exacerbate the disparity," said Cobbold. Indeed, by 2029, Commonwealth funding for Catholic schools per student will be nearly five times that provided for each public-school student ($19,732 compared to $4,882). Funding for Independent schools of $13,063 per student will be nearly three times that for public school students. "Public schools educate about 65 percent of the nation's children," said Cobbold. "A new approach to school funding is essential, especially if Australia wants to take part in the knowledge economy, which is going to be more critical than ever in a post-pandemic recovery." (See page 14.)

DEMOCRACY

Protest ban win

Photo by @gseleidiaz Unsplash

A campaign calling for protest gatherings to be allowed an exemption under NSW public health orders achieved a big win in October when the NSW Government quietly conceded that protests of up to 500 people could go ahead. Up until the overturn, any public gathering of more than 20 people for the "common purpose" of protesting — no matter how distanced the participants or large the area — had been deemed illegal.

In a statement, organisers of the campaign — called Democracy is Essential — said: "This is a huge victory won by our protest campaign and all those who stood up and defied police repression at recent demonstrations." The concession came just one week after national media headlines were made of police using disproportionate force at a student protest at the University of Sydney on the 14 October. Footage was captured of the arrest of law professor, Simon Rice, and the violent treatment of education officer, Shovan Bhattarai, who was injured after police flung her to the ground.

"This protest ban was a political attempt to silence our dissent, under the cover of COVID-19," said campaign organisers. "But it is not one the NSW Government could possibly defend while they were opening up the economy, allowing 40,000 people in footy games and so on. It took defiant protests to force the issue and make the Government back down. And it worked! Once again, protest got the goods!"

In order to demonstrate, however, protest organisers will be required to comply with a COVID safe plan, which includes assurances to provide participants with information and training on COVID-19, including when to get tested, physical distancing, and wearing masks. Organisers will also have to keep a record of names and mobile numbers for all protesters for a period of at least 28 days.

Citing the continuation of black deaths in custody and racism in the criminal justice system, the ongoing imprisonment of refugees, and the Morrison Government's expansion of the fossil fuel industry, the organisers added: "The injustices have not been put on hold. We need the right to protest more than ever. We hope this victory will now encourage many others, who were previously worried, to be confident to call protests around all the progressive causes we are fighting for."

LAW REFORM

Police policy slammed

A coalition of NSW legal and social justice organisations have voiced serious concerns about the application of the NSW Police's Suspect Targeting Management Plan (STMP) to children and young people. STMP is a secret NSW Police policy and practice that is used to target individuals for pro-active attention including random personal searches and home visits at all hours of the day.

"We continue to have serious concerns about the lawfulness of the STMP proactive policing measures, particularly seemingly arbitrary 'home visits' and searches that may be conducted without reasonable suspicion," said Camilla Pandolfini of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. "This policing practice is not transparent and has damaging effects on the relationship between the police and young people."

In October, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released its evaluation of whether there is an association between the use of STMP and a reduction in crime. While the report estimates an association between STMP and a reduction in certain types of offending, it concluded: "Exposing children as young as ten to repeated, invasive interactions with police has a serious negative impact on the young person and runs counter to efforts that are being made to divert young people from the criminal justice system."

Earlier this year, a Law Enforcement Conduct Commission investigation found that STMP policing practices "showed patterns of targeting that appear to have led to unreasonable, unjust and oppressive interactions for young targets". The investigation also revealed that STMP disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and that "the overt and intrusive policing tactics" resulted in "apparently unreasonable surveillance and monitoring of children and young people".

Youth and community services organisation, WEAVE, is among the agencies to speak out against STMP. "STMP continues to alienate the most disenfranchised in our community," said Daniel Daylight. "When you cannot walk down the street without getting harassed it affects your mental health and makes you feel like the world is against you."

NEWS

EQUALITY

Unanimous support for trans equality

A motion supporting trans and gender diverse communities has unanimously passed the lower house of the NSW Parliament. Submitted by Independent MP Alex Greenwich, the motion called for "the trans and gender diverse communities to be treated with dignity, fairness, respect and equality".

While the document noted that the NSW Parliament had long delivered on matters of equality for LGBTQ+ communities, it added: "There is still a long way to go and we urgently need to focus on trans and gender diverse communities whose basic health and welfare are overlooked and who are regularly subjected to discrimination, stigma, isolation, and exclusion." The motion continued: "Trans and gender diverse communities have been under increased attack lately, including in this Parliament, where their very right to exist is subject of discussion."

That last statement was a reference to One Nation's Mark Latham who, in August, introduced the Parental Rights Education Bill to the NSW upper house. The bill specifically bans all school staff from teaching about gender fluidity. Equality Australia warned that the legislation "harms trans and gender diverse students by denying their existence and preventing teachers and counsellors from supporting them".

Upon the passing of the motion, Greenwich said: "We have sent a clear message that the harmful and outdated views of One Nation's Mark Latham are not shared by the leaders and major parties that represent this state." In response, AJ Brown of Trans Pride Australia told the Star Observer: "This important foundation stone ensures that the trans and gender diverse community will move forward, major change and reform will not be a hope but now a reality."

Photo supplied

Meanwhile, the Inner West Council is establishing a Pride Centre in Newtown that will act as a hub for the LGBTQ+ community. The centre will be based at Newtown Town Hall, current home to the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. "The Inner West has been the home to a large and vibrant LGBTQ+ community for many decades and we have been the beating heart and soul of the struggle for civil rights in this country," said Inner West Mayor, Darcy Byrne. "That's why we've been so determined to bring this vision to life." The Pride Centre — set to open in 2023 — will offer resources, information, and support for LGBTQ+ community members in need.

ONLINE ACCESS

Addressing the digital divide

A survey of public housing residents and other low-income households in Waterloo has found that, for the vast majority of participants (81 percent), digital access is limited to non-existent. Conducted by Counterpoint Community Services, the aim of the survey was to understand how residents were coping with the impacts of COVID-19. Responding to the survey results, Counterpoint executive officer, Michael Shreenan, said: "It is especially concerning as many services have moved online and with many people requiring to or wanting to self-isolate, they are therefore unable to access these services."

The NSW Government is a prime example of an institution that has moved many of its services online. However, as a Counterpoint report — Addressing the Digital Divide in Waterloo Public Housing — states: "For many low and low-to-middle income households, they are not given a choice about moving online." Indeed, the 2016 Census found that only 35 percent of public housing households had access to a wi-fi connection. "Due to digital exclusion, they experience isolation, powerlessness and a lack of opportunities," continues the report.

To tackle the digital inequality Counterpoint is seeking approval from the Land and Housing Corporation to supply residents with a "digital waterhole" so that free access is readily available for those in need. Access to the internet, however, is just one aspect of addressing the digital divide: people need access to devices to be able to navigate the internet, plus the knowledge and confidence to utilise online services safely. The report concludes: "The challenge of digital equity is an urgent issue that cannot wait. These issues have to be addressed as soon as possible."

URBAN SPACES

Reclaiming Sydney's streets

Pedestrianising Sydney's streets could provide life satisfaction benefits to the value of $2.9 billion. A car-free scheme would also increase people's access to green space, so says a recent report on the potential impact of reducing cars in Sydney. The study — commissioned by Australian architectural practice, Woods Bagot — examined the proposition to close quiet streets so that they could become vibrant places for local communities by creating more space for parks, playgrounds, and market gardens.

"A surprising benefit of the COVID-19 lockdown is that urban streets got quieter and more pleasant," said spokesperson, Meg Bartholomew. "Cities around the world are now introducing measures to retain a more peaceful state.

Our study shows what a strategy for Sydney could look like at a micro and macro level."

De-paving quiet streets across 11 local government areas — Strathfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Sydney, Woollahra, Waverley, and the Inner West — would, says the report, take 100,000 cars off the roads and "put 530,000 Sydneysiders within 300 metres of new public green space", 260,000 more people than currently.

Turning streets into productive market gardens could also feed up to 130,000 families per year, potentially saving them another $220 million by providing street-grown fresh fruit and vegetables.

Responding to the report's findings, Eamon Waterford of the Committee for Sydney said: "Transforming quiet streets is a wonderful conversation we need to have in Sydney.

Turning streets back to space for gardens and children playing would increase the liveability of our city." (See page 16.)

WAR ON WASTE

FOGO is go-go

Randwick Council is the latest local government area (LGA) to embrace FOGO, a collection scheme that encourages residents to recycle food scraps with their garden waste. FOGO — which stands for food organics and garden organics — allows councils to divert food waste from landfill, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and use the waste to create compost that can be used in farms, parks and sports fields.

As part of Randwick's new waste collection service, households will receive new FOGO bins into which they can throw their food waste. These scraps are then disposed of in the green-lid bin instead of the red-lid bin. In a statement, Randwick Council said: "We're confident this is a direction our residents are happy to go, with majority of residents supporting FOGO as a service."

Meanwhile, Inner West Council has expanded its FOGO collection service to include the former Marrickville LGA. The new service is an extension of Leichhardt Council's longstanding recycling program in residential apartment buildings, which collects an average of 107 tonnes of food waste annually.

Inner West Mayor, Darcy Byrne, said this was the next step in the council's "war on waste", aimed at eliminating the 35 percent of waste in residential garbage bins that is currently made up of organics that could be otherwise recycled. "We are about to roll out a huge community education campaign to eliminate food waste from our garbage bins," said Byrne. "Reducing food waste is one of the most important things we can do to reduce global warming." A further extension of its FOGO collection service will reach Ashfield in 2021.

NEWS FEATURE

NSW BUDGET FALLS SHORT

WHILE COMMUNITY HOUSING ADVOCATES HAVE WELCOMED THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET ALLOCATION OF $812 MILLION FOR SOCIAL HOUSING ACROSS THE STATE, AS **CHRISTOPHER KELLY** REPORTS, THEY SAY MUCH MORE INVESTMENT IS NEEDED.

"Terribly disappointing", that was the reaction from Housing Trust CEO, Michele Adair, to the news that the NSW Government had made a Budget pledge of $812 million to fund the state's social housing stock. "There appears to be little if any new money in the Treasurer's announcement," she said. This is a lost opportunity to deliver real jobs growth, economic stimulus and social outcomes for our community."

It's a view echoed by the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS). "The NSW Government missed a golden opportunity to support more people in desperate need," said Joanna Quilty, NCOSS CEO. "Without urgent action and significant investment, what we will see is more individuals and families forced into precarious, inadequate and unsafe situations."

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW also labelled the Budget a missed opportunity. "Access to stable, secure and affordable housing can transform people's lives," said CEO Jack de Groot. "Without a home it is incredibly difficult for people to find and maintain a job, take care of their health and make plans for the future." Vinnies says at least 5,000 homes will need to be added to the social housing supply every year for the next decade to address the state's chronic shortfall.

Meanwhile, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre tweeted its response to the Budget announcement: "The NSW Government's planned investment in homelessness services and social housing is welcome news. However, it falls well short of the 5,000 new social housing homes per year we need to properly address the worsening homelessness crisis." Shelter NSW tweeted: "$812 million is something, but it is not enough. Low-income earners struggling in the rental market and unemployment on the rise. Overall, it's a B from us."

Homelessness NSW was also less than impressed: "The 2020 NSW Budget has failed to invest anywhere near what is required for new social housing to end homelessness in dire economic times," read a statement. According to the agency, homelessness in NSW has risen by 37 percent during the COVID pandemic, compared to a national increase of 14 percent. "If we can't get significant investment in social housing now, when homes are the answer to beating the pandemic, ending homelessness, and providing jobs, then when will we see this?" said Katherine McKernan, Homelessness NSW CEO.

Furthermore, economic modelling commissioned by Homelessness NSW estimates there will be 9,000 new people experiencing homelessness in the state by June 2021. "Services are stretched at the seams and will continue to be without the housing needed to address people's homelessness," said McKernan.

Announcing the social housing package — which includes 1,200 new properties, an upgrade of 8,000 more, and $212 million set aside for new and upgraded Aboriginal housing — the NSW Treasurer, Dom Perrottet, said: "This Budget sets in motion cycles of security to lift future generations from disadvantage to opportunity." However, although the social housing package has been declared the "biggest in NSW for 20 years", the $812 million stands in stark contrast to the $5.3 billion earmarked by the Victorian Government for new social housing and the delivery of 9,300 additional social housing properties throughout Melbourne and regional areas of the state (see page 11).

