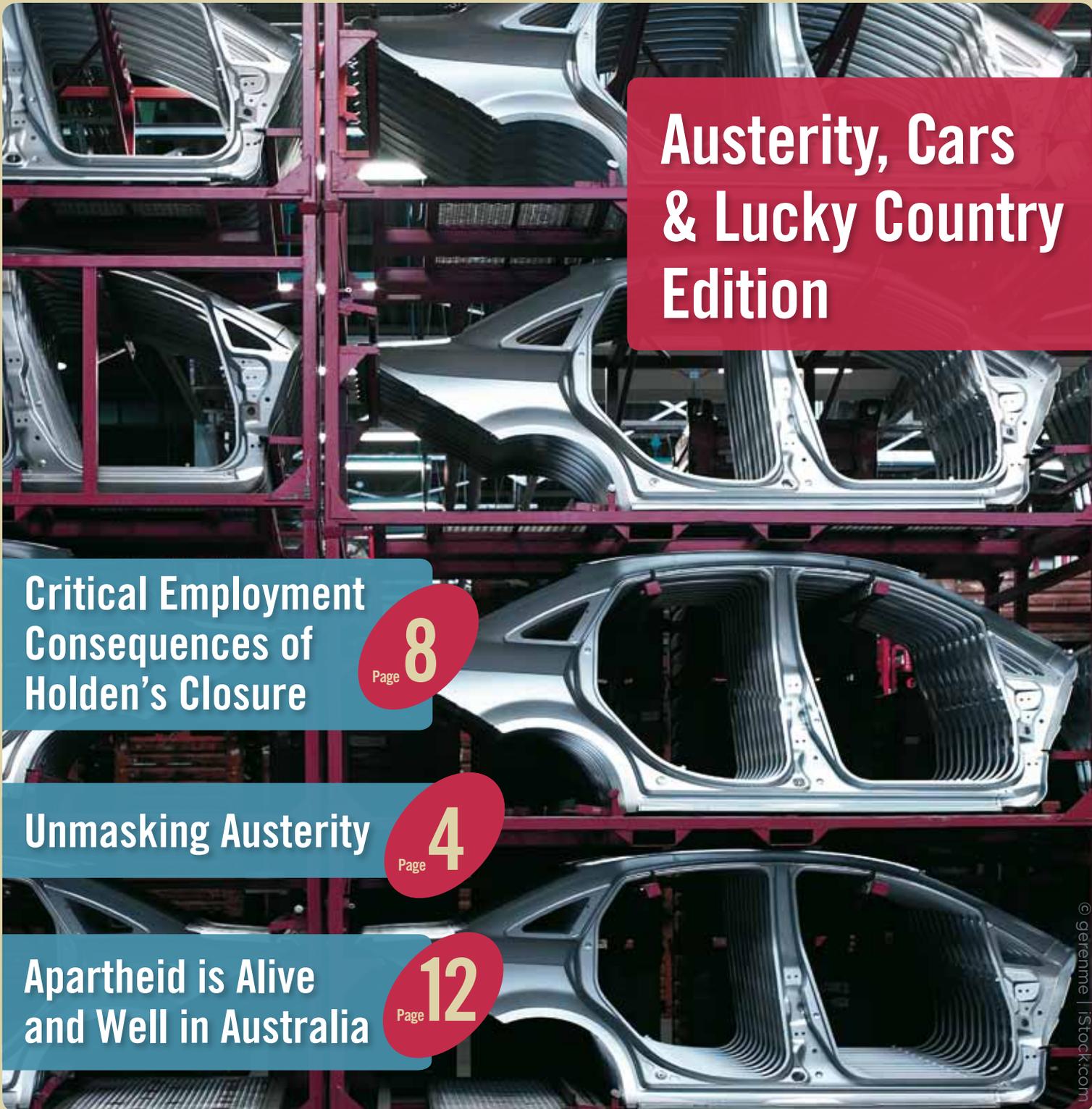


SACOSS

NEWS

Justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians



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Autumn 2014



SACOSS
South Australian Council
of Social Service



SACOSS

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of Social Service

As the peak non-government representative body for the health and community services sector in South Australia, the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) believes in justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians.

For information on membership, we invite you to visit our website or phone us.

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Bills going up?

If you're having problems with the cost of living and budgeting, you'll find suggestions for how you might save on housing, utility bills, and medical costs on the Affordable Living website and Affordable SA Helpline.

Web: www.sa.gov.au/affordableliving

Phone: 1800 025 539

To find out if you are eligible for State Government concessions visit the Concessions website or call the Concessions Hotline.

Web: www.sa.gov.au/concessions

Phone: 1800 307 758

Email: concessions@dcsi.sa.gov.au

TTY: (08) 8226 6798



Government
of South Australia

Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion



Editorial

Ross Womersley
Executive Director, SACOSS

I hope you have all seen the work we did in the lead up to the SA state election. As you'll see from the deeper analysis in this edition we worked hard and very deliberately at driving a message home about the absolute importance of South Australia having a fair and sustainable long term revenue base. We accompanied this with specific asks that seek to address cost of living issues where they are being felt most – by people across our community on the lowest of incomes - as well as 20 great ideas that will cut red tape and improve the capacity of non-government community organisations to do their work. We also had some specific asks in particular areas of social policy such as housing, justice and health.

I think on a whole lot of fronts we did extremely well. We did particularly well on naming the revenue issue. While neither of the major parties were all that keen to engage, it remains a major issue which was always going to confront the party who formed our next government. We also got some big wins on the cost of living front with both parties ultimately coming forward with promises to increase energy concessions as well as enhancing funding for the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme. Amidst some other red tape reduction promises the Labor party responded to our key challenge around funding certainty by committing to making 3+3+3 contracts the default contract for the sector.

We also found ourselves front and centre post-election and were particularly delighted when the Independent and Member for Frome, Geoff Brock, invited us into a discussion about what kinds of issues we felt were most important for vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians.

Our job is to speak out and up for the needs and interests of people whose lives are challenged by disadvantage, and to challenge and to persuade our community and all political parties that justice, opportunity and the idea we should share wealth, are indeed important values. I think in this election we demonstrated just how serious we are. We hope they all remember they shouldn't ever take these issues for granted the next time we are asked to go to the polls.

The state election took place in the shadow of the announcement from Holden (and subsequently Toyota) about its intention to close its manufacturing plant at Elizabeth. This has brought a real focus to the issues of unemployment and opportunity. We were pleased to see the Weatherill government consult directly with business and industry as well as our sector in seeking to formulate its response. We remain deeply concerned that at this time the federal government has not made any clear commitments.

We have a genuine crisis with a lack of employment opportunity in our northern suburbs. We have alarming levels of youth unemployment and we know the consequences of long term unemployment. It is imperative that government at the federal level can join with government at a state and local level and work collaboratively with the non-government community sector and the community more broadly to formulate and implement effective long term interventions.

We hope that in responding we can take the learnings and insights from other relevant recent experiences and in this edition of SACOSS News we have sought to explore some of these. Professor Fran Baum reflects on what happened to people when Mitsubishi closed over a decade ago. Greg Goudie reflects on what it means to be in your fifties and find yourself unemployed. And we talk about austerity and ask whether such economic approaches are the right response in these circumstances.

A couple of other highlights from this fantastic edition come in the sobering and thoughtful reflections of Malcolm Robinson as he explores the impact of the recent hearings of Royal Commission into Child Abuse that focused on the Catholic Churches and other institution's responses to the abuse of a number of children who were attending St Anne's Special School. John Pilger discusses the harsh reality of also talks about his film Utopia, Kate Leaney from Welcome to Australia writes about the continued challenge of building a sense of compassion around asylum seekers.

In solidarity,

Unmasking Austerity

Dexter Whitfield

This article has been adapted by SACOSS from Unmasking Austerity: Lessons for Australia by Dexter Whitfield, following forums and meetings in Adelaide in February organised by the Don Dunstan Foundation.

“Austerity” refers to the package of policies which have been adopted in the US and European Union in response to the Global Financial Crises which began in 2007/08. Systemic banking crises occurred in seventeen countries between 2007 and 2011, and a further eight countries, including Russia and Switzerland, were borderline – i.e. almost met the systemic criteria.

The bailout of banks and the collapse of revenue following housing and property crashes led to plummeting house prices and foreclosures in several countries. Bailouts were needed in Ireland, Iceland, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Cyprus. Bailout terms and timetables were set by the troika of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union and the European Central Bank.