Accusing the NSW Government of having "abdicated responsibility for people at the bottom end of the market", NSW Community Housing Industry Association chair, John McKenna, told ABC News: "We actually need a pipeline, and we need to know how much money is coming on an annual basis, not drip fed." The association says the Budget investment may actually result in as few as 780 extra homes added to the state's social housing stock. "There are 50,000 households on the waiting list for social housing," said CEO Mark Degotardi. "The question that needs to be answered is how many of these people will be left in the cold by [the Budget] announcement?"

NEWS FEATURE

VICTORIA'S 'GAME CHANGER'

COMMUNITY LEADERS SAY THE SECTOR'S ADVOCACY EFFORTS WERE VITAL TO SECURING THE ANDREWS GOVERNMENT'S MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR SOCIAL HOUSING ANNOUNCEMENT. **LUKE MICHAEL** REPORTS.

The Victorian Government will deliver more than 12,000 new social and affordable homes over the next four years, as part of a record-breaking $5.3 billion investment that has been welcomed by the community sector. Premier Daniel Andrews said that the Government will build 9,300 social housing properties and 2,900 affordable housing properties to boost Victoria's social housing supply by 10 percent and support around 10,000 jobs a year.

Victoria has long been criticised for underinvesting in social housing, with the state recording the lowest proportion of social housing of any state or territory in Australia. With social housing making up just 3.2 percent of the state's total housing, around 100,000 Victorians have been left on the housing waiting list.

Community groups have applauded the announcement, which also includes plans to establish a new statutory authority that will develop and oversee a 10-year public and community housing growth plan. The Victorian Council of Social Service CEO Emma King said the long-term social and economic benefits of this package will be immeasurable. "This colossal investment will mean fewer people cold, hungry and homeless, and more people in work. It's that simple," King said. "A single investment of this scale has not been seen in many decades, if ever. It's a game changer."

National Shelter also praised the investment — which is believed to be the biggest investment in social housing the state has ever seen. CEO Adrian Pisarski called on the Federal Government to match this investment, not just in Victoria, but all over the country to rebuild Australia's supply of social and affordable housing. "This is the most significant building announcement made by any state government in our history and we encourage other states to follow Victoria's lead," Pisarski said. "Every state and territory needs a program like this and the national cabinet should be looking at providing a necessary investment to drive this and other state initiatives further."

Jenny Smith, CEO of the Council to Homeless Persons, agreed that the Federal Government should match this investment to extend and amplify the package's impact. She said a lack of social housing has been driving people into homelessness and making it almost impossible for them to escape from it. "Without a secure affordable home, it is almost unachievable for people to engage in education or employment, much less to maintain their health and wellbeing," Smith said.

Smith told Pro Bono News that the sector's persistent advocacy efforts were fundamental to securing the multi-billion-dollar announcement from government. She said it was difficult to achieve policy change when governments have to consider a range of competing demands. "So it has been really important that the community sector has been coordinated in giving a very consistent message to governments in recent years: that all our efforts to support people will have limited impact … when people don't have a safe and secure home," she said.

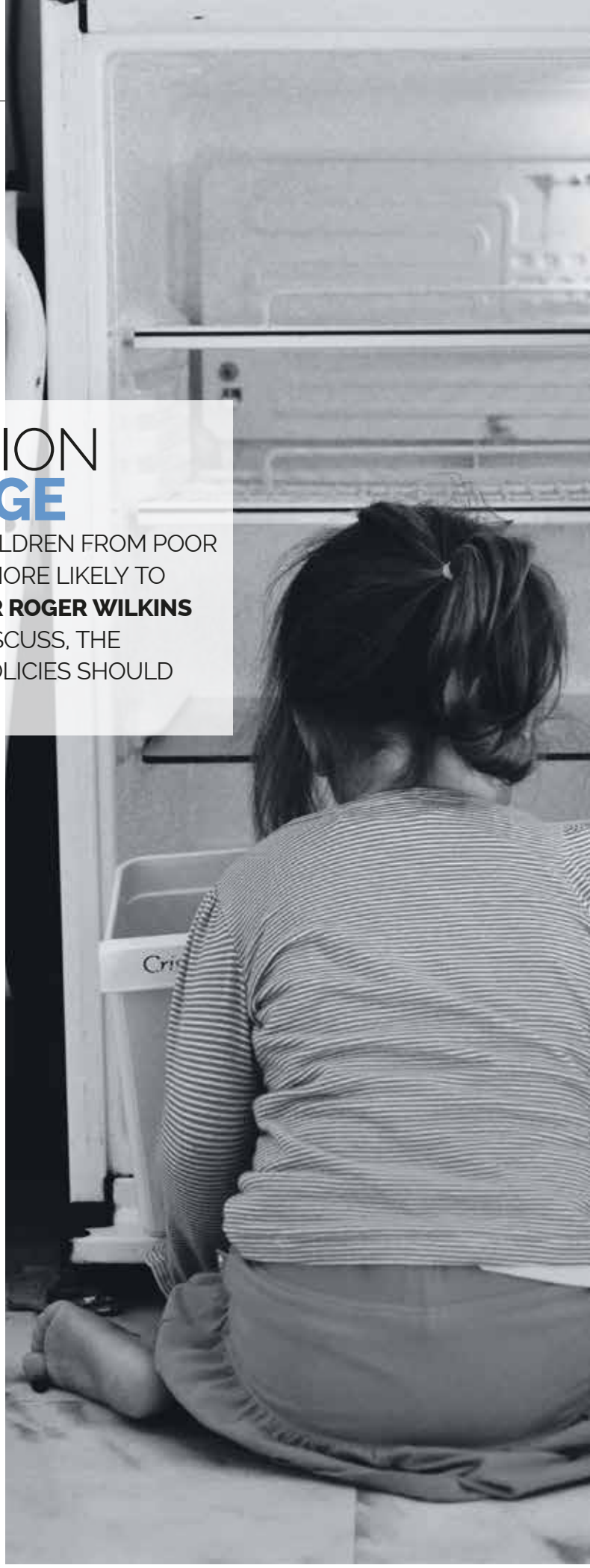
"The advocacy that the community sector has done in recent years [has been vital], meeting with members of Parliament, putting out policy documents and also getting the public on board. It's been a real collective effort from parliamentarians, the community sector and the community to get this done and it's a wonderful step forward for Victoria."

Courtesy Pro Bono News

"The community sector has been coordinated in giving a very consistent message to governments in recent years: that all our efforts to support people will have limited impact … when people don't have a safe and secure home"

THE TRANSMISSION OF DISADVANTAGE

NEW RESEARCH FINDS AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN FROM POOR HOUSEHOLDS ARE OVER THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER ADULT POVERTY. AS **PROFESSOR ROGER WILKINS** AND **DR ESPERANZA VERA-TOSCANO** DISCUSS, THE FINDINGS SHOW THAT GOVERNMENT POLICIES SHOULD FOCUS MORE ON PREVENTION.



Poverty and socio-economic disadvantage more broadly, continue to be important public policy issues for Australia. Based on a measure of poverty commonly used internationally, 13.6 percent of the Australian population was living in poverty in 2018; this translates to more than 3.24 million people — including 774,000 children aged under 15. This is considerably higher than in many other developed countries, including New Zealand, Germany, and Ireland. Moreover, as noted by the Productivity Commission, the poverty rate has remained stubbornly high for over 30 years.

Despite this lack of progress, the Australian Government has acknowledged the importance of the issue, in 2015 joining other nations in adopting the Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is to "end poverty in all its forms" with a national target "to reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions" by 2030.

'Remedial' policies — like income support benefits and social housing — are important tools for the Australian Government in combating poverty. But a deeper understanding of the origins and mechanisms underlying poverty can improve the basis for preventative policies that lead to not only better socio-economic outcomes for relatively disadvantaged members of the community, but also fewer demands on government budgets in the long run.

One important potential channel in this regard is poverty in childhood. Sadly, it's to be expected that children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience poverty in adulthood, for example, because of lower educational opportunities. However, to date, there has been little direct evidence in Australia on the extent to which poverty in childhood begets poverty in adulthood, or the nature of this 'transmission' of disadvantage.

In our report, produced in collaboration with the Paul

Ramsay Foundation, we present new evidence that low household income during childhood is a key predictor of disadvantage in later life. Our research on the intergenerational transmission of poverty is based on Australia's nationally representative longitudinal household study, the HILDA Survey. Drawing on all 18 years of data now available, spanning the period 2001 to 2018, we looked at the economic circumstances of children and how these are associated with their economic circumstances as young adults.

The results show that children who grew up in poor households are 3.3 times more likely to be in poverty in adulthood than those who grew up in never-poor households. And the longer the period of time spent in poverty as a child, the poorer the outcomes in adulthood. Children from frequently-poor families are 1.8 times more likely to experience frequent adult poverty than regularly-poor children; 2.1 times more likely to experience frequent adult poverty than those occasionally poor as children; and 4.7 times more likely to experience frequent adult poverty than children who grew up in never-poor households.

Our research further shows that experience of poverty during childhood is associated with poorer socio-economic outcomes in terms of educational attainment, labour market performance, health, and even overall life satisfaction in early adulthood. For example, comparing children from households which experienced several years of income poverty with those who did not, the latter group are 2.4 times more likely to get a university degree, 1.8 times more likely to be employed full-time, and 1.3 times more likely to have a permanent, ongoing job (as opposed to a casual or fixed-term job).

Among the employed, children who were raised in non-poor families earn, on average, an hourly wage rate that is 23 percent greater than those who experienced poverty as a child. Growing up in a family with little or no wealth (as distinct from low income) is also an important predictor of lower educational attainment, poorer labour market performance, worse health, and lower overall life satisfaction.

Finally, even after we control for a wide range of non-economic parental factors and neighbourhood characteristics, our analysis strongly supports the idea underlying the 'economic resources model'.

This means that experiencing poverty during childhood is associated with dramatically reduced financial sufficiency and dramatically higher chances of being poor as an adult — confirming the idea that poverty begets poverty.

The magnitudes of the estimated associations and the fact that the strongest effects are identified for the poorest families, support the policy case for taking steps to reduce child poverty. It's highly likely that reductions in child poverty would have substantial benefits — not only for life outcomes and well-being of the children in later life, but also through benefits to the wider community. These benefits may include increased income tax revenue (from higher rates of labour market participation) and reduced demands on the welfare budget.

That said, more research is needed to better understand the sources of the intergenerational transmission of poverty and the different ways to help people build a better future. While low parental income may be the key driver of the intergenerational transmission of poverty, it is important to investigate the role played by potential mediating factors — including family circumstances and dynamics, socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhood, educational opportunities and outcomes, as well as health and access to health care.

In understanding the mechanisms underlying the 'transmission' of disadvantage, we can work to improve those preventative policies that can lead to better outcomes for the disadvantaged in our communities.

Source: The University of Melbourne

FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS

A LANDMARK STUDY INTO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN AUSTRALIA SHOWS THAT DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND. AUTHOR **SERGIO MACKLIN** SHARES THE REPORT'S FINDINGS.

This report comes at a time when the Australian economy is reeling under the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. More than at any other time, young Australians need to be prepared to face an uncertain economic and social future. The uncertainty they face increases the importance for education and training in Australia to foster the development of a broad range of knowledge and skills. To meet the challenges of the future, Australians must grow up resilient, adaptable, and well-informed.

Prior to the COVID crisis, Australian governments had already reaffirmed the importance of promoting a broad base of learning, and in doing so aimed high. The 2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits Australian governments to providing all young Australians with the opportunity to reach their full potential where they become successful lifelong learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed members of the community. According to the goals set out in the Declaration, every learner in Australia — irrespective of where they live or who they are — will develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.

A test of the effectiveness and condition of education and training systems is how many people do not acquire the full range of desired skills and attributes and get left behind. It is important to know who they are and what it is that hindered their progress. The results show that our systems are working well for a number of young Australians and teaching the skills needed for contributing effectively to modern workplaces and communities.

However, about one-fifth to one-third of young people are behind or missing out, that is, not acquiring the lifelong learning skills and not mastering the knowledge and skills needed to become creative and confident individuals and active and informed citizens. It shows that Australia must do better not only to lift academic learning at all stages of the education system, but also to develop the broader skills that young Australians need.

These figures translate to large numbers of learners missing out at each stage, for example:

- 21.7 percent of 5-year-olds, or 70,308 of the population nationally, are not developmentally ready on entry to school.
- In Year 7, in the middle years, 24.8 percent of students, or 72,419 students nationally, do not have the desired literacy and numeracy skills expected at this point.
- Among senior year students, 27.8 percent or 88,314 15-year-olds do not meet or exceed for their age the international benchmark standard in mathematics, reading and science.

- Among 24-year-olds, 28.1 percent or 110,410 individuals nationally are not mastering the skills to become confident in themselves and the future, while 38.1 percent or 145,056 are not actively engaged in the community.