As this Global Financial Crisis moved from the financial sector to the broader economy, the initial government response in many countries was essentially “Keynesian” (ie. when private sector spending declines, governments increase spending to stimulate the economy; when private sector spending grows, governments reduce spending). However, many stimulus packages were considered inadequate. For example, almost 40% of the US\$787bn American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program was tax cuts that “...were probably only half or less as effective in stimulating demand as actual increases in government spending”.

After the initial stimulus packages, concern about budget deficits and public debt grew. The “deficit hawks” took control in 2010 and austerity policies became the core policy. In the run up to the G20 Toronto meeting the German government and the European Central Bank lobbied extensively for fiscal consolidation winning over the UK and Canada and leaving the US isolated (Blyth, 2013a).

Austerity was intended to rapidly reduce public debt by a combination of cutting public spending, reducing or freezing labour costs, tax increases and privatisation alongside reconfiguring public services and the welfare state. These measures would in turn allow the private sector to generate economic growth.

Yet the evidence shows that these austerity policies have largely failed, and have come at a great social cost (see box)

The Failure of Austerity

Far from reducing public debt, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) public debt continued to increase in Spain, France, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Greece between 2011-2013, the UK and US likewise, with a very small decline in Germany in the first quarter this year. When pre-financial crisis debt ratios are taken into account, the increase is even more substantial. Ireland's debt to GDP ratio increased from 24.8% in 2007 to 125.1% in 2013; Portugal's increased from 62.0% in 2006 to 127.2% and Greece's rose from 106% in 2007 to 160.5% in 2013.

By comparison, and without full austerity measures, public debt as a percentage of GDP increased in Australia between 2007-2012 from 14.6% to 32.4%, but it remains the third lowest of the thirty-four Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

Austerity policies also did not bring about a new burst of private sector-led growth. Reduced demand from the withdrawal of government spending intensified the recession in many places. The impact in decreasing demand and economic growth was double to triple that originally estimated by the IMF, and negative or weak economic growth prevailed as the private sector failed to fill the gap in investment created by significant reductions in public sector spending. Post-GFC economic growth in the Euro area reached 1% in 2010, but has since hovered just above or below zero over the next few years.

Some economies have technically come out of recession and Spain and Ireland have exited their bailout programs, but this has had little effect on jobs and living standards. Indicators of economic growth and increased employment are small, anaemic and volatile in most countries. Emphasis on numbers belies the real quality of jobs being created, and the reform of banks and financial markets is unfinished and of questionable effectiveness. The big banks are bigger, the shadow banking system is widening, the rich are richer and the system depends more than ever on investor faith in central banks.



Lessons to be Learnt

We must remember the crisis was caused by the failure of markets and deregulation. It was a private sector failure, not a sovereign debt crisis. Yet austerity has meant deep public spending cuts, mass unemployment, closures, privatisation, wage and benefit cuts, increased poverty and damage to health. Poor and working/middle class families have borne the brunt of the economic and financial burden of austerity – the socialisation of the losses, while income and health inequalities have widened.

Many of these consequences of austerity extend well beyond the implementation of the policy. For example, the loss of output, lost or delayed investment, health inequalities and poverty, the social effects of unemployment, migration and the loss of skills will be borne for years.

The idea that governments have no option but to adopt austerity policies is incorrect. Not only was the scale of austerity unnecessary and ill-timed, it was unjust and based on flawed economic theory. And the narrow “anti-cuts” campaigns that responded to it were largely unsuccessful.

An alternative strategy should set out policies to target investment for a clean energy economy, infrastructure investment, job creation and the reform of financial institutions and regulatory regimes. Comprehensive regulation, monitoring and review processes are fundamental parts of all sectors in the economy to ensure objectives are achieved. They must be democratically accountable and transparent and should not be drawn by corporate interests alone, nor left for them to self-monitor. The financial cost to the state and the private sector should be accepted as a basic cost of public service or business.

The economic and social effects of austerity:

- Soaring economic costs – the loss of output, reduced wealth, unemployment and government intervention and support runs into trillions of dollars in the US alone.
- 5.5 million young people are unemployed in the European Union alone.
- 2.2m public sector job losses have followed deep cuts in public spending in the UK, US and Spain alone.
- Cuts in wages, benefits and pensions have reduced take-home earnings by up to 20%.
- Increasing closures and business failures.
- Bankruptcy of several US towns and cities.
- Health services closures and patients facing increased charges and longer waiting times.
- Increasing poverty and widened inequality with public spending cuts also increasing inequalities between regions.
- A gigantic wealth transfer from taxpayers to the corporate sector and wealthy individuals, as bailouts have protected bank bondholders (except in Iceland).
- Public services and the welfare state are being reconfigured to embed marketisation and privatisation.
- Meanwhile, corporate profits have risen, share price highs were achieved in 2013 and cash hoarding by large US corporations has mushroomed.

Full references in this article can be found in the original paper *Unmasking Austerity: Lessons for Australia*, available at www.adelaide.edu.au/wiser/pubs

Further information on alternative policies that provide a way forward and the path to a more equitable and sustainable economy is available in subsequent papers in this series - see *Opposing Austerity* and *Alternatives to Austerity* briefing papers from the Australian Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre at Adelaide University. www.adelaide.edu.au/wiser/pubs

The Mitsubishi Déjà Vu



Fran Baum and Anna Ziersch

Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity
- Flinders University

The news that Holden will be closing its doors by 2017 is an all too familiar story for South Australia. The same thing happened with Mitsubishi in 2004. Then a group of researchers at Flinders University began research to see what happened to the health, social and family life and employment of the workers made redundant. Mitsubishi cooperated with the study and through them we contacted over 370 workers and then tracked them over 2 years with 300 staying in the study. This study provides some useful pointers for how the Federal & State government could support the Holden workers.

In terms of employment the main finding was that after 2 years approximately one third of workers were in full time employment, one third in part time and one third were out of workforce either unemployed or retired. Those who had a job were generally employed at a lower wage and with less generous conditions than they had at Mitsubishi.

We also monitored the mental health of the workers over two years. After the first year of the commencement of redundancies 44% of workers reported poor mental health status (as measured by a robust questionnaire). This was over twice the proportion of the general Australian population. This reduced to 27% by the end of the two years suggesting that while mental health issues relating to redundancy reduced in the first few years that for some the effects may be longer term.

We found a number of factors that buffered workers or made them more vulnerable to these negative mental health effects. Women, those without partners, those working less years at Mitsubishi, and those experiencing financial strain had worse mental health. High levels of trust, regular social contact and social support were protective of mental health.

In our interviews with workers stress was a major factor stemming from their job insecurity and job loss, financial strain, feelings of losing control over their lives, loss of self-esteem, shame and loss of status, and the experiences of grieving. These factors were linked to significant impacts on mental health. These two comments highlight the stressful nature of the experience:

I was suicidal because I was starting to get depressed with not earning as much as I used to and not being able to pay the bills and that. (Raymond, 50+, maintenance worker)

I was grieving because I nearly ended up just stepping away. I said to my wife it's really hard, I found it really hard, even to the point of getting a bit tight in the throat side of emotion (Tyson, 40+, production worker)

For some the mental health consequences commenced well before the actual job loss:

It's just a very depressing place there sometimes ... From the day I started people were telling me it was finishing up now, that was eight years before it shut down. (Tracy, 30+, production worker)

One of our interviewees highlighted the different ways that people experienced the redundancies:

Saying goodbye to all the men. It was dreadful. There were some that were very happy to go. And then there were people, men my age ... You knew they'd never work again. Some of them were crying. Some of them were really angry. You know, saying that they had lost the choice of working till they were 65. Then there were people going straight from there into another job, so they were ecstatic. It was just a whole range of different emotions. (Doreen aged 50+, canteen worker)

We also asked the workers about how their job loss had affected their family life. The main negative effects reported were financial strain, loss of relationship stability, and general stress and worry. We also talked to 35 children of Mitsubishi workers. For them the main impacts were in terms of their awareness that their family budget was reduced, that their parents were stressed and worried and in some cases their Dad had to travel further for work and so was away from home for longer.

Other children appreciated seeing more of their parents because they were spending more time at home. The workers reported the loss of community associated with Mitsubishi which was widely reported to have been 'like a family'. Our study also considered the impact of the closure on the wider community and concluded that the car factory had had a quite significant practical impact as well as symbolic value in the southern area.

What are the implications of our study for policy related to the Holden closure? In terms of the individual workers there clearly needs to be some support for their mental health especially in the lead up to the closure and at the time of the closure. Our evidence suggests that redundancy is particularly stressful and will lead to deterioration in mental health.