More troubling than the actual numbers is the information on who is struggling and missing out. The results in this report reveal that young people from poorer families, those living in rural and remote parts of Australia, and Indigenous Australians are being left behind. On the measures of learning, for example, large gaps are evident from the early years to adulthood based on socioeconomic status.

The gaps exist across all domains, across all skill areas, and are even larger at later stages of school and into adulthood. The results are consistent with research that has demonstrated that social background is too often a key predictor of educational and future success; and that these gaps are unusually wide in Australia. Moreover, the performance gaps manifest in the earliest years of children's lives and are difficult to bridge in the years that follow, such that children who start behind too often stay behind.

The Alice Springs Declaration states that as a nation we have a collective responsibility to ensure that steps are taken to deliver on the educational goals for all young Australians. It will require major work involving strategies such as reducing the effects of poverty and better supporting affected families and communities. It will also require improving early childhood education, making schools more learner friendly, and reducing the effects of social segregation which are comparatively large in Australia by world standards. Any strategies to improve performance will need to be multifaceted, begin at birth and address differences in need across all stages of education.

Poring over the results presented in this report gives rise to the sense that for many in the population Australia's education and training systems are working well. On a range of measures, many of Australia's young people show that they are relatively good at mastering the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the modern world. They enter school with strong foundations laid before school, and make good progress in the middle and senior years of school in developing the skills they need to complete school and successfully transition to full-time study and work, and gain post-school qualifications at university or in vocational education and training.

Our systems, for many young Australians, are providing the skills for contributing effectively to modern workplaces and communities. In international comparisons, some Australian learners are top performers — up there with the world's best — and as they progress to become adults the communities they live in and the world more broadly will benefit from their contributions. Those who are doing well achieve all that the national goals say will be achieved.

There is another sense, however, that also stands out from the results of this report: our education and training systems are dogged by inequality. No matter which way you turn, which measure you use, parts of our population are missing out and falling behind. There are very uneven levels of academic learning across different groups of young Australians and wide gaps in achievement as learners progress from stage to stage. For these Australians, our systems are not functioning well, raising a question about the quality of education and the capacity for meeting the needs of all young Australians.

The results are at odds with the very first goal expressed in the Alice Springs Declaration which commits Australian governments to promote excellence and equity in education and provide "all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination", and "recognise the individual needs of all young Australians, identify barriers that can be addressed, and empower learners to overcome barriers". Excellent systems are those that both raise and level the bar in promoting skill development and outcomes. That is, they lift standards of achievement and ensure that the standards are shared evenly across young people from different backgrounds.

The concept of levelling the bar means delivering strong outcomes for all. It is clear from the results of this report that education systems in Australia are not achieving this. As a result, not all Australian students are achieving their potential, and overall Australia is falling short. Our failures undermine our pretensions to be called world leading. You cannot be considered excellent without having equity, otherwise the concept of excellence is hollow: leading systems are meant to deliver on both fronts.

The Alice Springs Declaration indicates that as a nation we have a collective responsibility to ensure that steps are taken to deliver on the educational goals for all young Australians. It must start from birth and address differences in need and opportunity across all stages of learning. While it may not be easy, it is critical that we set ourselves the task of achieving our national aspirations for education. Success can form the foundation of Australia's future prosperity, through generations of intelligent, confident, creative, and engaged citizens.

Sergio Macklin is deputy lead of education policy, Mitchell Institute, Victoria University.
Source: Educational Opportunity in Australia.

OSLO: STREETS AHEAD

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST MAKES CITIES WORK BETTER FOR EVERYONE. IT IS NOT AN EASY TASK BUT, AS **TERJE ELVSAAS** REPORTS, THE NORWEGIAN CAPITAL HAS SHOWN THAT IT IS POSSIBLE.

Until recently, the people of Oslo did not have a say in what the streets of Oslo were used for — and that needed to change. "Our main objective is to give the streets back to the people," Hanna Marcussen, Oslo's Vice Mayor for Urban Development told BBC Future in 2019, explaining the radical changes the city was making to local streets. She saw the potential for the streets to be places where Norwegians met one another, ate in outdoor restaurants, where kids could play, and where art could be exhibited.

To reach these goals, Oslo began closing off streets in the city centre to cars entirely. The city removed all 760 on-street parking spots inside the city's inner-ring road. And in place of all that, the city installed cycling lanes, benches, and miniature parks. This radical reimagining of public space did not come to pass overnight. In fact, it began decades ago. The idea of making Oslo more liveable — reducing the role of private cars in the city at the same time as adding infrastructure for people — evolved over time.

The story begins in 1990, when Oslo decided that cars were not good for the city. While, at this point, car-use was not restricted, an important change in priorities was made. The main road system in Oslo was moved away from the surface and down into tunnels below the city centre. This dramatically reduced the number of cars visible on Oslo roads at any given time.

By 2014, these ideas had advanced. That year, the Danish architect Jan Gehl conducted a survey on public life in Oslo. The survey identified several challenges: there was little activity after office hours. Traffic was heavy. Public spaces were not nice. There was a lack of basic infrastructure like public benches and drinking fountains, and a lack of green space.

> ***"The Norwegian capital reached a milestone in 2019: zero pedestrian and cyclist fatalities in the city centre."***

The following year, an important conversation began about the city's future. Knowing that Oslo is expected to see an almost 30 percent increase in population by 2040, the Norwegian capital began to worry about its carbon footprint. In 2016, the city effectuated a climate and energy strategy targeted to reduce Oslo's direct greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2022 and to be reduced to zero by 2050. By 2017, the City of Oslo was able to launch a response to these concerns — reducing all traffic in Oslo and to give the city centre more car-free areas and car-free streets. The Car-free Liveability Program set a clear goal: to make the Oslo city centre greener and more inclusive for everyone.

By turning the traditional planning pyramid upside down — putting people's needs at the top and private cars at the bottom — Oslo has managed to prioritise pedestrians, bikes, and city life in streets and squares that were formerly dominated by private cars. This has done more than bring life to the city centre, it has saved lives. The Norwegian capital reached a milestone in 2019: zero pedestrian and cyclist fatalities in the city centre. In May, the Agency for Urban Environment released the numbers from their latest traffic counting in Oslo: 28 percent of cars disappeared from the city centre between 2016 and 2019. While it is impossible to quantify how much of the decrease in car traffic is due to any one measure, there is a high likelihood that the Car-free Liveability Program contributed greatly. Today, Oslo is working on how to reduce car traffic even more in order to create an increasingly pleasant and people-friendly city centre.

Terje Elvsaas is the former communications adviser for the Oslo Car-free Liveability Program.

AMSTERDAM: DEPLOYING THE DOUGHNUT

THE NETHERLANDS' CAPITAL IS USING A REVOLUTIONARY ECONOMIC STRATEGY TO REACH ZERO WASTE. **ABI MALINS** INVESTIGATES WHAT THIS MEANS.

Earlier this year, Amsterdam announced its Circular Strategy 2020-2025, the first step towards generating an entirely circular urban economy by 2050. Reducing pollution and over-consumption of increasingly scarce raw materials, the city is aiming to shape a sustainable, environmentally conscious, and socially responsible future. These are broad, somewhat utopic terms, confronting a modern capitalist system that prizes material wealth above all else. "A circular economy has been one of the city's priorities for several years now. In 2015, Amsterdam was the first city in the world to commission a study into the possibilities for a circular economy," says city spokesperson, Lisa den Oudendammer.

The 2020-2025 strategy combines three main focuses: implementing sustainable building methods to increase available, affordable housing; reducing general refuse; and minimising commercial and residential food waste. Based on British economist Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics model, it aims to transform Amsterdam into a city that respects and protects the planet as a whole, as well as each of its local residents.

Explained in brief, the inner ring of Raworth's Doughnut represents the fundamental necessities of modern life, ranging from food and clean water to gender equality and education. The outer ring represents the limits humans may reach without damaging the natural planet around us, from the oceans to the atmosphere. Amsterdam's Circular Strategy situates the city squarely within the "dough", providing citizens with all they need, while protecting the planet.

"Working with a City Doughnut basically provides us with a mirror," comments den Oudendammer. This allows conscious self-evaluation of how Amsterdam's municipal policy contributes to reducing its carbon footprint, while strengthening the social foundations of the city. Fundamentally, Amsterdam is reimagining how the city will consume and produce, aiming to halve its use of raw materials by 2030.

The Circular Strategy's emphasis on increasing housing in the city is also vital. Around one in five Amsterdam tenants are unable to cover basic costs after paying their rent, and only 12 percent of some 60,000 online social housing applications are successful. Job creation in sustainable sectors will be of paramount importance in the wake of the pandemic, too. While conventional industry jobs may disappear within a circular economy, the strategy promises net job creation across sectors such as repairs, processing, and sustainable construction.

The city authorities' decision to announce plans in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic was not taken lightly. "We had some doubts at first regarding the timing," den Oudendammer shares, "but it turned out that people were also longing for ideas to rebuild our economy after the crisis." Speaking at a live streaming event hosted by Amsterdam arts and culture centre Pakhuis de Zwijger, Raworth said that Amsterdam's strategy "could not have come at a more powerful time". There is a "huge thirst amongst people for a positive vision", she said, as individuals are awakened to the tangible possibility of renewing global societies and economies in the wake of the pandemic.

While some Amsterdam residents keenly anticipate sustainable change, the Circular Strategy is likely to cause friction. Amsterdam residents and businesses will encounter disruption to established norms and practices, as real change requires fundamental re-evaluation of our consumption habits and desire for material possessions. The strategy admits its roadmap is "fraught with uncertainty" requiring experimentation and risk-taking as the city moves through previously uncharted territory.

Raworth herself has reinforced the idea that there is no certain route to a modern, green, and conscious economy. But speaking at Pakhuis de Zwijger, Raworth echoed this sentiment: "Quite honestly, the thing that keeps me awake at night is the endless drive for growth in the profit-based financial system that we currently have. That is where I think the much more profound transformation needs to take place. It's not enough just to transform your purpose," Raworth continued. "You need to also change how you govern yourselves, how the city is owned and how the city is financed. These aren't easy questions, but they're questions that every single city in the world should be asking itself."

From this moment of crisis and flux comes the opportunity to craft a more sustainable future. These realisations have resonated far beyond Amsterdam, but the city is blazing the trail toward making them a reality, setting a benchmark for Europe and the wider world.

AN APPETITE FOR ACTION

DESPITE THE CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE CAUSED BY LAST SUMMER'S BUSHFIRES, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REMAINS RELUCTANT TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE. BUT, AS NEW RESEARCH REVEALS, AUSTRALIANS ARE INCREASINGLY SEEKING LEADERSHIP. **CHRISTOPHER KELLY** REPORTS.

Unprecedented is a word all-too often bandied about to describe disasters. But, in the case of the 2019-20 bushfires, it seems the only apt descriptor. During Black Summer, as it became known, Australia experienced the most devastating bushfires in recorded history. At least 33 people were killed, with toxic fumes across much of eastern Australia causing many more deaths. Over 3,000 homes were destroyed as fires raged through 24 million hectares of land. Nearly three billion animals perished or were displaced and many threatened species and eco systems were extensively harmed — "one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history" reported the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Meanwhile, suburban skies glowed ochre; commuters choked on smoke. Thousands of Australians — locals and holidaymakers — became trapped, fleeing to the coastal fringes to escape the encroaching flames. Communities were isolated, experiencing extended periods without power, communications, and ready access to essential goods and services. Viewing the nightly news footage you could well believe that the apocalypse really was now.

Seasoned firefighters had never witnessed anything like it. Writing in The Guardian, Greg Mullins — a former commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW — said: "In nearly 50 years of firefighting I had never seen fires behave like they did last summer. I saw kangaroos unable to outrun the flames and fires burning across people's lawns, setting their homes on fire." NSW was the worst-hit state, ravaged by more than 10,000 fires. Some of these converged to create megafires that burned for months.

An inquiry by the NSW Government into the blazes found that climate change played a direct role in the lead up to the fires and in the "unrelenting conditions" that helped them spread. It's a conclusion echoed by the Royal Commis-

sion bushfire report that dropped in October. "[It] details how record temperatures, record dryness, years of reduced rainfall, fuelled these fires, and explains that this was climate change in action," said Mullins. "It details how, even if we stop greenhouse gas emissions now, decades of increased disaster and fire risks are already locked in."

The Black Summer bushfires have served as a wake-up call with more Australians than ever before voicing real concerns over the impacts of climate change. Indeed, the recently released annual Climate of the Nation report shows that four in five Australians (79 percent) agree that climate change is occurring — the highest result since 2012. "A striking difference in the reports over the years is the increasing number of Australians who believe we are experiencing climate impacts right now," said Richie Merzian, climate and energy director at The Australian Institute.

The report reveals that three-quarters or more of Australians believe climate change is likely to cause or is already causing more bushfires (76 percent), as well as more heatwaves and extremely hot days (78 percent). "Last summer forever changed us, ushering a new age of fear, and bringing home the brutal reality of the extreme weather that a rapidly warming planet is serving up to us with increasing frequency and intensity," said Mullins.

The report also clearly shows Australians' preference for renewable resources over fossil fuels, with solar (79 percent), wind (62 percent), and hydro (39 percent) people's top three energy choices. Coal ranks last (14 percent). The findings are at odds with the Australian Government's dogged devotion to gas and coal. A position recently reasserted when Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced plans for a "gas-fired recovery" from the COVID pandemic. "The Government's call is not backed by popular support," said Merzian. "Natural gas is, after all, a key contributor to climate change."

The majority of the report's respondents (59 percent) support Australia's economic recovery being primarily powered by investment in renewables, compared to only 12 percent who would prefer it were powered by investment in gas. "A gas-led recovery from COVID-19 will lock us into a high emissions future, more warming, and worsening climate change-driven catastrophes," said Mullins. "That would be unforgivable."

Not only does the Australian Government continue to push for gas, but it also has no plans to transition Australia from domestic coal-fired power. Rather, it has agreed to subsidise an upgrade to an existing coal-fired power station, called for ageing coal-fired power stations to operate past their retirement age, and funded a proposal for a new coal-fired power station in Queensland with a lifespan of up to 50 years.

Again, this flies in the face of public opinion. Over four-fifths of Australians (83 percent) prefer coal-fired power stations to be phased out, whether gradually (52 percent) or immediately (31 percent). "A strong commitment from Government to decarbonise the electricity sector and coordinate the transition away from carbon-based electricity generation is supported by most Australians — and is only getting more popular," write the report's authors, Audrey Quicke and Ebony Bennett.

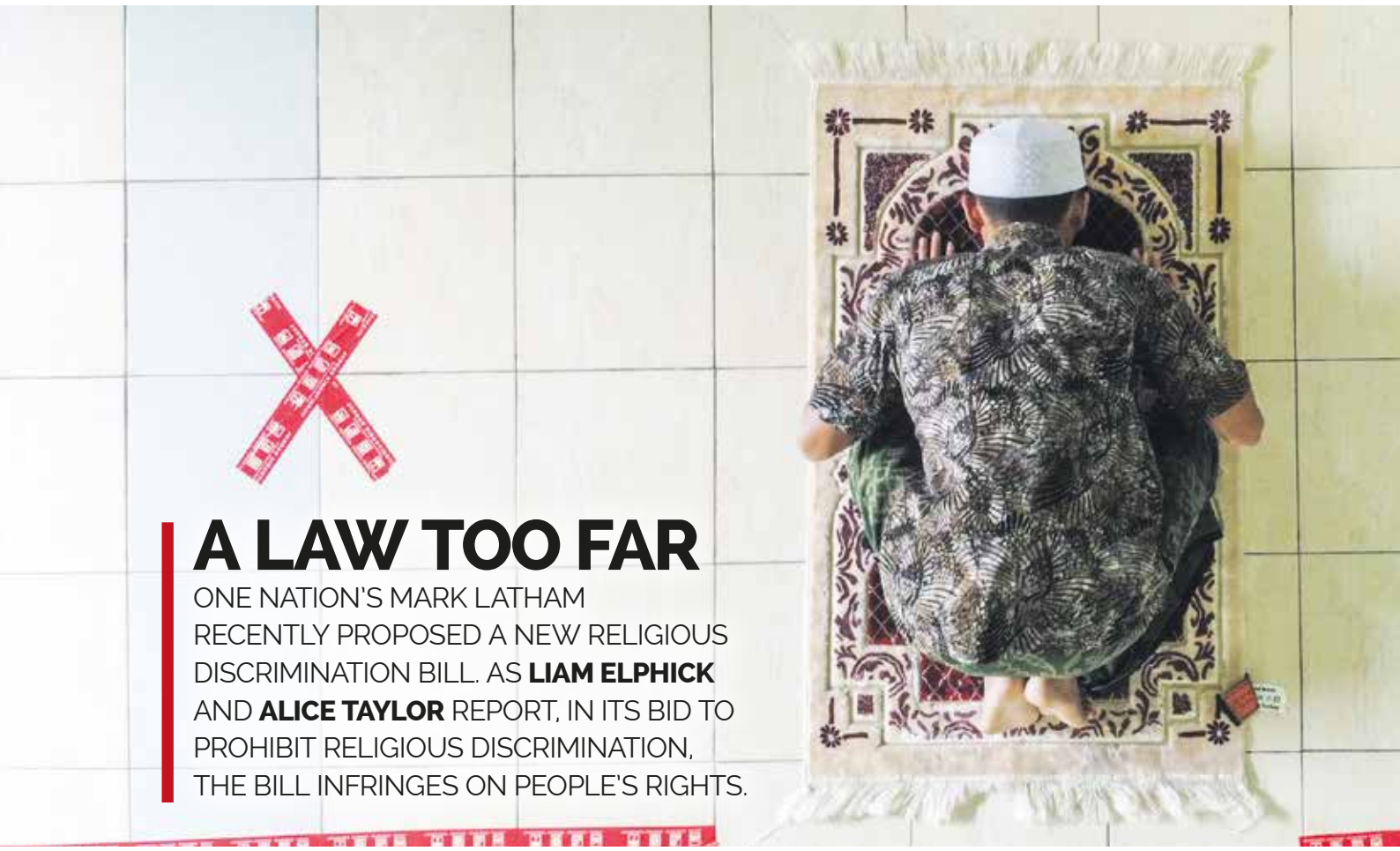
The Morrison Government's head-in-the sand approach to climate change has provoked dismay on the international stage. In 2019, the Prime Minister snubbed the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York. Viewed as a "regressive force" in global climate negotiations, Australia's climate policy ranks amongst the worst-performing countries in the international Climate Change Performance Index. This year, Australia held the ignominious honour of ranking last out of 57 countries on climate policy. And despite more than 100 countries around the world committing to net zero emissions by 2050, the Australian Government has failed to do so.

As the report points out: there are substantial costs associated with inaction on climate change. "These costs are primarily borne by Australian households and businesses through uninsured losses or paid by the community through rising insurance premiums. Costs covered by governments, including emergency services and infrastructure reconstruction, are provided by increasing taxes or redirecting funding from other areas such as education and health. The cost of inaction will increase as climate-related disasters become more intense and frequent." Research by Deloitte Access Economics backs this up. It warns that, if climate change goes unchecked, it would cost Australia $3.4 trillion and 880,000 jobs by 2070.

In the absence of federal leadership, Australian states and territories are leading the way on climate action. They have all embraced renewables and pledged to race toward zero emissions. And the public overwhelmingly backs the initiatives. According to the report, more than two-thirds of Australians (68 percent) support a national target for zero emissions, with bipartisan support across Coalition, Labor and Greens voters.

Perhaps the most interesting takeaway from the Climate of the Nation report, is that Australians' desire for climate action comes at a time of "other high-priority concerns around the public health and economic impacts of the [COVID] crisis". Yet despite the pandemic, people remain deeply anxious about the ever-increasing impacts of climate change. "The results show that concern about climate change remains at record high levels," said Merzian. Indeed, according to the report, 71 percent agree Australia should be a world leader in finding solutions in tackling climate change. "There is an appetite to address both COVID-19 and climate change," said Merzian. "The Australian public is ready to tackle both crises and want the Australian Government to take a leading role." It could and it should. Otherwise, as climate scientists around the globe predict, the unprecedented will become commonplace.

Source: Climate of the Nation 2020 — The Australian Institute



A LAW TOO FAR

ONE NATION'S MARK LATHAM RECENTLY PROPOSED A NEW RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION BILL. AS **LIAM ELPHICK** AND **ALICE TAYLOR** REPORT, IN ITS BID TO PROHIBIT RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, THE BILL INFRINGES ON PEOPLE'S RIGHTS.

No-one should be refused employment or access to goods and services because of their religious beliefs. The NSW Anti-Discrimination Act (ADA) should provide protection for religion as it does for race, sex, and disability. However, the Religious Discrimination Bill goes far beyond this.

It privileges and prioritises religion over all other views, practices, and attributes. It provides wide exceptions to religious bodies to permit them to discriminate and to refuse to comply with some existing NSW laws. And it renders it near impossible for employers to enforce codes of conduct and promote safety and equality in their workforces.

These issues undermine the bill's ability to effectively prohibit religious discrimination, and unduly infringe on other laws and rights. The bill adds two new protected attributes to the ADA, making it unlawful to discriminate because of one's "religious belief" or "religious activity".

Unlike the simpler definitions provided in other state laws, religious belief has been given an unnecessarily complex definition. "Religious belief" is defined as either: having a religious conviction, belief, opinion, or affiliation; or not having any religious conviction, belief, opinion, or affiliation. This definition is entirely subjective: each person can effectively decide what their religious beliefs are. The explanatory notes to the bill say this is intended "as a means to avoid courts determining matters of religious doctrine".

But as two High Court justices remarked in the famous 1983 case of the Church of the New Faith: "The mantle of immunity would soon be in tatters if it were wrapped around beliefs, practices and observances of every kind whenever a group of adherents chose to call them a religion." This definition also likely excludes agnostics from protection: by definition, they do not have a specific religious conviction and also cannot be said to have no religious conviction.

"Religious activity" is defined as an "activity motivated by religious belief". This wide definition would capture a vast array of actions, even where the link to religious doctrine is only tenuous. The only limitation is that it excludes "offences punishable by imprisonment". This means some unlawful acts can still be protected.

Employers, goods and service providers and accommodation providers would not be able to treat someone differently based on them breaking the law. Schools would be unable to sanction students for engaging in religiously motivated bullying or harassment.

The biggest challenge will be for employers to determine if an activity is indeed motivated by religious belief. If an employee (Person A) makes a complaint of harassment against another employee (Person B) and that harassment is based on a religious view of, say, gender or sexuality, employers would be placed in an impossible position.

They would either need to investigate and sanction Person B and risk them bringing a religious discrimination claim against them, or they would need to reject the complaint and risk Person A bringing a harassment claim against them. Employers will be forced to act unlawfully, no matter what they do. Other states, such as Victoria, have avoided this conflict by protecting only "lawful" religious activities. The

NSW bill also does not prohibit religious vilification, despite this being a widespread problem for Muslim and other faith groups.

The bill applies to religious conduct in three key ways — each of which goes far beyond equivalent discrimination laws in Australia. First, employers are barred from restricting or limiting their employees from engaging in "protected activity". A "protected activity" means a religious activity performed by the employee when they are not working and not at their workplace. This includes religious views expressed on social media, in a clear nod to the Israel Folau saga.

Let's assume an employee expresses religious views or comments on social media — hypothetically, that "hell awaits homosexuals" — that breach an employment code of conduct. Under this bill, the employee cannot be punished for this. They can actually sue their employer for any such punishment, unless the comment directly criticises the employer, attacks the employer and causes financial detriment to the employer. The bill, though, provides that withdrawal of sponsorship or of financial support does not count as "financial detriment" — so it seems an impossibly high threshold for any employer to meet.

As a result, these provisions would significantly curtail the ability of employers to protect their brand and reputation, enforce codes of conduct and promote the safety and equality of their workforce. Employers would need to uncover the motivation behind an employee's comments or actions before they could even attempt to enforce codes of conduct.

Because this protection is only afforded to views and activities that have a religious basis, employers would be forced to treat employees of faith differently from other employees. An atheist employee could make the same comment — that "hell awaits homosexuals" — and their employer would be free to sanction them.

These "protected activity" provisions also extend to qualifying bodies, universities, and schools. This means a school would be unable to sanction a student for bullying another student after school, so long as their bullying is religiously motivated.

Second, the bill makes it unlawful to require any religious body, when performing functions under NSW laws, to engage in conduct in a manner contrary to their religious doctrines. There appears to be no equivalent provision in any other Australian discrimination laws.

The breadth of this provision may mean that, for instance, religious bodies could challenge and avoid criminal laws imposing duties to report child abuse and neglect to authorities. This could be on the basis that a particular religious body's doctrines oppose unsealing the confessional. Local governments might also be unable to impose noise restrictions on religious ceremonies. The NSW Government might even be unable to impose COVID-19 public health restrictions on religious ceremonies.