The provision of timely appropriate emotional and financial counselling support will be important. Yet mental health services in South Australia are stretched. So we propose that the Federal government works with the Northern Adelaide Medical Local to ensure that there is free, accessible and appropriate mental health care available. Financial counselling should also be provided and be free for at least two sessions.

We also suggest that some means of keeping the workers connected to each other is important so that they can provide much needed social support. Perhaps a grant to the union to organise this would work? Our evidence also suggests that the job network services were not as helpful as they might have been to the Mitsubishi workers. They commented that the network was not well co-ordinated and the advice and help received was not always helpful and usually not tailored to their specific needs. So we suggest that there is intensive independent evaluation of the services provided that can give rapid feedback on the performance of the job networks.

The impact of the closure on the Elizabeth community is likely to be significant. Working at Mitsubishi was seen as more than just a job and the workers talked of losing a family. It is likely that Elizabeth as a whole will suffer. Both the state and federal governments need to step up with a well-crafted community and economic development plan. This will require significant government investment and we suggest that this will require governments to raise more revenue to invest in Elizabeth.

As SACOSS has reminded us in their election campaign on taxation, if SA state taxes had remained at pre-GFC levels as a percentage of the economy we would have \$1.1 billion to spend on services and infrastructure. The role of government has to be to support communities like Elizabeth when there are major economic structural changes. In the long term it represents a good investment in future savings to health, justice and welfare budgets.

Mitsubishi workers were made redundant at a time that the Australia economy was buoyant and received generous redundancy packages. The less favourable economic environment and uncertain redundancy measures means that both state and federal governments have to step up and lend a big helping hand to Elizabeth and all workers affected by the Holden closure.



Critical Employment Consequences of Holden Closure

Greg Goudie

Executive Director,

DOME - Don't Overlook Mature Expertise

What we are seeing today with the Holden and Toyota pending closures is the crest of a wave that has been coming for a long time.

It started with the well intentioned Button Car Plan in 1984 which had the goal of restructuring the industry to be more competitive by reducing import tariffs. The plan was to reduce the number of car makers, to share models and share components thus giving the surviving manufacturers increased volumes and reduced costs.

Unfortunately no one predicted the growth of Thailand, Korea, China and the not-so-level tariff playing fields, GFC and a high Australian Dollar. It is forecast that there will be job losses in excess of 23,000 nationally over the next 4 years because of the car industry's demise. In South Australia the estimates range from 12,000 to 15,000 jobs being lost.

Since 2010, while the Australian economy has grown at 13%, our manufacturing production has fallen by almost 10%. And whilst total employment has risen by over 7%, employment in manufacturing has dropped by over 12%. Over the past 50 years we have seen the closure of various manufacturing industries in Australia - the textile/clothing/footwear industries, the whitegoods industry, and now the automotive industry.

Understanding these changes is important for the current workers in the automotive industry, as the opportunities in any form of manufacturing in Australia will be limited in availability and future prospects. People leaving the industry will require significant training and support to find other work outside of process/production line work.

The main issue may be - who is eligible for this assistance? It is indicated that those directly affected, be they at Holden or a parts supplier, may be eligible for assistance - there is eligibility criteria that will be used to assess each worker. But it is the collateral damage to people and businesses that have relied on the patronage of Holden and other employees for their main business who may not get the assistance they require to change careers or find new employment in a restricted market.

Whatever the situation there will be lots of skilled workers available where their skills may not be of use anymore. They will have some transferrable skills and that is what will be critical in helping them gain other employment. The work of the Department of Employment and employment service providers will be crucial in helping the displaced worker recognise these skills and helping them sell them to employers.

Some of the responses offered in the current Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Program will be very useful and helpful to eligible employees. Currently there is an Experience + Career Advice service available for mature age (45+) to provide access to free, professional career counselling. This service should not be underestimated in its value to the older worker looking for a career change. Too often the older worker is excluded from these offerings on the basis of the 'old dog, new tricks' stereotype.

Whilst there is an indicative cap on the Employment Pathway Fund for any retrenched worker, if required, "The amount your JSA provider spends on you should reflect your individual needs even if it exceeds the \$2,880 credit." So it would appear that the initial offerings of support are substantial.

What will be the ultimate long term impact of the Holden closure only time will tell, however we can be certain that in the short term, it will have a direct impact on the lives of thousands of South Australians, particularly the mature age.

Whilst there are no available statistics on the different age groups being affected, it is likely that the majority of people leaving the industry will be mature age or 40+. Getting a job or returning to the workforce is extremely difficult for this group, because no matter how much is said and done, there is still discrimination against older workers. There is a real danger with mature age that they will become long term and very long term unemployed.



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At DOME we see many people who struggle to find employment, the average time a mature age person is out of work is currently 66 weeks; it has been as high as 72 weeks. The main effect on the individual is loss of self-esteem and confidence. To some, the loss of their job will be like a death in the family. Their employment is who they are and what they represent.

The best way to prevent long term unemployment is to not let it start. Individuals and families need support at all levels and ages to ensure there is a culture of working to earn a living and a sense of pride in doing a good job.

Another important factor is what starts as becoming unemployed, can quickly become long term unemployment, which can then turn into generational unemployment where 2 or more generations in a family remain unemployed. This has a greater effect on society as it is much harder to break the cycle of unemployment once it becomes a culture.

The cycle can be broken at a number of levels. With the younger person they need to be given support, proper career advice and training, so they can enter a career that will have a future and be enthusiastic about expanding their knowledge and skills.

For the older person, similar support is needed. More emphasis is needed on restoring self-esteem and confidence. Too often they quickly take the attitude that there is no hope and no one really cares. They also need the career advice to look at new careers where they can use their existing skills and be given the opportunity to learn new ones.

There is a range of negative stereotypes attached to older workers that will need to be overcome.

“Stuck in their ways” is often the phrase used to describe older people who may in fact have experienced or observed a proposed change and may be offering reservations about its implementation. “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”.

“Slow to adapt and resistant to change” are also commonly used. The world of work has changed dramatically over the past 30 years and if this “resistance to change” was true then there would be no one working over the age of 30. Older workers will always embrace change given the right training.

Older people are not “difficult to retrain”- it is a fact that older people may take longer to learn new skills and techniques, however they will retain them and be more effective than a younger person.

It has been statistically proven that older workers are not “prone to ill health”, and in fact take less sick days than their younger colleagues.

On the positive side the older worker brings a wealth of experience to the workplace, in the form of actual work skills and life experience. They are known to be more reliable in work attendance and job function. The older worker, in general, will be more loyal to an employer and offer many years of reliable service. The older worker by definition will bring maturity to the workplace and be able to provide mentoring support and training to other employees.

Whatever the age, the workers and their families affected by these closures will need support and retraining for many years to come, this will not be a quick fix scenario.

Royal Commission Into Child Abuse

Malcolm Robinson

Director, Bower Place Complex Needs Clinic

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse may yet prove to be a turning point in the way child sexual abuse is thought about and managed in Australia, especially in relation to the intellectually and cognitively disabled. This is a comprehensive scouring of the way institutions that purport to protect and care for children have become implicated in the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. This is an endemic problem not confined to one or two State or Church organisations; this is pervasive evil on a spectacular scale.

A Royal Commission is established by government and has sweeping inquisitorial powers - the power to report with no power of consequence or remedy. It can robustly recommend further investigation and prosecution but cannot prosecute. Ordinary legal processes under the Westminster system, require evidence be brought to a Court (or Tribunal), constrained by rules that control the way information and opinion is provided to that Court; processes that require the parties to recognise the authority of that Court.

A Royal Commission has relaxed evidentiary constraints, extraordinary licence to leave its judicial bench and seek out information from any quarter, can hear as much lay evidence as it wishes, and can crisscross the boundary between common and expert knowledge.

Ordinary people have a voice through a Royal Commission. Parties implicated in a Royal Commission do not relinquish authority through the Commission's intrusion into their matters.

Whilst many may lament the Royal Commission's inability to prosecute, this paradoxically, enhances the potency of its inquisitorial power. As witnessed in Case Study 9: The St Ann's Catholic Special School, the Royal Commission has the authority to call people and institutions to account for their actions and decisions. The public roll call included the Catholic Archbishop, a former St Ann's Principal, a former Director of Catholic Education, Police, one victim and two family members.

This is fundamental to evidence about sexual abuse provided by the intellectually and cognitively disabled; evidence long disenfranchised before the Law, deemed to be of little value, unreliable, and easily disqualified under an adversarial system of justice - a system not yet fully across the implications of intellectual and cognitive inequality before the Courts. Diversionary Courts don't remedy that inequality but corral the disabled into lengthier legal processes.