Third, religious bodies are granted wide exceptions from the operation of the entire bill. These allow religious bodies to discriminate against people of other religious beliefs. Religious bodies are defined widely to include all schools and charities conducted in accordance with religious beliefs. In some instances, this is entirely appropriate. For example, an Anglican school is likely to want its religious education teachers to be of the same faith — and this seems fair.

But this bill goes much further. The exception covers any conduct that "furthers or aids" the religious body in acting in accordance with their religious beliefs. This is an easier test to satisfy than in any other Australian discrimination laws.

Imagine, for example, a student joins an Islamic school in Year 7 and at the time shares the same religious beliefs. Halfway through Year 12, that student may decide they do not identify strongly with those beliefs anymore. This bill would allow the school to expel that student on the basis that they do not share the same religious beliefs as the school.

Similarly, a Catholic soup kitchen could refuse to serve food to Jewish people or require them to participate in Catholic practices to receive food. Allowing organisations primarily engaged in charity, health, or education to be granted a carte blanche to discriminate is a step too far. Indeed, this frustrates and undermines the fundamental purpose of the bill: to prohibit religious discrimination.

The ADA is an outdated piece of legislation. It often provides ineffectual protection from discrimination. While NSW has stood still, other states and territories have reformed their discrimination laws. These provide much stronger protection for all individuals.

A wider, expert review of the ADA is the best way to effectively prohibit religious discrimination. This bill will only be a stop-gap measure. As its own committee inquiry recently recommended, the NSW Parliament should "undertake a thorough review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 with the aim of updating and modernising the act". This would provide better protection for all people in NSW — not just those of faith.

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Courtesy of The Conversation

YOUNG, INDIGENOUS, AND FORGOTTEN

THE FIRST NATIONAL STUDY TO EXPLORE WHAT HAPPENS TO INDIGENOUS CHILDREN WHEN THEY LEAVE CARE ONCE THEY TURN 18 HAS BEEN CONDUCTED BY MONASH UNIVERSITY. **PHILIP MENDES, JACINTA WALSH**, AND **LENA TURNBULL** SHARE THEIR FINDINGS.

There are currently about 18,000 Indigenous children across Australia who are living in statutory out-of-home care, having been removed from their families. This is one-third of Australian children in care, or 11 times the rate of non-Indigenous children in care.

The trauma of removal is carried by the child, their family and community for life, and is often passed on knowingly or unknowingly to the next generation. Trauma and separation affect the development of the child, their feelings of self-worth and belonging, their sense of identity, and lifelong connections with family, community, culture, and Country. Despite this trauma extending beyond their time in care, what is rarely spoken about is the experiences, needs and outcomes of these Indigenous children once they reach the age of leaving care — 18 in all states and territories, bar the ACT.

There is currently some national focus on enhancing the pathways and outcomes for all young people when they turn 18 and exit care. The Home-Stretch campaign, led by Anglicare Australia, is urging all Australian state and territory governments to increase the age of leaving care to 21.

Based on research that suggests that, within one year, 50 percent of care-leavers will be either unemployed, imprisoned, homeless or have become a young parent, a range of notable supporters have joined this call. Yet currently, only four states have adopted a trial of extension of care until 21 years (notably, ACT has already extended some support and care to 25). New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory have to date not introduced any extended care programs.

According to our research, approximately 1,140 Indigenous young people aged 15 to 18 leave care across Australia annually. However, there are queries about the accuracy of this number. Alarmingly, it appears that the eight state and territory governments do not necessarily know the number of Indigenous children leaving care, where they go, or what happens to them.

There are some policies in place to support Indigenous care-leavers' transition to independence, such as cultural plans that support connection to family and community while in care, and transition plans for life beyond care from the age of 15. Yet, our research confirms previous data showing that many Indigenous children do not have meaningful cultural planning while in care, and that transition planning is often completed at the last minute — or not at all.

The result of this is that Indigenous youth are leaving care unsupported and unprepared to meaningfully and successfully reconnect with family, community and Country. Often, Indigenous care-leavers self-place out of care at a young age, or experience a rushed, unplanned and unsupported transition to independence when they turn 18. This is in stark contrast to intact families — where young people often reside in the family home well beyond 18 — and return multiple times until they establish independence.

Removed from family, having broken connections with community, and often living with non-Indigenous families or in residential units far from Country, Indigenous children transitioning from care are also experiencing the fallout of a system in crisis.

Funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in the leaving-care space is minimal to none, despite recognition of the unique cultural needs of Indigenous children. Victoria and Queensland are the only states that fund ACCOs to provide leaving-care services for Indigenous children ($1.16m in Victoria, and an undisclosed amount to one ACCO in Queensland annually), yet still not at an proportionate rate.

Service provision therefore falls to mainstream non-Indigenous organisations. Our research indicated that workforce issues abound within the sector. Access to Indigenous workers is minimal, Indigenous care-leaver engagement with non-Indigenous organisations is poor, and the services

and programs that do exist often fail to provide culturally appropriate support.

There's a severe shortage of affordable and culturally safe housing for Indigenous care-leavers in urban, rural and remote Australia, resulting in a risk of transitioning into homelessness. Services reported examples of Indigenous care-leavers who, on their 18th birthday, contacted their service provider not knowing where they would sleep that night.

Indigenous care-leavers are being referred to temporary accommodation in adult homeless shelters or, in rural areas, are given tents to support rough sleeping. Limited housing options result in care-leavers self-placing or couch-surfing with family and community, who are often still living with unresolved trauma and disadvantage themselves.

As well as experiencing homelessness, Indigenous care-leavers may be leaving care with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental and physical health concerns. They may be experiencing difficulties with family relationships, and yet also be caring for siblings or extended family. They frequently have not been adequately taught independent living skills while in care, so struggle to care for themselves and others.

In some cases they're having children early, and then experiencing increased government surveillance due to their own history, meaning they have a higher risk of their own children being removed. They're also experiencing higher risk of youth and adult justice system involvement.

All these factors mean they need further support, yet our research found that Indigenous care-leavers are experiencing a culturally blind and insensitive system, leaving them vulnerable to a life of cycling through state and welfare systems that frequently fail to provide the culturally appropriate support they need to live a fulfilling and successful life.

As a country — whose state and territory governments have statutory parental responsibility for these children — we have to do better for Indigenous children and young people. In order to do this, a series of changes need to occur.

Firstly, as the very foundation for policy in this area, the out-of-home care and leaving-care sector needs to recognise the impact of historical government policies, and the ongoing intergenerational trauma and disadvantage shaping Indigenous communities today.

Secondly, a national commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth should be appointed. They should oversee a national benchmark for leaving-care policy and practice that supports Indigenous young people to remain in Indigenous communities.

In recognition of the need for accurate data to support ongoing improvements in this sector, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare annual child protection report should include reliable data on the number of Indigenous young people leaving out-of-home care, aged 15 to 21 years, and what happens to them in areas such as housing, education, health, and social and community connections.

All Indigenous young people leaving care should be able to access a proportionate housing allowance that allows them access to safe and secure housing.

And finally, in recognition that solutions for Indigenous people should come from Indigenous communities, ACCOs should be funded to provide all leaving-care services for Indigenous children. They should also be funded to design, generate, and apply quality and meaningful transition and cultural plans for all Indigenous care-leavers.

Connection to family, community and Country should be central to the lives of all Indigenous young people in care, transitioning from care, and beyond care, if they so choose.

If, as a country, we're serious about "closing the gap" and supporting healthy Indigenous communities, we need to recognise the significant issue of ongoing intergenerational trauma that's created through the removal of Indigenous children into predominantly white service systems that fail to respond and care for them appropriately.

We need to recognise that service system responses need to be informed by the unique cultural knowledge that can only be provided by Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organisations.

Indigenous youth leaving care are emerging elders and ancestors of the future. With appropriate resourcing and assistance, Indigenous communities can support Indigenous young people to lead healthy, fulfilling lives, and become the next generation of leaders for their communities.

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"There's a severe shortage of affordable and culturally safe housing for Indigenous care-leavers in urban, rural and remote Australia, resulting in a risk of transitioning into homelessness."

William Cooper 1937, Wikimedia Commons

WILLIAM COOPER: INDIGENOUS JUSTICE WARRIOR

ACTIVIST WILLIAM COOPER LED ONE OF THE EARLIEST ABORIGINAL POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM IN AUSTRALIA, WRITES **FEIYI ZANG**.

The Black Lives Matter movement has exposed the ongoing racism and discrimination in both the US and Australia. There is a rich history of resistance to racism here. One of the first political movements for Aboriginal rights in Australia was established by activist William Cooper when he helped found the Australian Aborigines League (AAL) in 1934.

The AAL built a strong base of support for Aboriginal rights in the labour movement and many churches. This was at a time when Aboriginal people were widely considered to be inferior and lived under the dictatorship of so-called "Protection Boards". Cooper and the AAL fought against daily discrimination and championed economic equality and full citizenship rights. They also articulated the demands of a colonised people fighting back, for the return of land and for self-determination. These demands remain foundational for continuing struggles today.

Cooper was born in 1861 in Yorta Yorta country near the confluence of the Murray and Goulburn rivers, and the NSW-Victoria border. Colonisation saw the Yorta Yorta dispossessed of their lands and their population reduced by 85 percent due to disease and violence. The Yorta Yorta were relocated to the Maloga Mission on the NSW side of the Murray River in 1874. By 1888, they had moved to Cummeragunja, meaning "our home" in the Yorta Yorta language. The land was granted to them as a result of pressure from the community for their own blocks of farm land.

In 1881, the community had formulated demands for, "a sufficient area of land to cultivate and raise stock … that we may form homes for our families … and in a few years, support ourselves by our own industry". This, they argued, would be just compensation because, "all the land within our tribal boundaries has been taken possession by the Government and white settlers". These demands were finally granted after Cooper, along with other Yorta Yorta men, signed a petition to the Governor in 1887.

Cooper also wrote to the local MP requesting a plot of land for himself. Cooper's letter explicitly called on the Government to grant him the land as a, "small portion of a vast territory which is ours by Divine Right". While, as historian Heather Goodall points out, Cooper used the language of Christianity, to which he had recently been converted, he based his request on Aboriginal rights of prior ownership to the land.

The Yorta Yorta managed to create a successful pastoral community. But in 1907, this was attacked by the newly formed Aborigines Protection Board, who seized control of the land from

Aboriginal families and forced them to work it for the Board's profit. From 1908 onwards, there was constant confrontation at Cummeragunja.

Many residents were expelled on disciplinary grounds and Cooper seems to have been among them. He managed to earn a living through the 1910s and 1920s as a shearer, drover, horse-breaker, and rural labourer across several states. During this period, he was a member of the Australian Workers' Union and acted as a spokesperson for local Aboriginal people.

Historian Richard Broome summarises the racist controls on Aboriginal people during this period: "First, control was exercised formally by Aboriginal Boards acting under special legislation, which incarcerated people on reserves, managed their daily lives and work, fragmented families, and denied them civil rights. Second, a blatant genetic racism, against Aboriginal people based on their skin colour — separating those who could attend school, those who were removed and preventing Aboriginal people from entering areas that white people could."

The onset of the Great Depression saw Aboriginal people excluded from unemployment relief payments and forced to accept ration payments on reserves. The NSW Protection Board insisted that Aboriginal people do several days' work to earn their rations. Aboriginal activists insisted that they were prepared to work for wages but not for food.

By 1933 there was a large camp of around 200 Aboriginal people just outside Cummeragunja who had been refused the dole because they were said to be "too black" and told they must go to the Aborigines Protection Board for relief. But at Cummeragunja they were too white to receive rations because they were not considered "predominantly of Aboriginal blood".

The racism and poverty Cooper and others from Cummeragunja experienced ignited a new movement for Aboriginal rights. In 1933 Cooper left Cummeragunja because residence on the reserve made him ineligible for the pension. At the age of 72, he moved to Melbourne.

"We are entitled to reasonable comfort, merely from the fact that this land was ours, with assured living before the whites came."

Tom Foster, Jack Kinchela, Douglas Nicholls, William Cooper and John Patten discuss a resolution, 1938. Source unknown

Cooper became the secretary and motivating force behind the AAL, made up largely of exiles from Cummeragunja. He drew important support from fellow Christians, but there were also close connections between the AAL and the labour movement, including socialists in the ALP and the Communist Party. Working alongside Cooper was fellow Cummeragunja exile Shadrach James who, in the late 1920s, had been elected secretary of the Goulburn Valley Food Preservers' Union and vice-president of the local Trades and Labour Council.