This Royal Commission has already tipped the scales and given some intellectually disabled citizens a limited voice, directly, through their families, and through practitioners working therapeutically with them. St Ann's is a now well documented sexual abuse scandal involving more than thirty intellectually disabled victims, several perpetrators, and a pattern of complex, calculated and sinister exploitation that came to State and Church attention in 1991 and was promptly buried. The ring leader was allowed to leave South Australia, and victims were silenced for 10 years until it re-surfaced in 2001.

This has been an unmitigated management debacle by the State and Church agencies involved; not one can claim any credit and the matter remains unresolved in the Courts twenty-three years after first discovery. A Royal Commission was first called for in October 2003, and resisted by the institutions now subject to this enquiry. The treatment of these victims and their families has been openly cruel and heartless in the extreme. Support for counselling and treatment was cut in 2003, 2 years after this matter surfaced. Individual victims and family members have died in the meantime, and the key perpetrator is dead.

Systematic sexual abuse is seriously damaging to an individual's internal neurobiological functioning and their socio-relational interaction with the world around them. It corrupts innocence when innocence is differentiating and transforming. The abuse becomes isolated inside the victim's head and secreted from the outside. Intellectual disability imposes silence. A perpetrator's threats impose silence. The silence of the system imposes a never-ending silence. Silence and secrecy mask the crime and become the pathology that destroys lives.

The Royal Commission exercised its extraordinary powers of enquiry to seek out the truth about the sexual abuse at St Ann's. Victims who can, families, practitioners and other support workers applaud this initiative. Had they not done this, the sexual abuse at St Ann's between 1986 and 1991 would have remained buried, and the institutions involved never held to account.

Of deep significance is the matter of LH (his pseudonym at the Royal Commission). LH is thirty-eight and intellectually disabled. He was abused by three paedophiles, employing bizarre physical, psychological, visual and electronic practices with him and other St Ann's students.



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LH has now given compelling face to face evidence to the Royal Commission on three separate occasions, the last being the public hearing into St Ann's. It took great courage by LH to traverse the very difficult and complex process of providing public testimony.

The contradictions stare directly at us. The Church has clearly obstructed settlement, blaming the families, and externalising responsibility onto them. The Royal Commission sits in a Federal Court shadowed by the building programs that are the new St Aloysius College and Christian Brother's College; a contradiction whispered about in the halls and passageways outside the earshot of the Church hierarchy. Many are discomforted by this ostentatious spending that contrasts with Pell driven frugality over victim support. Perhaps the Royal Commission will extend its powers of enquiry to include a little forensic accounting.

A voice does not equal justice. This Royal Commission delivers a voice but it cannot deliver justice. The victims and families may find the justice they seek somewhat elusive and still in the hands of the State and Church. That is the way of a Royal Commission. No matter what this one recommends, it cannot require the parties to behave differently; it cannot extract apologies, bring the parties face to face, require reparation and restoration; or prevent the institutions externalizing blame. It cannot

make the Church settle the St Ann's matter any quicker than they intend to. The Prime Minister's relationship with Cardinal Pell must raise serious questions about justice; a perverse loop which mirrors the conflation of Church and State in South Australia when the Vicar General and Chair of the Social Inclusion Unit were one and the same man.

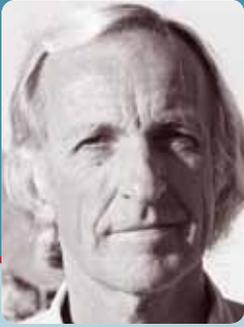
The American political philosopher, Rawls, was clear about the conceptualisation and practice of justice in a civilized society; that we are measured by the way we manage the unequal relationship between the citizen and the institutions of that society; that we must minimise and remedy the disadvantage that attends to those with the most unequal relationship with the Church, Police, Schools, Courts, and so on. St Ann's is an exemplar of this thinking. These victims and their families were (and still are) manifestly disadvantaged by their unequal relationship with the institutions of the Church and State, and through the endemic avoidance, inertia and perhaps corruption of those institutions.

Why?

Because it is there. Because they could. Because they felt like it. Because money is more important than people. Because these were voiceless victims.

The future of the St Ann's matter remains clouded by the Courts, the benevolence of the Church and the inertia of the State. SAPOL and earlier incarnations of Families SA and Disability SA are probably implicated. The Church continues its unconscionable legally sanctioned delaying tactics. In the meantime the victims and their family members get older and die.

Malcolm is a Social Worker and Family Therapist and the Director of the Bower Place Complex Needs Clinic. He worked clinically with many St Ann's victims and their families and was instrumental in bringing this matter before the Royal Commission. He directly supported LH in giving evidence.



Mandela is Gone – but Apartheid is Alive and Well in Australia

John Pilger

In the late 1960s, I was given an usual assignment by the London Daily Mirror's editor in chief, Hugh Cudlipp. I was to return to my homeland, Australia, and "discover what lies behind the sunny face". The Mirror had been an indefatigable campaigner against apartheid in South Africa, where I had reported from behind the "sunny face".

As an Australian, I had been welcomed into this bastion of white supremacy. "We admire you Aussies," people would say. "You know how to deal with your blacks."

I was offended, of course, but I also knew that only the Indian Ocean separated the racial attitudes of the two colonial nations. What I was not aware of was how the similarity caused such suffering among the original people of my own country.

Growing up, my school books had made clear, to quote one historian: "We are civilised, and they are not". I remember how a few talented Aboriginal Rugby League players were allowed their glory as long as they never mentioned their people. Eddie Gilbert, the great Aboriginal cricketer, the man who bowled Don Bradman for a duck, was to be prevented from playing again. That was not untypical.

In 1969, I flew to Alice Springs in the red heart of Australia and met Charlie Perkins. At a time when Aboriginal people were not even counted in the census - unlike the sheep - Charlie was only the second Aborigine to get a university degree. He had made good use of this distinction by leading "freedom rides" into racially segregated towns in the outback of New South Wales. He got the idea from the freedom riders who went into the Deep South of the United States.

We hired an old Ford, picked up Charlie's mother Hetti, an elder of the Aranda people, and headed for what Charlie described as "hell". This was Jay Creek, a "native reserve", where hundreds of Aboriginal people were corralled in conditions I had seen in Africa and India.

One outside tap trickled brown; there was no sanitation; the food, or "rations", was starch and sugar. The children had stick-thin legs and the distended bellies of malnutrition.

What struck me was the number of grieving mothers and grandmothers - bereft at the theft of children by the police and "welfare" authorities who, for years, had taken away

those infants with lighter skin. The policy was "assimilation". Today, this has changed only in name and rationale.

The boys would end up working on white-run farms, the girls as servants in middle-class homes. This was undeclared slave labour. They were known as the Stolen Generation. Hetti Perkins told me that when Charlie was an infant she had kept him tied to her back, and would hide whenever she heard the hoofs of the police horses. "They didn't get him," she said, with pride.

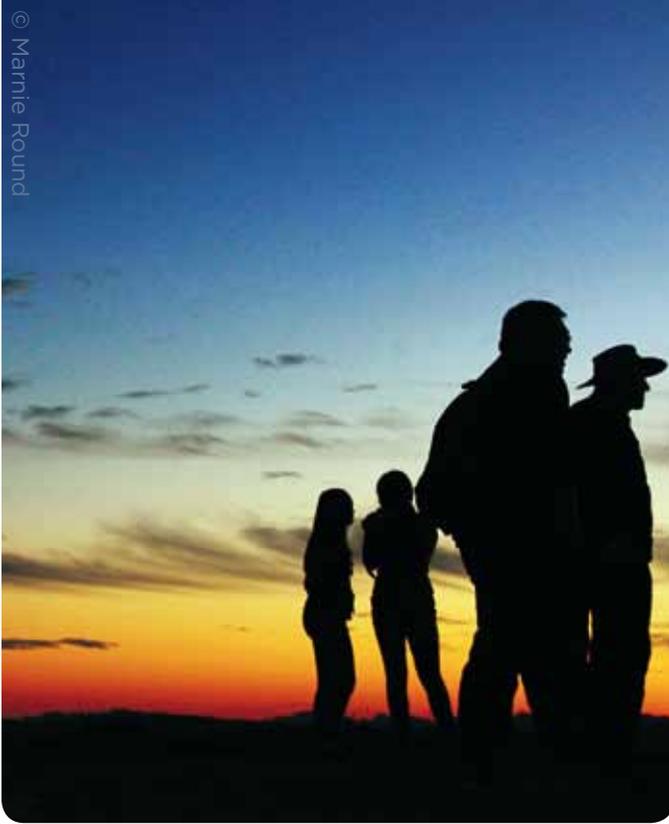
In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised for this crime against humanity. Older Aboriginal people were grateful; they believed that Australia's first people - the most enduring human presence on earth - might finally receive the justice and recognition they had been denied for 220 years.