In September 1933, there was a major national campaign against continuing frontier violence in the Northern Territory led by the radical labour movement and supported by union and church leaders. Cooper took this moment to launch a petition to the King that highlighted nationwide oppression. This requested, "royal intervention to prevent the extinction of the race", better conditions and federal parliamentary representation. The petition was circulated in Melbourne and across reserves in NSW.

The AAL's immediate aim was the ending of all discriminatory practices against Aborigines, in "civic, political and economic" spheres. They demanded: "Full citizens' rights to all Aboriginals, whether living on settlements or not. This is to include the payment of sustenance as to Whites for all unemployed Natives. We claim the right to work for full wages or the payment of dole for those unable to work." These economic as well as political demands were central to its definition of full citizenship rights.

Cooper's demands were always framed by the broader injustice of dispossession, "we are entitled to reasonable comfort, merely from the fact that this land was ours, with assured living before the whites came". The AAL also called for the end of segregation in the NSW school system, of child removal and of the Protection Board's power to sever Aboriginal people's contact with kin and land by expulsion of reserve residents.

Left to right: William (Bill) Ferguson, Jack Kinchela, Isaac Ingram, Doris Williams, Esther Ingram, Arthur Williams Jr, Phillip Ingram, unknown, Louisa Agnes Ingram holding daughter Olive, Jack Patten. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales Q 059/9

One of the most significant actions that Cooper helped organise was the Day of Mourning protest. This move towards public protest was triggered by Cooper's anger that his letters and petitions had been ignored by the authorities. On 26 January 1938, the NSW Government held an official commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the beginning of colonisation. Cooper proposed to the NSW-based Aboriginal Progressive Association, involving Aboriginal activists William Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs and Jack Patten, that the day should be marked by Aboriginal people as a Day of Mourning. They staged a protest march in Sydney followed by a mass meeting of Aboriginal people one kilometre from the Government's re-enactment of the First Fleet's landing. Five days later, an Aboriginal delegation met with Prime Minister Joe Lyons to present a 10-point program.

Ferguson and Patten penned a manifesto titled "Aborigines Claim Citizenship Rights!" that began: "This festival of 150 years of so-called progress in Australia commemorates also 150 years of degradation imposed upon the original native inhabitants by the white invaders of this country." It continued, "you took our land away from us by force. You have almost exterminated our people, but there are enough of us remaining to expose the humbug of your claim, as white Australians, to claim to be a civilised, progressive and, kindly and humane nation."

By 1939, the situation at Cummeragunja was even worse, due to the appointment of the authoritarian manager Arthur McQuiggan. The residents sent a petition to the Protection Board demanding McQuiggan's dismissal. McQuiggan's response was to paste it up on the door of the station office and invite those who wished to remove their names to do so.

Cooper continued to believe that working through the proper official processes through letters and petitions to the Government could deliver justice. These hopes would come to nothing. The decision to begin the walk off from Cummeragunja was taken on 3 February 1939. The significance of this cannot be overstated. It meant walking away from the land the community had been fighting to get back for 30 years. The strike lasted nine months. The demands of the 200 strikers eventually extended to a call for a Royal Commission, return of the farm blocks to Aboriginal families, abolition of all Board control and full citizenship rights.

The strike support campaign mounted in Melbourne was by far the largest and most organised of any yet taken by an Aboriginal body. It began as a collection of necessities. The campaign received strong backing from left-wing unions, notably the Australian Railways Union, and Communist Party members.

In September 1939, 1,200 people attended a meeting at the Hawthorn Town Hall demanding Aboriginal rights. This was organised by Communists and left-wing ALP activists and addressed by leaders of the Cummeragunja struggle, who put a resolution in support of the strikers' demands.

The strike was finally broken in October 1939, when the NSW Protection Board convinced the Victorian Government to withhold food relief to strikers and deny their children access to the local school. But the strikers refused to return to the station where McQuiggan still held control. Instead, they dispersed into surrounding areas in NSW and Victoria, extremely bitter. Although the strike appeared to have been a failure, several months later McQuiggan was finally sacked.

In November 1938, the Nazis led a pogrom in Germany where Jewish businesses, synagogues, homes and schools were destroyed, dozens killed, and 30,000 Jewish people taken to concentration camps, in what is known as Kristallnacht — the night of broken glass. The AAL had marched in anti-fascist rallies since 1934 and was formally affiliated to the Communist-led Movement Against War and Fascism.

Now, Cooper led a march to deliver a protest letter to the German Embassy in Melbourne. Prominent Aboriginal activist Gary Foley argues that this was a politically strategic way to, "draw attention to the similarities between what was happening in Germany and how Aborigines were being dealt with in Australia". William Cooper himself argued, "We feel that while we are all indignant over Hitler's treatment of the Jews, we are getting the same treatment here."

William Cooper led a life of relentless struggle. He connected land rights and political struggle against racism with economic rights for Aboriginal workers and the unemployed. Cooper's life should be an inspiration for today's Black Lives Matter movement and the ongoing fight for Indigenous justice today.

Courtesy of Solidarity

BLACK STORIES THROUGH A WHITE LENS

A NEW BOOK SHOWS HOW AUSTRALIA'S MAINSTREAM MEDIA DISTORTS THE ABORIGINAL NARRATIVE.

When the Black Lives Matter movement re-emerged powerfully this year, it encouraged a cultural reckoning about how Black stories are told, reaching deep into Australia's mainstream media. Once more, research showed just how unselfconsciously white Australian media is. Our study of 45 years of mainstream print news reportage of Aboriginal self-determination found the media overwhelmingly reports from and assumes a white standpoint.

What emerges from our research is the degree to which a white lens distorts Black stories. Aboriginal political aspirations for treaties, self-determination and agreement-making have been met with procrastination and denial from successive Australian governments — and, as we discovered, Australian media. This matters because reporting shapes the way Aboriginal political worlds are understood and talked about in public discourse.

Our study systematically examined the history of media coverage of moments where Aboriginal people have claimed their rights. We began in Darwin, Larrakia country, in 1972, just prior to the victory of Gough Whitlam's Labor Party in the federal election. The Larrakia nation's attempt to deliver a petition to visiting Princess Margaret was symbolic of the growing confidence of the national land rights movement. Yet, in the reporting surrounding this, activism was described as failing and change was considered unlikely, unpopular, and unnecessary.

Fast forward to a crucial event in 2017, when more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives came together in the red centre of the country. After decades of consultation, inquiries, reports and recommendations, the Aboriginal polity arrived at a cohesive position and communicated the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Initially, the reporting appeared sympathetic. But it dissolved once more into constraining narratives after the immediate rejection by then-Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, and the systematic reassertion by most media that reform was doable only if it did not challenge the subordination of Aboriginal sovereignty.

Over 45 years of Aboriginal people explaining and agitating with patience and persistence, the media almost always failed to take Aboriginal efforts seriously. We found a failure to understand key concepts, such as the distinction between treaty, agreement-making, Makarrata and compact. If it were not for the Aboriginal media's effective communication of Aboriginal demands, the historical record would be much impoverished.

The coverage we reviewed in our study revolved around three dominant and repeated narratives. The first, what we termed a "White Mastery narrative", sees Aboriginality as a problem to be solved through assimilation, and Aboriginal political demands as an obstacle to a cohesive society. Present in the reporting on the Larrakia petition, it re-emerged around the time of Prime Minister John Howard's emphasis on "practical reconciliation".

The second, which we termed the "irreconciliation narrative", was strongest in reporting on Aboriginal demands for a treaty through the 1980s. Here, great sympathy was undercut by the idea that Aboriginal calls for self-determination are impossible, "irreconcilable" demands, unpopular with the Australian populace. This narrative promotes a politics of procrastination on the one hand, and hopelessness on the other.

The third, which we termed the "subordination narrative", seeks to reposition Aboriginal desires for self-determination into frames of disadvantage and deficit. It sees the socio-economic uplift of Aboriginal people as the most pressing concern. In this narrative — if addressing statistical inequality and "closing the gap" means subordinating Aboriginal self-determination — it's justifiable. The three dominant narratives demonstrate how a white lens distorts Black stories.

Another narrative, which we called the "sovereignty/nationhood narrative", only appeared in glimpses. It recognises the growing depth and strength of the Aboriginal polity and acknowledges aspirations to self-governance as legitimate. In particular, it validates the Aboriginal polity as an equal negotiating partner with the state.

Over time, there were increasing invitations for opinion pieces in the mainstream media from Aboriginal voices. The Aboriginal polity engaged more deliberately with the media. Yet the media's focus remained on parliamentary fracas, scandal, and conflict. In the reports we examined — predominantly from Fairfax/Nine and News — we could not identify a single Aboriginal journalist at work. We also examined Aboriginal media, such as Koori Mail or Land Rights News, for example. We found that, with far fewer resources, these outlets achieved nuanced and complex representations of the Aboriginal polity.

It should be a given for mainstream media outlets to place Aboriginal journalists at the centre of any attempt to tell Black stories. That, on its own, however, is not enough. Australia's media landscape requires a transformation that needs to go much deeper than issues of representation. By understanding how the mainstream media has failed, we can also see the pathways to telling the Black stories that can change Australia's future. It is only by reconsidering its white standpoint that the media can give due justice to Black stories.

The full findings are published in a book titled Does the media fail Aboriginal political aspirations by Amy Thomas, Andrew Jakubowicz and Heidi Norman (AIATSIS Research Publications)

A podcast based on the book — Black Stories Matter — is also available. Courtesy of The Conversation.

FAREWELL TO A LABOR PIONEER

WHETHER FIGHTING FOR GENDER EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, SUSAN RYAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF LABOR'S GREATEST MODERNISING REFORMS. **REBECCA BENSON** REPORTS.

From the youngest possible age, Susan Ryan felt that it was "unfair, intolerable, really, that females were regarded as second-class citizens". It was, she told The Guardian in 2017, "the big thing that I wanted to change". With the enactment of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1984, Ryan succeeded in making that change.

Ryan's trailblazing role as an advocate and activist for gender equality was attested by the tributes she received when news broke of her death, aged 77, at the end of September. Describing Ryan as a "feminist hero and Labor giant", former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, tweeted: "I honour a woman of courage and a true believer." Labor frontbencher Tanya Plibersek, meanwhile, viewed Ryan as "a hugely impressive role model" who "continued her fight for equality long after leaving Parliament".

With the campaign slogan "A woman's place is in the Senate", Ryan entered Parliament as the ACT's first female senator in 1975. The arrival of the 33-year-old single mother in the upper house puzzled some parliamentarians. "The older senators couldn't really accept that I was there," Ryan would recall. "[They] kept asking me who I was working for." In her opening speech, Ryan noted that she was a member of "a particularly small minority group. Women are as badly under-represented here as they are anywhere else in our society where power resides or where decisions are made."

Although born in Camperdown in 1942, Ryan grew up in Maroubra where she attended the Brigidine Convent School. Ryan would later be granted a scholarship to study education at the University of Sydney where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1963. A decade on, Ryan would graduate from the Australian National University with a Master of Arts degree in English Literature. After graduating, she served as a delegate to the ACT Labor Party. The appointment would launch Ryan's political career.

Ryan served in the Senate for 12 years — eight of those on the opposition bench. When Bill Hayden became Labor leader in 1977, he handed Ryan the shadow portfolios of communications, the arts, and the media. In the process, Ryan became the first woman to sit in a Labor shadow ministry. Two years later, Hayden also gave Ryan responsibility for women's affairs — a post she was to hold until her resignation in 1988.

After years in the political wilderness, Labor finally gained power in 1983. When the newly appointed Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, gave Ryan the education and youth affairs portfolio, she became the first female cabinet minister in Labor history. As a self-proclaimed feminist who actively championed women's rights and social democratic principles, Ryan was never afraid to alienate conservative factions of the Labor Party. "My parliamentary career contained many periods when I was in the eye of a storm," Ryan said in 1992.

The biggest storm of all was the Sex Discrimination Bill. Developed by Ryan, the landmark legislation outlawed discrimination against persons on the ground of sex, marital status, and pregnancy. The bill's passage wasn't smooth, and it received much resistance from the parliamentary patriarchy — a reaction that came as no surprise to Ryan. "The male backlash had started before we had even got anywhere for them to lash against." Progressives also had gripes. In order to push the bill through, concessions were made, and exemptions sought. Ryan, however, remained politically pragmatic. "It would not have been possible to pass it without those exemptions," she later said.

In a speech honouring Ryan, Senator Penny Wong told members of the upper house: "It's hard to remember that at this time it was not unlawful to discriminate in this country on the basis of sex in employment, education, accommodation and the provision of goods and services. All of these injustices and inequalities were in the sights of Susan Ryan. Every woman and every girl has benefited from Susan Ryan's leadership."