What few of them heard was the postscript to Rudd's apology. "I want to be blunt about this," he said. "There will be no compensation." That 100,000 people deeply wronged and scarred by vicious racism - the product of a form of the eugenics movement with its links to fascism - would be given no opportunity to materially restore their lives was shocking, though not surprising.

Most governments in Canberra, conservative or Labor, have insinuated that the First Australians are to blame for their suffering and poverty.

When the Labor government in the 1980s promised "full restitution" and land rights, the powerful mining lobby went on the attack, spending millions campaigning on the theme that "the blacks" would "take over your beaches and barbies". The government capitulated, even though the lie was farcical; Aboriginal people comprise barely three per cent of the Australian population.

Today, Aboriginal children are again being stolen from their families. The bureaucratic words are "removed" for "child protection". By July 2012, there were 13,299 Aboriginal children in institutions or handed over to white families. Today, the theft of these children is now higher than at any time during the last century.



I have interviewed numerous specialists in child care who regard this as a second stolen generation. “Many of the kids never see their mothers and communities again,” Olga Havnen, the author of a report for the Northern Territory government, told me.

“In the Northern Territory, \$80 million was spent on surveillance and removing kids, and less than \$500,000 on supporting these impoverished families. Families are often given no warning and have no idea where their children are being taken. The reason given is neglect - which means poverty. This is destroying Aboriginal culture and is racist. If apartheid South Africa had done this, there would have been an uproar.”

In the town of Wilcannia, New South Wales, the life expectancy of Aborigines is 37 - lower than the Central African Republic, perhaps the poorest country on earth, currently racked by civil war. Wilcannia’s other distinction is that the Cuban government runs a literacy programme there, teaching young Aboriginal children to read and write. This is what the Cubans are famous for - in the world’s poorest countries. Australia is one of the world’s richest countries.

I filmed similar conditions 28 years ago when I made my first film about indigenous Australia, *The Secret Country*. Vince Forrester, an Aboriginal elder I interviewed then, appears in my new film, *Utopia*.

He guided me through a house in Mutitjulu where 32 people lived, mostly children, many of them suffering from otitis media, an infectious, entirely preventable disease that impairs hearing and speech. “Seventy per cent of the children in this house are partially deaf,” he said. Turning straight to my camera, he said, “Australians, this is what we call an abuse of human rights.”

The majority of Australians are rarely confronted with their nation’s dirtiest secret. In 2009, the respected United Nations Special Rapporteur, Professor James Anaya, witnessed similar conditions and described government “intervention” policies as racist. The then Minister for Indigenous Health, Tony Abbott, told him to “get a life” and stop listening to “the victim brigade”. Abbott is now the prime minister of Australia.

In Western Australia, minerals are being dug up from Aboriginal land and shipped to China for a profit of a billion dollars a week. In this, the richest, “booming” state, the prisons bulge with stricken Aboriginal people, including juveniles whose mothers stand at the prison gates, pleading for their release. The incarceration of black Australians here is eight times that of black South Africans during the last decade of apartheid.

When Nelson Mandela was buried, his struggle against apartheid was duly celebrated in Australia, though the irony was missing. Apartheid was defeated largely by a global campaign from which the South African regime never recovered.

Similar opprobrium has seldom found its mark in Australia, principally because the Aboriginal population is so small and Australian governments have been successful in dividing and co-opting a disparate leadership with gestures and vacuous promises.

That may well be changing. A resistance is growing, yet again, in the Aboriginal heartland, especially among the young. Unlike the US, Canada and New Zealand, which have made treaties with their first people, Australia has offered gestures often wrapped in the law.

However, in the 21st century the outside world is starting to pay attention. The spectre of Mandela’s South Africa is a warning.

John Pilger is an award winning Australian journalist and documentary film maker.

His latest documentary *Utopia* calls for a renewed struggle for justice and freedom for Australia’s first people. It has been screening throughout the country and will be shown on SBS TV later in 2014.

utopiajohnpilger.co.uk
johnpilger.com

This article was republished with express permission from John Pilger.

Compassion Builds a Better Nation Than Cruelty Ever Could

Kate Leaney

Manager, Welcome To Australia Welcome Centre

Manal Younous

Assistant National Director, Welcome To Australia

In the current climate of what is becoming increasingly evident as a political race to the bottom on the topic of refugees and asylum seekers, it's easy to feel despondent and hopeless about the presence of compassion in our nation. However, it's now more than ever that we need to hold onto the idea that compassion builds a better nation than cruelty ever could.

Over the past few months we've seen the conversation and actions surrounding those seeking asylum descend lower than we thought they ever could. We've robbed people of the protection, fairness and justice they, as human beings, deserve. We have seen the politics of fear and prejudice play havoc with people's lives.

There's no truer example of this than the story of Reza Berati; a name I'm sure many of us will never forget, unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons.

A 23 year old Feili Kurdish man, he was fleeing the persecution he faced in the country he tried to call his own. He sought refuge in a country that boasts about its commitment to giving everyone a "fair go". Risking everything to escape oppression in his homeland, only to be forced to live in a prison designed to break him, Reza died during a night of violence and terror while in Australia's "care". He turned to us for protection and we failed him. Regardless of the politics, his was a life worth valuing. This was a man in search of a better future; a future without fear, persecution and horror.

In Reza's story we see the Australia that the politics of fear and division has created. His was a fate we could have prevented, but didn't. His was a life that could have been so different, but wasn't. We'll never know what his future could have been but we owe it to his legacy to ensure a different future for the men, women and children in detention on Manus Island, Nauru, Christmas Island and the Australian mainland.

While most children in the Australian community play, laugh and dream, children in Christmas Island detention sit behind fences; are denied education, offered limited medical care and very little recreational time. Children whose parents have risked everything to give them a chance at life are being moved further and further away from that life. They sign their artworks not with their names but with their boat ID numbers. These children, 50% of whom are under 5 years old, are identifying as a number not a name.

If you dehumanize a person, you can get away with anything. Over a decade of damaging, negative rhetoric has brought us to a point where the dehumanisation of children is now a key part of asylum seeker policy.

Meanwhile on the mainland, those on bridging visas languish in limbo; with limited access to healthcare, no rights to work and no access to education for those over 18 years of age. Removing these simple avenues for people to engage in everyday society serves only to exacerbate their feelings of social isolation and to damage the social cohesion of our communities.



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When faced with incidences like these – and many more – we could be forgiven for wondering where hope lies. However, we see the Australia that is possible all around us, despite the damage being done by policies that don't represent our values of fairness and justice. Fortunately, we are surrounded by examples of people and communities who are exemplifying hope and compassion.

We see that hope lies in Adelaide's Welcome Centre, which, like many community-funded and volunteer-run enterprises like it, is providing the services and connections to community people new to Australia are crying out for. Every week at The Welcome Centre, people are shown an abundance of welcome, love and value through free English lessons, material aid, emergency relief, friendship and social support. The Welcome Centre aims to be a place of refuge and comfort amongst the uncertainty felt by those seeking asylum, which is reflected in the way our new friends describe the centre as "home" and the volunteers as "family".

We see that hope lies in the First Home Project, an innovative Perth based project, where a local family has opened their hearts to other families calling Perth home for the first time. The First Home Project story is one of alternative economics and amazing compassion for refugees by crowd sourcing a "community mortgage" of \$600,000 in just 14 days to enable the property to be purchased. Now that the project is underway and families have moved in to their new homes, they are not only provided with practical support in terms of providing a roof over their heads and a rental history to assist in sourcing their next home, but generously offered a social network of friendship and belonging.

We see that hope lies with the response to Reza Berati's death, which saw thousands of Australians flock to hundreds of candlelit vigils nationwide remembering a man they never knew but wished they'd had a chance to meet.

We see that hope lies with thousands of Australians daily engaging in practical acts of welcome in their schools, workplaces, communities and places of worship. We know that belonging is a gift given by a community that has been set free from fear.

My dream is that we, as a nation, learn to respond to those seeking our compassion, not with mistrust and fear, but with love and respect. My dream is for words like welcome, compassion, life and hope to be reflected again in our national values. I dream that we'll build, together, the Australia that we could be proud of.

I invite you to dream with me:
welcometoaustralia.org.au

The Welcome Centre is located at 100 Drayton Street, Bowden (look for the Activate SA building).

The Welcome Centre is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am to 4pm and Wednesdays from 10am to 6pm.

The SACOSS Election Campaign

SACOSS

The South Australian state election is over and we now look forward to working with the returned Weatherill government (as we would work with any government) to advance the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

It is difficult to assess SACOSS' election campaign. From the middle of last year we developed an ambitious campaign that sought to:

- Frame the election debate by putting the need for a sustainable revenue base to pay for vital services at the centre of the campaign;
- Promote and get commitment to specific policy initiatives across a range of social justice areas; and,
- Get outcomes for the sector in areas of better contracting and red tape reduction.

These goals all came together in a comprehensive platform which we promoted to all parties during the election campaign.

Given that we published an election report card in *The Advertiser* in the final week of the campaign, and after the election one of the key people who would decide the next government (Geoff Brock) announced to the media that he wanted to consult SACOSS (among others) as part of his decision making process, we clearly made some impact in the election campaign.

Our message around taxes and the need for a sustainable revenue base was viewed as credible in the media and the Premier publicly acknowledged that there was a real issue with the revenue base. Taxes actually became a key issue in the campaign and a point of difference between the parties. We did not get our ultimate goal of bipartisan support as the Liberals promised a range of tax cuts without any balancing measures to restore lost revenue, but our tax campaign was important advocacy underpinning vital services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

While we got more publicity than expected on tax issues, we struggled to get profile on other issues. The launch of our Cost of Living Relief Package in December was overwhelmed by the announcement later the same day of Holden's closure, but by the end of the campaign there were significant bi-partisan outcomes on energy concessions and the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme. Both parties also addressed other cost of living issues. Labor committed to some of our policies initiatives, while much of Liberal's relief package was aimed at middle-SA, rather than targeted to the most vulnerable households. These differences were reflected in our election report card.

Unfortunately, with limited resources we were unable to fully promote much of the rest of our platform, although building on work being done in the Human Services Partnership Forum, the Labor Party also promised some significant red tape reduction reforms.

Overall, through our platform, media work and in negotiations around our report card, as well as through our and others' previous campaign efforts, the new Labor government has committed to:

- \$50 pa increase in the energy concession for low income customers
- \$2.5m increase in the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme
- Establishment of a Good Money shopfront for financial services for low income South Australians (including NILS debt consolidation)
- Implementation of agreed funding for the Consumer Credit Legal Services
- Transfer of title of 4,000 Housing SA houses to the community housing sector
- A new Mental Health Plan for SA
- 3+3+3 as the default length of service contracts with 6 months' notice of whether long term contracts will be renewed
- Implementation of simple, low risk grant processes for contracts under \$100,000
- Government-wide grant guidelines to reduce red tape.

Obviously there is more work to do with the government to make these commitments a reality, but these are significant outcomes which will make a difference for struggling households.

continued overleaf →

(ADVERTISEMENT)

SA State Election

PARTY REPORT CARD

See where the major parties stand on the issues that matter

SACOSS has developed a platform of election policies to help vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians. Our Report Card scores the parties on those policies.



LABOR

LIBERAL

A Fair & Sustainable Revenue Base	Addressing the revenue problem to ensure that there is money to fund vital services	★	
Cost of Living Relief	Assisting low income households to meet cost of living pressures	★★★	★★
Housing	Increasing and improving access to affordable housing and social housing	★★	★
Health	Focusing on community and preventative health, and a plan for mental health services	★	★
Social & Economic Participation	Fixing the child protection system and supporting asylum seekers in our community	★	★
Justice	Having fewer people in prison and ensuring supports are in place to help people get back on the straight and narrow	★★	★★
Community Sector Support	Reducing red tape and making better contract arrangements so we can get on with delivering services to people	★★★	★

What about the other parties?

Of the other current parliamentary parties, the Greens position appears closest to SACOSS' big concern about ensuring a fair and sustainable tax base, while Family First, Dignity for Disability and the Xenophon team seek to achieve a sustainable revenue base through economic growth and cutting waste. These are good goals, but may not be enough to fix the revenue problem.

For full details on all the policies, see sacoss.org.au/party-report-card

SACOSS.ORG.AU

The South Australian Council of Social Service invites you to view the detailed election party report card on our website

← from previous page

Our campaign was non-partisan and our assessment of the parties in the final week of the campaign was fair and transparent. It was not and did not pretend to be an analysis of all Government and Opposition policies, or of who would be the best government. It did not direct anyone how to vote. It simply provided a report on how the parties had responded to our platform. We published a simplified two-party version in *The Advertiser*, while our website contained the full report card on all parliamentary parties' responses to our platform, as well as links to party policy statements and both major parties' formal responses to our platform.

Despite this level of detail and transparency, publishing a report card in the last week of an election is inevitably controversial. We encourage anyone who is interested to go to the SACOSS website and read the two major parties' responses and see the detail underpinning our assessments.

Overall, we implemented our election campaign broadly as planned and achieved some good policy outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Our key task now is to work with the Government to see its policy commitments implemented. However, in running such a busy and high-pressure campaign we also came up against some of our own organisational limitations, and so we have a number of important internal things to address to further build our capacity and to continue to be an effective voice in the future.

Our Election Timeline

Preliminaries – mid 2013

- Development of campaign platform and strategy
- Board & Policy Council sign-off
- Letter to SACOSS members

November 2013

- 6 November: Housing Cost of Living Report launched
- Meetings with Parties: Greens, D4D, Liberal, Anne Bressington, Family First, Labor
- 25 November: AGM Launch of Tax Campaign and website

December 2013

- Two-week tax advertising (5aa, InDaily)
- 11 December: Cost of Living Package Launched

January 2014

- SACOSS News Election issue published
- Letters to all major party lower house candidates re tax
- 20 January: Asylum seeker policy launched
- 29 January: 18,775 tax postcards in Messenger in Bright and Morialta
- 30 January: Cost of Living Report launch (concessions)

February 2014

- 10 February: Policy Report Card on web
- 11 February: SACOSS Conference & Tax Media
- 12 February: 18,750 tax postcards in Messenger in Dunstan and Cheltenham
- 28 February: Write to all parties in Upper House re tax pledge

March 2014

- 5 March: SACOSS Tax Report Launch
- 12 March: Launch of Policy Report Card
- 17 March – Post-election letters to Such & Brock
- 17-21 March – Meetings/conversations with Premier, Opposition Leader and Geoff Brock
- 20 March – Media re election

The SACOSS Campaign Numbers

- Approx 40 media stories, comments or references to SACOSS' campaign
- 3 Advertiser opinion pieces
- 4 Letters to the Messenger Press Editor published
- 3 research reports published
- 1 major conference
- Approx 20 Small Change radio pieces on election issues
- Over 5,000 visits to our website during the campaign
- Countless Tweets to 1100 followers
- 19 Facebook election posts
- Lots of meetings and phone calls to MPs and staffers



Cost of Living Update No. 17

Dr Greg Ogle

SACOSS Senior Policy & Research Analyst

In January SACOSS published its latest *Cost of Living Update* based on data from the December Quarter in 2013.

The ABS Selected Living Cost Indexes showed in that quarter the cost of living went up by 0.6% for aged pensioners and other welfare recipients. Without the rapidly rising utilities costs of previous years, this was a modest rise and below the general inflation rate.

However those on base level income support payments, were still \$5 a week worse off than at the same time last year. This is in keeping with the longer term trends identified in SACOSS *Updates* which consistently show that lowest income households are being hit hardest by cost of living pressures.

The December Quarter *Update* provided further evidence of this trend by focusing on concessions and income supports. These concessions and payments provide vital support for people who are struggling with particular necessary expenditures, but our analysis showed that many of the key government concessions have failed to keep pace with rapidly rising prices.

The Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS - assistance for rural and remote patients to travel for specialist medical attention) and the SA Taxi Subsidy Service (SATTS - access cabs for people with disabilities) rates have not increased at all while relevant prices have risen by between 15% and 21%.

Energy and water concessions have also lagged behind increasing prices.

The failure to keep pace with prices effectively means that the value of the concession erodes over time. For instance, if you use a wheelchair and need an access cab during the day, five years ago you could go 26km before the SATSS subsidy ran out. Now you can only go 20kms before reaching the scheme's cap - you pay full fare for the remainder of the trip, which is pretty tough when you simply don't have the alternative transport options that many others have.

These sorts of concessions are essential to ensuring that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society have access to basic services like energy, water, health and transport.