Ryan's time in Parliament was turbulent to the end and, during Hawke's third term, Ryan was stripped of the education portfolio. "By maintaining the policy of no tuition fees for university, in the eyes of my colleagues, I had gone too far," said Ryan. "I paid the price and lost the job." By the end — as the Hawke Government began further embracing free market reforms — Ryan said she felt like "a shag on a rock".

Outside of Parliament, Ryan continued to blaze a trail: in 2011, she was appointed Australia's inaugural Age Discrimination Commissioner and, in 2014, Disability Discrimination Commissioner. But, as Wong remarked, "We remember Susan not just for the things she did first. We remember her for the legacy she leaves. She changed Australia for the better."

Susan Ryan at the 2013 Human Rights Awards.
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A FISH ON A BICYCLE

IN SEPTEMBER 1992, AS PART OF A SENATE SERIES OF OCCASIONAL LECTURES, **SUSAN RYAN** DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS.

A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle. Did the slogan that adorned many of the doors and walls of women's liberationists in the 1970s imply anything about women and politics? Women in Parliament are not women without men, they are women surrounded by them. But in making their way through the congestion of legislation, policy, scrutiny, representation, electioneering and leadership, are women as unnatural and unlikely as fishes on bicycles? When I went into Parliament women parliamentarians were not quite as rare a sight as a fish on a bicycle: they actually did exist.

After being elected in 1975, I joined four women who had already been in the Senate for a short period: Liberal senators Guilfoyle and Martin, and Labor senators Coleman and Melzer. Senator Walters from Tasmania was also elected in 1975. So there were six: a small but noticeable number. In the House of Representatives there were no women. My election was greeted with many media comments and profiles emphasising my gender, age, hair colour, marital status, physical size, and motherhood. About my political agenda they were less informative.

Being female evoked comment, but even more remarkable than my female presence in the Senate, I was a feminist. Most people, including senators and members of my own caucus room, did not quite know what that meant. I did. I had formed my political aspirations and drawn my political energy from feminism, that movement for gender equality beginning at the end of the 1960s, called, in retrospect, Second Wave Feminism and at the time, Women's Liberation. It was my first political involvement, and I did not linger very long. I was interested in the questions being explored within Women's Liberation: the nature of the female; the operation of oppression; defining the patriarchy; the possibility of a "women's culture".

But there were more urgent and important questions for me. Along with other activists, I moved straight from the basic assumption of feminism — that women were unfairly treated by society (all societies) — to the conclusion that the remedy for this unfairness was in the hands of women themselves. This was a political solution — one that required the exercise of political power.

As I conducted my analysis of the obstacles to equality and fairness for women, I was drawn again and again to the political system. External obstacles to equality for women abounded. Many of them were rooted in legislation and public policy created in the parliaments of Australia: practices such as denying permanency of employment to married women; limiting women's education; restricting them to a narrow range of training and employment; wages policies that refused to accept the reality of female economic independence and failed to note that many women supported dependents; refusal to acknowledge the consequences for women of women's fertility.

Considering these policy failures, and examining the way in which Parliament made laws and budgets, I came to believe that not only was a woman's place in the House and in the Senate — as my first campaign slogan proclaimed — but a feminist's place was in politics.

In our kind of democracy, particular groups seek to impact on political decision makers through the formation of lobbies. It occurred to some of us very early on that a women's lobby should be established to influence the content of laws and the performance of politicians. We formed the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) in the year

leading up to the election of the Whitlam Government in December 1972. WEL utilised shock tactics, the media, persuasion, and a bit of psychological terrorism, to get issues like childcare, equal pay, reproductive control, and access to education and training, on to the agenda of the newly elected Whitlam Government. From my feminist perspective, this lobbying was necessary but not sufficient. It left women on the outside of political power, waiting, persuading, threatening, but not acting directly to achieve change.

That short and intense period where the Women's Electoral Lobby became an effective part of the 1972 election campaign determined my parliamentary career. How much more efficient, I thought, how much more effective, if we were in there making the decisions, instead of knocking on the doors trying to attract support. Debate on the ill-fated Abortion Reform Bill in 1973 exemplified the problem: the debate was conducted in an all-male chamber; the women were outside rallying, organising, shouting through loud hailers, preparing for disappointment. I decided that next time we should be in there making the laws.

I set about organising a preselection base throughout the Labor Party branches in the ACT. I worked with other Labor Party feminists and progressive male members to try to ensure that the branches reflected this new and dynamic commitment to gender equality. This strategy — to the amazement and annoyance of seasoned political commentators — succeeded: I was endorsed and won a Senate seat in 1975.

I was often asked at the time what I expected, what misgivings I had. It is hard to say whether my expectations were too modest or totally extravagant. I did expect that I would be able to make changes. It was both better and worse than I anticipated. I found many supporters, but so much that seemed to me to be logical, sensible, fair, and of general benefit to the community, seemed to others to be radical, eccentric, and impractical.

In my early attempts at women's policy there were times when I felt like a fish on a bicycle. But the work of a parliamentarian, even one with special commitments, can never relate to one set of issues only. I had two broad objectives when I entered Parliament. One was to bring into consideration matters of vital importance to women which had been neglected; the other was to establish, through my work and by supporting the work of other women in the Parliament, recognition that women were capable parliamentary performers. I wanted to demonstrate that the neglect of female candidates by the major political parties had been an error and had deprived the nation of a great deal of capacity.

"My central objective in Parliament was economic independence for all, including women. Economic independence means the capacity to provide for your own needs and for the needs of those for whom you are directly responsible."

My central objective in Parliament was economic independence for all, including women. Economic independence means the capacity to provide for your own needs and for the needs of those for whom you are directly responsible. How were women to achieve economic independence? The answer involved a logical series of policy initiatives. Women needed to be able to compete on merit for permanent and rewarding jobs. I never believed that such jobs should simply be handed out according to some numerical concept of fairness, nor that others, in this case men, should be deprived of their economic independence in order to make way for women.

So, the next logical step involved education and training. If women were to compete on merit for good jobs, then they had to have access to the fullest and widest range of education. That meant reforming schools, changing the universities, and giving women access to apprenticeship and technical training. Further, I never expected that as a result of the reforms I was advocating, women as a group would lose interest in bearing children. While I respected individual choice in these matters, I thought it likely that the majority of women would, like myself, have children and seek employment. The logical consequence of that prediction was better provision by society for support and assistance in the rearing of children, particularly very young children, hence the policy of childcare.

In developing a logical policy framework, it had to be acknowledged that contraception and family planning techniques were — to sum up in one word — unreliable. That is they did not work for all of the people all of the time. While the unplanned pregnancy often became the wanted and much-loved child, there were cases in which it could be a personal catastrophe. The choice of termination should be available to women.

I still find it hard to believe that the objectives that I had at that time — equal opportunity in employment; access to education and training; childcare services; fertility control — were radical enough to upset and destabilise the parliamentary system and the community it represented. But enormous resist-

ance was organised to these objectives. There was resistance within the Labor Party and inside the federal caucus.

My advocacy for childcare, reproductive control, or equal pay, was often met by my own colleagues expressing fear at the electoral danger I was creating with such views. Some notable Labor figures complained that I was taking up the cause of a tiny majority of over-educated women, a cause that would be unsettling and unwelcome to the vast majority of Australian women who (I could only infer from the comments of my colleagues) were totally satisfied with their lot.

That resistance was overcome. The Labor Party — despite being in many respects a reflection of the conservative society it inhabits — does have a central core of commitment to equality, and therefore to change that will create better opportunities. Slowly, the Labor Party started to build policies to address the inequalities suffered by women.

I must also acknowledge the support of somewhat unlikely figures: Bob Hawke, as Prime Minister, fully comprehended the issue of structural discrimination in the workforce and put his weight behind the package of equal opportunity measures. Keating, when Treasurer, never dismissed my budgetary proposals aimed at assisting disadvantaged women, particularly single mothers and older women. I had powerful opponents in cabinet as well as outside and the extensive program of reform for women I was able to secure would not have succeeded without the support of the most powerful figures of the Government.

Outside, things were harder. Administrators in TAFE and universities, employer organisations and even unions, produced reason after reason why women could not, without disaster, be admitted to apprenticeships, managerial jobs, professorships or crane driving. I also met resistance in Parliament on the other side, as one would expect. Many of my earlier contributions to parliamentary debates were greeted with groans of scorn and derision by senators on the opposite side. But to be fair, the groaning was not universal and, as time passed, I realised that there were Liberal senators who were prepared to acknowledge female disadvantage and use the powers and processes of the Parliament to make some improvements.

I did, however, have some fairly torrid times in my early years in Parliament, none more so than during the debate on the motion that I brought into the Senate to disallow the termination of pregnancy ordinance introduced into the Australian Capital Territory by the Fraser Government. The opposition to my 1978 abortion initiative reverberated several years later during the debate on the Sex Discrimination Bill.

When one runs into difficulties, it is too easy to say "the boys stopped me; I experienced this failure because I am a woman". I am not decrying the personal experience of women who say that is how they felt; I am not saying that I have never been the victim of sexism or the double standard. But I am loath to support the thesis that life in Parliament is really too hard for women. It must be remembered that men have their policy failures, experience factional treacheries, and lose cabinet debates.

When I and my colleagues who had worked hard to rebuild Labor's electoral fortunes after the terrible defeats of 1975 and 1977 came into office in 1983, each and every one of us in cabinet was sometimes overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. I was not the only minister who felt torn between the ideals in our platform and the reality of Government, who felt miserable at failing to persuade my colleagues to a particular policy. These were experiences we shared.

Look at prime ministers and opposition leaders. At the pinnacle of parliamentary power, there is no ivory tower, no shelter from the storm, and ultimately no buffer against ambition, disaffection, treachery or failure. Everyone in Parliament has to endure such experiences, women included. It is important to acknowledge the difficulties that are universal in order to deal with those that do arise from discriminatory attitudes to women.

Looking back on my time in Parliament, I can identify issues and actions that typify the parliamentarian anxious to achieve social change. All who have embarked on such a course — the many men and the few women — have had turbulent times. My involvement with reforms for women made my parliamentary work even more turbulent and controversial. The presence of a newcomer in the citadels of power is always a challenge, whether the novelty is to do with a person's gender or the person's race. There is no avoiding that extra dimension of controversy. Only when a critical mass of women parliamentarians is achieved, will gender cease to be an issue.

I hope we see many more fish on bicycles.

The above is an edited extract.
Source: Parliament of Australia.

"I am loath to support the thesis that life in Parliament is really too hard for women. It must be remembered that men have their policy failures, factional treacheries, and lose cabinet debates."

THE STUFF OF THE APOCALYPSE

A YEAR ON FROM THE BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES, AUSTRALIANS REFLECT ON THE COUNTRY'S WORST BLAZES IN RECORDED HISTORY.

KIM Most rural fire brigades knew that there was a bad season coming. They knew that the conditions were getting drier and for us around here, we knew that our fuel loadings were higher. We haven't had a decent fire for a number of years, so something bad had to happen. It was going to happen. We just didn't know when.

STEPHEN When the fire approached, we defended my mother's house and protected neighbouring properties as best we could before escaping at the last minute to the beach. We watched as the fire roared down the coast and houses burned. My mother's house was still standing but four homes on her street were gone. My brother helped five people to safety. Here and in other areas, the fire just went through and cleared everything in its way. It was like a rocket going through.

INDIA I just couldn't imagine losing our house so I was prepared to fight as long and as well I could. My main fear was the smoke I was breathing … if I was going to pass out. When the tree caught on fire, I really thought the tanks were going to melt, and the house was going to catch on fire there as well. The fire had burnt through the hose in two places. I don't know how that would've gone if that hose was completely screwed.

GEOFF [The fire] was about a kilometre from us and we were watching it. And there's helicopters and sirens and it's getting pretty dramatic. I turned around and saw the whole hillside to our north was fully alight and the whole hillside to the east was fully alight. I could see there was spot fires everywhere and there was no controlling them.

GRAHAM When the water goes off and then the power goes off, and then you've got spot fires starting all around you, you can't do anything about it. Everything you think you know about fire, when it comes, it just makes its own mind up.

MARAIAH It just kept coming back and coming back. The fire came back across ground that had already been

burnt, it was that hot and that intense and that relentless — nobody had ever seen anything like that.

EVAN It was completely unprecedented in my view — I've never seen anything like it. The fire activity, the overall size of the fires, and just how fast they moved, I'd never seen anything like it before. When the sun should have been up, it was pitch black. There was ash falling from the sky. This was a situation that I have never been in.