For this reason, the call to increase and properly index concessions was central to the 11 point Cost of Living Relief Package SACOSS put forward in the state election. <http://www.sacoss.org.au/cost-living-relief>

We are pleased to say that both major parties promised increases in the concession for energy consumers, and increases to the PATS subsidy for rural and regional patients.

The returning Weatherill government has promised a \$2.5m increase in the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme and \$50 pa increase in the energy concession for low income customers.

SACOSS looks forward to seeing these election promises implemented and will continue to advocate for more support to relieve cost of living pressures for low income households.

Cost of Living Changes and State Government Concessions, December 2008-2013

Cost of Living Area	Price Increase %	Relevant Concession Payment	% Increase
Housing			
• Electricity	68.1	SA Electricity Concession	37.5
• Water & Sewerage	60.0	SA Water Concession	47.5
• Water & Sewerage	60.0	SA Sewerage Concession	15.8
Travel Accommodation	17.7	PATS Accommodation Subsidy	0.0
Transport			
• Fuel	21.3	PATS fuel subsidy	0.0
• Transport Fares	15.2	SA Transport Subsidy Scheme	0.0

SACOSS 2014 Conference: Taxing Times – Sustaining Vital Services Overview



Dr Greg Ogle
SACOSS Senior Policy
& Research Analyst



Vivian Clark
SACOSS Events Coordinator

The SACOSS 2014 Conference: Taxing Times – Sustaining Vital Services was both the traditional chance for our sector to come together and discuss issues of importance in the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, but also a key part of SACOSS' campaign in the lead up to the state election on 15 March.

We now all know the election outcome, but at the time of the conference the outcome was very much up for grabs with both major parties vying for votes. At the same time SACOSS was busy publicising our election platform, and encouraging discussion on difficult and sometimes complex issues, including taxation and the dwindling SA government revenue. (For a recap of our election platform and specific asks, see SACOSS News Summer 2014, State Election Edition, p.9)

The conference covered many of the broad areas of our election platform and focused particularly on red tape reduction, cost of living and on tax issues. The tone was set by keynote speaker, Richard Denniss from The Australia Institute who noted that having low taxes is a legitimate choice in a democracy – we can choose to have the American health system or the social services of third world countries, but if we want to have better services we will need to collect the taxes to pay for them.

Richard Denniss and many of the speakers that followed addressed issues around making the tax system fairer and more efficient, and the day seemed successful in articulating why tax and revenue issues matter to our sector and the people we serve. As the SACOSS campaign slogan said, “Without Taxes, Vital Services Disappear”, and our 30-second video advert launched at the conference was well received. (Available to view at www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5mw-Mw3tEw)

There were two conference sessions addressing how government should partner with our sector and what better contracting of services would like, as well as insights from what contracting and red tape reduction looks like from business and local government perspectives. It also emerged that the Small Business Commissioner, who has legislated power to advocate and resolve disputes with government over contracting, also has coverage of our sector and would be willing to take up issues on our behalf.

www.sasbc.sa.gov.au/about_us/overview

In the afternoon Ben Phillips from the NATSEM at the University of Canberra outlined what's been happening with cost of living pressures. He argued that for most average households, rising costs have been more than met by increases in income, so the cost of living pressures are more about perception than actual dollars. However, this does not apply to those whose incomes have not risen or who are pegged at CPI. In reply SACOSS' cost of living researcher Dr Greg Ogle noted that that is why SACOSS' work and our election Cost of Living Relief Package were directed at services to low income households rather than price controls.



The conference ended with a panel of Cassandra Goldie (ACOSS), Nigel McBride (Business SA), Joe Szakacs (SA Unions) and Wendy Campana (LGA) addressing the issues covered in our election platform. Unsurprisingly, there was not total agreement about either the SACOSS platform or with each other, but there was agreement about the urgent need to address revenue issues and red tape reduction.

In a one-day conference it is impossible to cover all the areas of concern to our sector, or even all the aspects of SACOSS' election platform. However, the conference did provide an important opportunity to escape both the day to day busyness of our work and the 43 degree temperatures outside to focus on the bigger issues that will impact on our sector and on the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in South Australia.

SACOSS is proud to acknowledge the support of the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), Platinum Sponsors of the SACOSS 2014 Conference: Taxing Times – Sustaining Vital Services.

Conference photos

- 1 **Ben Phillips**
Principal Research Fellow, NATSEM
- 2 **Dr Richard Denniss**
Executive Director, The Australia Institute
addresses the conference.
- 3 **Ross Womersley**
SACOSS Executive Director
- 4 L-R **Dr Richard Denniss**
Executive Director, The Australia Institute
Dr Cassandra Goldie
CEO, Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- 5 **Victoria Purman**
Account Director SA, Essential Media Communications





Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Update

Kate Kameniar
Healthy Workers Adviser

Good nutrition is essential throughout life to promote health and prevent chronic diseases such as Type 2 Diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The Australian Dietary Guidelines for healthy eating recommends we eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables a day, however most Australian's eat only half this amount. Given we spend about a third of our lives at work, having a supportive healthy eating environment where healthy food and drink options are available in the workplace is particularly important.

The Workplace Fruit N Veg Challenge was a joint initiative of SACOSS, the Australian Services Union and Aged and Community Services SA & NT. Workplaces from the non-government health, aged care and community services sector took on the challenge to promote fruit and veg in the workplace during February.

We had a fantastic response and some great initiatives including, replacing the biscuit tin with a fruit bowl, shared staff lunches, recipe swaps, and cookbooks. Congratulations to the Central Domestic Violence Service who won the first prize of \$500 to go towards its next healthy workplace initiative, and Sammy D Foundation which won second prize of \$100 worth of fruit delivered to the workplace.

Central Domestic Violence Service AlphaFruitAbles – 1st prize winner

The AlphaFruitAbles project was open to all staff at the Western Adelaide Domestic Violence Service with the goals to increase staff intake of fruit and veg in the workplace through shared lunches, increase staff awareness of a wide variety of fruit and veg, and to provide staff (and clients) with access to new, creative and healthy recipes incorporating different fruits and vegetables.

The 10 staff members were divided into two teams. Each Wednesday (to coincide with team meetings) the teams alternated responsibility for providing a shared lunch. Each team member created a dish with the main ingredient being a 'hero' fruit or vegetable starting with A in week 1, B in week 2, and so forth. Staff lunches were held weekly during February and the team have committed to continuing the challenge fortnightly until they reach the letter "z." During the challenge staff brought in their recipes and took photos of the meals to put together in a healthy recipe book that would be made available to all staff and clients. Additionally staff incorporated weekly juice days, where each staff brought in a fruit to be added to the blender to make juice to share.

The Central Domestic Violence Service have committed to continuing the AlphaFruitAbles project to the end of the year. The prize money will go towards equipping the kitchen when they move into new premises.



Sammy D Foundation Fabulous 5&2 February – 2nd prize winner

The goals of the Sammy D Foundation's "Fabulous 5&2 February" were to increase consumption of fruit and vegetables in the workplace and promote healthier lunch choices by making fresh fruit and vegetables readily available for staff.

Using the staff kitty they had implemented during the Healthy Workers Workplace Physical Activity Challenge in October 2013, the team purchased ingredients, including fruit for snacks and salad and vegetable ingredients for shared healthy lunches, and created daily lunch menus using recipes from the Heart Foundation website. A staff roster was developed to nominate a responsible person to purchase ingredients each week. A leader board was created to record the number of servings of fruit and vegetables staff were eating. Posters promoting the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables were displayed.

All office staff participated and looked forward to the new recipes each day. The leader board was a great way to record how staff were tracking and support each other to get enough serves each day. Sammy D Foundation are continuing their kitty and shopping roster for shared lunches and fruit.

What we eat is a matter of personal choice, but we can influence access to food so that healthier foods are easier choices!

Many organisations are now recognising the importance of healthy catering and putting policies and guidelines in place. Providing healthy catering is a great way to show a sense of care and value for your staff, volunteers and guests, supporting them to eat healthily. It can also be a lot of fun and there are lots of great healthier options available these days.