JONATHAN With a single road into and out of town through heavily wooded terrain, we realised our window of opportunity to get out was closing. The likelihood of being cut off and trapped in was high, but the consequences of being caught in a firestorm while driving out were more significant. We believed the safest option was to move swiftly to the town's wharf. We found an ideal spot by the water's edge with a low rock wall and parked the car. To protect ourselves from hot embers flying through the air, we wrapped ourselves in woollen blankets. Others nearby did the same. In the event of a firestorm, our final escape option was to jump in the water, shielding ourselves behind the rock wall.

NEIL Our neighbour informed us that the impending fire could not be stopped. With our only firefighting resource being three garden hoses supplied by town water (which historically fails in a crisis) and a house full of guests not used to this type of situation, we decided to follow government recommendations and evacuate early. We waited and hoped. There wasn't much else. Around 2:30pm, we received a text message from our neighbour who had reliable news that her house, along with ours and many others in the same street, was gone. The hope evaporated.

SUE My husband came up and said to me "Look, we've had all our windows blow up. The house is on fire. We're not going to save it". He still did try. He tried so hard. The fire brigade eventually came late, and they just said "No, you're not going to save it because you've got a flat roof." You live in the bush, you live by the rules of the bush, and that's it. And it's just so disheartening that somebody next to you doesn't, and you just lose everything.

ROB I remember thinking, "This can't be happening, how can we be getting so much fire?" We had all these [blazes] in the north and all the ones around Sydney and then we started to have all these lightning strikes down south ... That's what really happened, the mountain ranges from the very north of the state burnt to the very south of the state.

PETER When you wake, even before you're properly awake, the first thing you smell is the smoke. This is despite the fact the vents in the house are closed; the smoke still gets inside. The streets are deserted. Public pools and major tourist attractions closed. Sporting events have been postponed. Businesses and government departments sent their workers home. The national airline stopped all flights. The postal service halted all deliveries. Petrol stations sold out of fuel, supermarkets sold out of bottled water, and bank ATMs were emptied of cash. It's the stuff of the apocalypse.

MARY The fire brought whipping winds, bursts of thunder, lightning strikes and, very briefly, rain. There was an eerie quiet, punctuated only by the anxiety-provoking but reassuring sound of sirens. There were gas blasts, houses toppling and trees crashing or exploding. The fire produced deafening, apocalyptic roars that will stay with me forever.

JANE The frontline firefighters and people in affected communities will live with the ongoing trauma of things they cannot unsee. Like many of my fellow Australians, my anger is directed at those who were supposed to lead but have for decades failed us, and at those who continue to peddle spin and misinformation. Faced with apocalyptic fire conditions, an unruly rabble of politicians, media hacks and others with vested interests have been desperately grasping for explanations that do not relate to our changing climate.

NADA I am devastated for my country, the tragedy of the loss of lives, homes, incomes, for the pain and suffering of millions of wildlife and livestock and the ecological destruction. Yet our Prime Minister still persists in selling coal to India. I'm in despair at what we leave for future generations.

SARAH As a climate scientist, I'm not surprised by the bushfires. What I am is exhausted. I am tired of repeating again and again about how climate change is already here and that we are to blame. What will it take for everyone to finally realise this, and by then will it be too late? As an Australian, I'm shattered. The fires have changed Australia forever. The wrath of climate change is no longer on the horizon. It's here.

STEPPING UP TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

AS **TIM FLANNERY** WRITES, IN THE FACE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S INACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE WE MUST LOOK FOR LEADERSHIP ELSEWHERE.

An overwhelming majority of Australians want action on climate change. And the Federal Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic shows governments can act decisively and effectively on imminent threats. But on climate action, there is a lack of political will. So in the absence of federal leadership, what should be done? And who must do what? Those questions are already being answered by state governments, councils, researchers, entrepreneurs and financiers who understand the climate problem. Their actions are slowing our slide to disaster — but they need others to step up.

Among the most important entities in climate action in Australia are the state and territory governments. The ACT was the first to eliminate fossil fuels for electricity generation. Tasmania is on track to be there by 2022 and has now set a 200 percent renewable energy target by 2040, with the additional clean energy to be used to produce hydrogen. South Australia is also set to be powered solely by renewables by the 2030s. These jurisdictions show what can be done in Australia if there's a political will, and successive governments stick with a plan.

Some larger states are catching up fast. New South Wales has recently gone from being one of the worst performers to among the best. The Berejiklian Government has a ten-year plan to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, and the first stage prioritises the uptake of electric vehicles. It will change building codes to make it cheaper and easier to install electric charging points, encourage the uptake of electric vehicles by fleets, and change licensing and parking regulations to encourage their uptake. If the states worked together to pursue the most ambitious targets and programs, Australia could do its bit to solve the climate problem.

Australia's local councils have become powerhouses of innovative climate solutions. In June 2017, I attended the Climate Council's Cities Power Partnership at Parliament House in Canberra. Some 34 mayors and councillors attended, and I listened with interest as one after another described the projects they were working on. The breadth was astonishing: from promoting bulk-buys of solar panels for disadvantaged residents to making low-carbon road surfaces at local plants. Many councils were planting trees, assisting with energy efficiency measures, or converting waste to energy. Since that first meeting, the Cities Power Partnership has grown hugely. It now includes more than 120 local governments, representing half of all Australians.

It is not just Australia's local councils forging ahead with climate action. Individual households lead the world in producing clean energy. More than two million — 21 percent of the nation's total — have now installed solar panels. This, of course, was supported by the Federal Government's renewable energy target. But it wouldn't have happened without Australians paying good money for their rooftop solar panels.

Movements aimed at building momentum will doubtless continue. In September 2019, hundreds of thousands marched during the school climate strikes. The crowds were unprecedented, as was their passion. The demonstrations have had limited impact on the Federal Government, but people are also organising in different ways. Extinction Rebellion is one of the potentially more potent. Its members are committed to breaking the law peacefully. Part of their power lies in the fact that they keep reminding the police, courts, and politicians that their actions aim to save everybody's children — not just their own.

Action by state governments, councils, individuals, and groups will be critical to tackling climate change. But that still leaves the problem of Federal Parliament. More pro-climate Independents in Federal Parliament would shift our politics in the right direction. At the last election, voters in the northern Sydney seat of Warringah dispensed with incumbent Tony Abbott, in favour of Independent candidate Zali Steggall. It shows what's possible when traditionally conservative voters get sick of being held to ransom by climate deniers in Parliament.

Membership of both the Labor and Liberal parties has dwindled in recent decades. That means a tiny, self-selected portion of Australia's population chooses the candidates we vote for. This has exposed the Liberals, in particular, to hijack by climate deniers — given the small membership numbers, it's not hard for denialist candidates to win preselection. But if party members let these wreckers run the show, Australia will continue on the path to catastrophe.

Australians have become used to living with governments that don't serve our interests. Many people are rightly cynical and disengaged from politics. And that's exactly where the climate deniers would like us to be. But to effect real change, we must shake free of apathy. New people will have to step up and join those who have been persevering in pushing for climate action for years. With enough momentum, we can embark on the cure for this most wicked of problems.

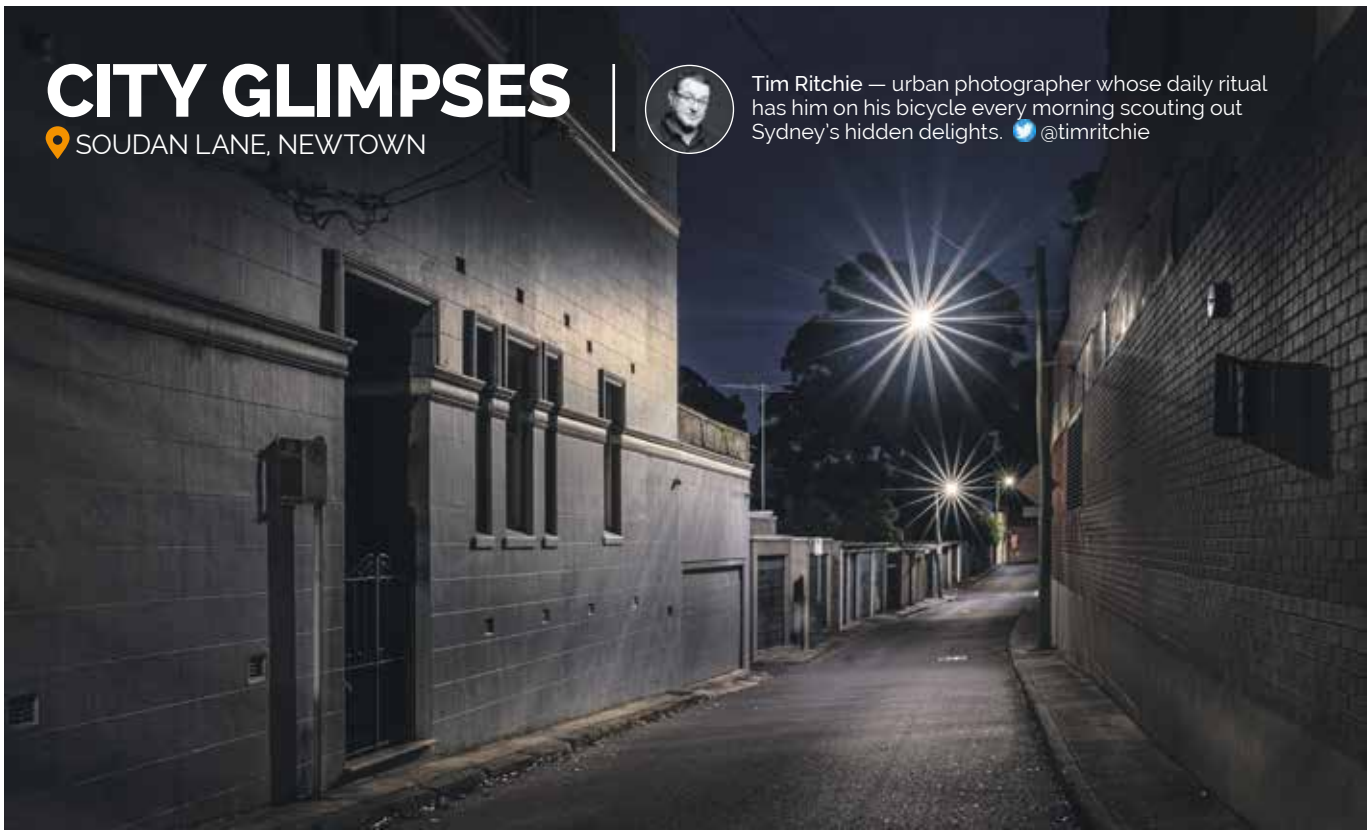
This is an edited extract from The Climate Cure: Solving the Climate Emergency in the Era of COVID-19 by Tim Flannery (Text Publishing).

Image: Mark Coulson, 5th World Conference of Science Journalists.

CITY GLIMPSES

SOUDAN LANE, NEWTOWN

Tim Ritchie — urban photographer whose daily ritual has him on his bicycle every morning scouting out Sydney's hidden delights. @timritchie



In 1885, a contingent of troops from NSW arrived in Egypt to support the British-backed Egyptian regime from an uprising of locals known as the Mahdi. The Soudan War (spelt that way then) was the first time Australians fought in an imperial war. This is Soudan Lane in Sydney's Newtown, it was named in memory of this conflict.

FROM THE VAULT

SUMMER 2007

As we come to the end of a year defined by the worst bushfires on record coupled with a life-threatening pandemic, this feature on the importance of strong communities seems strangely prescient.

Both the concept and reality of a strong community is essential in delivering services and more importantly in improving the lives and happiness of individuals. It is an element that is too often overlooked by government and community organisations in planning and delivering services. A strong community provides the context in which we work and the catalyst for delivering social justice and progress.

A strong community is developed from a mixture of the urban environment and people relationships. A strong community is about changing the power from 'power over' to 'power to'. Of course this is not a popular strategy for those who enjoy exercising 'power over' citizens. The basis of community development is to assist citizens to exercise the collective power they have to deal with local problems and issues and to increase positive interaction leading to resilience and trust (social capital). If governments and community organisations do not encourage citizens to work on self-improvement and to assist others in their community, the task of government is much harder and more expensive.

One test for a strong community is when there is a disaster. A community with strong bonds between the people will pull together in times of crisis. A weak community will fall apart or turn on each other. Governments depend on these strong relationships and resilience when dealing with crises, like bushfires, floods, and unrest. They talk about the wonderful selflessness of people helping each other. There does not seem to be an understanding that this quality is present all the time and only has to be encouraged and nurtured to be used on an ongoing basis. Building strong communities is as important as infrastructure and building a road system.

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