In 2013 we worked with the HELPP (Healthy Eating Local Policies and Programs) team at Flinders University Nutrition & Dietetics to produce a series of short, video resources for workplaces, which are available on the SACOSS website.

sacoss.org.au/resources

Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Initiative

The Healthy Workers Healthy Futures initiative is an SA Health strategy funded by the Australian Government under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. The initiative encourages managers and workers to create workplaces that foster and support healthy lifestyles. For guidance and support developing health eating policies and programs in the workplace please contact SACOSS Healthy Workers Adviser Kate Kameniar phone (08) 8305 4231 or email katek@sacoss.org.au



Small Change

Marnie Round
SACOSS
Communications Officer



Small Change is SACOSS' weekly radio program that shares stories of achievement, innovation, and trying times, Tuesdays at 6pm on Radio Adelaide. Here are some podcast highlights from the past few months:

Detroit Rock City

As we say goodbye to Australia's car making industry with Holden's 2017 departure looming, what are we in for? Rosemary Sarri, Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan, joined us to talk about what we can learn from the experiences of Detroit -Motown by name, music and industry - until the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/detroit-rock-city/

Close The Gap

While most Australians have one of the highest life expectancy rates in the world, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can expect to live 10 to 17 years less than other Australians. Infant mortality is twice the rate for babies born to Aboriginal mothers, and rates of preventable illness like heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes are also disproportionately high for our first peoples.

To air our support for National Close The Gap Day we spoke to Mary Buckskin from the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (ACHSA), and Justin Mohamed from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

radio.adelaide.edu.au/close-the-gap-ahcsa/
radio.adelaide.edu.au/close-the-gap-naccho/

Unmasking Austerity

The Don Dunstan Foundation and the Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre presented a panel forum in Adelaide on austerity in light of the Commonwealth Government's Audit Commission report. Jamie Peck is Canada Research Chair in Urban & Regional Political Economy and Professor of Geography at the University of British Columbia. He joined Small Change to speak about the impacts of austerity around the world and what it could mean for Australia if implemented.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/unmasking-austerity/

Friendship and FUSE

On the eve of the 60th Anniversary of Australia ratifying the UN Refugee Convention we looked at some of the great programs in our communities working to welcome and assist asylum seekers and refugees settling in South Australia.

Baptist Care's FUSE Mentoring Program works to assist refugees and asylum seekers settling into Adelaide by linking them up with volunteer 'mentors'. Bryan Hughes is the FUSE Mentoring Coordinator and he told us more about the program and the benefits it's having for mentees and mentors.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/90485/

Culture and Identity

Dr Ase Ottosson from the Australian National University is an anthropologist and former journalist, currently undertaking research in Central Australia on how people of different cultural backgrounds experience their difference and similarities in the same place.

In light of various celebrations, protests and commentary that surround the 26th of January in Australia, Dr Ottosson spoke to us in two parts about how and why cultural identity has formed, and the influence that mass media can have on the perpetuation of images and ideals.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/culture-identity-part-1/
radio.adelaide.edu.au/culture-identity-part-2/

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The Good Life: What Makes a Life Worth Living?

Reviewed by Phil Saunders

The Good Life is about morals and ethics. It is about what drives us as humans, what binds us together as a community of humans.

The good life, says Mackay, is one defined by our capacity for selflessness, the quality of our relationships and our willingness to connect with others in a useful way, not our security, wealth, status, postcode, career, success or levels of happiness. We are by nature social creatures, born to relate to each other, to foster community by acknowledging and responding to each other's needs, to restrain our self-interest and curb excess competitiveness.

This is a conversation based on Mackay's many consultations with ordinary Australians, and on his reflections on reading a number of philosophers, modern and ancient.

It is illustrated by case studies, which are sometimes amusing, sometimes light-hearted and sometimes poignant.

The book's themes are based on the Golden Rule, that is, treating others as we would wish to be treated, the life lived for others and contributing to the common good and the cultural and genetic transfers that make this part of our makeup.

He explores the place of happiness, certainty, fundamentalism, infantilism, planning, religion, luck and the 'utopia complex'. There are references to sound bite politics and everything being a brand. He discusses the role of self-control and common sense at a time when it seems our entire culture runs on the promotion of self-esteem and feeling good about yourself, regardless of whether you've done anything to warrant such feelings.

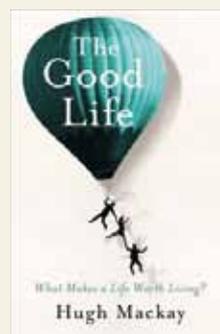
We are, however flawed. Mackay addresses the dilemma of lives falling short of adhering to the Golden Rule. He talks about 'the dark side' of our natures, the contradictions in all of us. We can be selfish as well as selfless, competitive as well as cooperative. Circumstances can bring out the worst in us. The relentless reinforcement of the dark side of our nature increases the potential for bad people to emerge.

In describing a person's life, we say they have lived a full life, a charmed life, a productive life, a fortunate life, an authentic life, an exciting life, a blameless life, a passionate life or a creative life. But, asks Mackay, is this accidental, luck rather than good behaviour; might it just be ruthless self-serving and destructive to others; is it glamour without goodness; what has been its focus; what in the end, was the measure of its contribution to the common good?

Mackay argues that the morality of the good life is about cooperation, mutual responsibility, a sense of community and egalitarianism. It is about the strong supporting the weak, the haves sharing their prosperity with the have-nots, the able offering guidance and support to the less able. It is not about the poor or needy 'deserving' of support. The need defines our moral duty. You can't lead a good life on your own.

In pondering the good life there are a number of questions that come to mind. How does being selfish, or selfless, influence my political views? How does it determine whether I want a market economy or a market society, 'small government' or an interventionist one? Do political statements such as, "there is no such thing as society" and "I didn't go into parliament for social issues" underestimate the electorate's inherent understanding of the good life as outlined by Mackay? Does "what's in it for me" really work in political salesmanship when this type of market transaction devalues one's sense of citizenship?

In the end, argues Mackay, it is how we reconcile the cooperative and competitive, the selfless and selfish sides of our nature that determines the kind of society we become.



The Good Life:
What makes a Life Worth Living?
Hugh Mackay

Pan Macmillan Australia, 2013
RRP \$29.99

News from Marjorie Black House

Since the last edition, SACOSS has been working on a number of issues and submissions, including:

- State Election Campaign
- Taxing Times, Sustaining Vital Services Conference
- Submission of SACOSS response to *Building a Stronger Society: a discussion paper on social impact investment*, February 2014
- Produced soon to be released report on retail energy market contracts since price deregulation.
- Undertook field trip to ACT Energy and Water Hardship Program for disconnections

And also in the pipeline...

- SACOSS Member Survey
- Major research study on people at risk of utilities disconnection
- Hardship and Affordability Conference (May 12)
- National Consumer Roundtable on Energy (March 27,28 and June 19,20)

Get involved with SACOSS

Help us enhance the voice of the community on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians. If you aren't already, become a SACOSS member today sacoss.org.au/membership

SACOSS sends out a fortnightly eBulletin to our members listing brief descriptions of upcoming events, job vacancies, and other items relevant to the community services sector. You can now subscribe to the eBulletin and submit entries via our new website.

Visit sacoss.org.au/ebulletin for all the details.

SACOSS on Twitter and Facebook

It's not all LOL OMG FOMO here you know...follow us on Twitter [@SACOSS](https://twitter.com/SACOSS)

And get your mouse-clicking finger on Facebook and LIKE us at facebook.com/SACOSS

SACOSS News Winter edition

The Winter SACOSS News will be a spotlight on law and justice. If you'd like to contribute to it, please contact SACOSS Communications Officer Marnie Round at marnie@sacoss.org.au

Deadline for advertising and submissions is Monday 1 July, 2014

ACOSS National Conference 2014 Global problems, local solutions: Tackling inequality in Australia & beyond

Registrations for the 2014 ACOSS National Conference are now open.

Date Wednesday 11 – Thursday 12 June, 2014
Location Brisbane, QLD
conference.acoss.org.au

Each year ACOSS holds its annual conference, creating a meeting place for the community sector to spark discussion and promote action to address poverty and inequality in Australia.

In 2014, with the G20 on our doorstep, the ACOSS conference will shine a light on the problem of growing inequality and initiatives at home and abroad to address the inequality challenge.

The program will feature international guest speakers and Australian leaders addressing the latest ideas and directions impacting public policy and the community sector in Australia. Program updates will be announced soon.

The conference will also provide a unique opportunity to engage with the work of the Civil Society 20 (C20) to promote an inclusive growth agenda both to the G20 and the Australian government.

Come and join the discussion in Brisbane and share your ideas to tackle poverty in Australia.

SACOSS Room Hire

Need a space for your
next workshop, meeting
or small gathering?

SACOSS has two rooms available for hire at the rear of the offices of Marjorie Black House, 47 King William Rd, Unley.

The Marjorie Black Community Room can seat approximately 60. Facilities include: laptop, data projector, electronic whiteboard, hearing loop and kitchenette. The Daphne Gum quiet room comfortably seats up to 10.

For more information and booking details visit sacoss.org.au/room-hire or contact Vivian Clark at vivian@sacoss.org.au

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