

Rebuilding Community Labor – stronger supporters, stronger members





For a movement born marching under the banner 'The Unity of Labour is the Hope of the World', we have offered little hope or unity in recent times.

Radio and the Model T Ford hadn't been invented in the 1890's, the last time we held this few seats in the NSW Parliament.

At that time, Labor was an insurgent political force with a clear mission, yet to form Government. We need to recover the clarity of purpose and the urgency that drove Labor in those early days.

It will take all of us to share the burden of rebuilding NSW Labor.

It is no tougher than the burden that the pioneers of Labor in the 1890's chose to shoulder: the creation of a better, fairer world.

What could you say about these last four years to those first unionists who slogged their way across NSW, sleeping rough, far from their families, in those early days of Labor?

As we face one of NSW Labor's darkest hours, we need to return to Labor's central values and platform – the needs of working people - and an inclusive, humanitarian vision.

We need to grow the Labor party, calling on people of good will to join us to help restore Labor.

We need to urgently reform the culture and the structure of NSW Labor, starting at our Annual Conference on July the 9th and 10th.

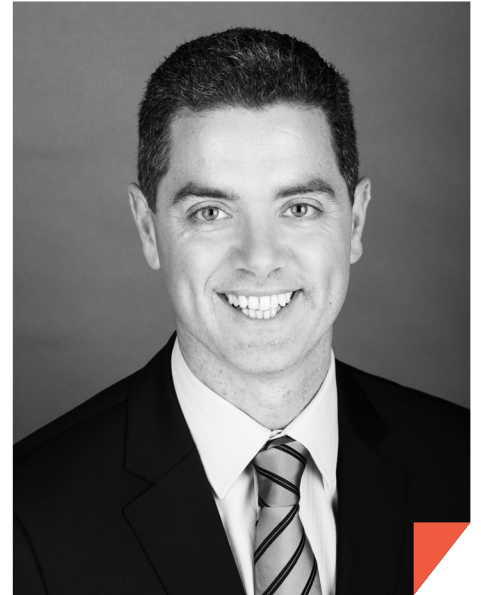
The National Review authored by Carr, Faulkner and Bracks provides a strong platform for reform. I ask for your support to argue the case for reform as together we rebuild NSW Labor.

This paper is designed as a contribution to the discussion about the long reform task the Party has ahead.

I argue for a Community Labor model, which suits the fast-paced modern political environment we face while drawing on our best traditions.

I welcome your views, and look forward to working with you to tackle these tasks over the coming months and years.

John Graham
Assistant General Secretary





A Charter for Community Labor

1. We need a bigger Labor party

We recognise that the Labor party is at a turning point where we either rebuild its membership base or accept it is a parliamentary party and is no longer a broader labour movement.

2. We need to return to Labor's central values and Platform

The needs of working people and an inclusive, humanitarian Labor vision.

3. We need to strengthen Labor's relationship with unions and their members

Australian unions represent 2 million Australian workers and their families. Labor and unions need to strengthen a relationship built upon organising, community action and building a better life for working Australians.

4. We need to engage our members

We need to embrace direct election for key leadership positions within the Labor party and find ways to involve our members in Party building, policy making and campaigns.

5. We need to engage Labor supporters

The modern campaign and media environment require us to maintain contact with a far greater number of our supporters. We need to ask them to organise with us.

6. We need to strengthen Labor's policy development

We should supplement Labor's conference policy process with a more interactive policy forum, to promote policy dialogue between the Parliamentary party, the broader Party and the community.

7. We need to reinvent Labor's campaign model

Donations reform has made redundant the old Labor campaign model of paid TV and paid mail. We will rely once again on community organising to win elections. The NSW Branch implemented a mobilisation strategy at this election which, while still new, represents a positive future direction for the party.

8. We need to refresh Labor's training agenda

NSW Labor should urgently expand its training and education capability. We should train community leaders, future candidates and progressive organisations from our suburbs and regions in the most modern rigorous campaigning techniques so that we build a grassroots campaigning movement.



From the McKell model to Community Labor

NSW Labor on March 26th suffered a near death experience. It is worth recapping briefly on events:

- Labor lost thirty five seats across the two houses of parliament.
- It holds just twenty of ninety three seats in the NSW Legislative Assembly. It last held this few seats in 1898.
- Our share of the vote was only 25.7%. It was last this low in 1904.
- 537,913 people who voted Labor four years ago chose not to do so in 2011.
- While the state-wide swing was a record 16.5% across the state, it was above 20% in twelve Labor held seats, all but one of which were in the Sydney basin.

The results showed the benefit of strong, locally grounded active campaigns:

- Strong local Labor campaigns were able to record swings as low as 6.6%, and dramatically outperformed the state-wide swing, in seats such as Marrickville, Monaro, Balmain, Cessnock and Macquarie Fields.
- Strong Labor candidates were able to outperform the Labor vote in their area by up to 12%.

An electoral result of this magnitude must force a fundamental rethink for NSW Labor.

On the night of the NSW election Labor MLC Luke Foley argued this was not the end of a sixteen year government; it was the end of a seventy year McKell model of government, during which Labor held government for fifty two of those years.

The McKell model was characterised by the attributes that originated in McKell's government, including a settlement between the Party and the Government that recognised that the Government would be allowed to lead, but that it would persuade the Party to follow it. Contentious issues would be hammered out between the leaderships of the Parliamentary Party and the Party behind closed doors. It was a subtle dialogue between the leaderships of the Party and the Parliamentary Party.



It was Labor's edge for seventy years - providing a model of responsible government. It was a model that left the governing to the Parliamentary Party. The Labor Party's policy organs for that period have more often than not been called upon to defend the approach of the Government of the day.

Ultimately the McKell model descended to the worst of Tammany Hall. We subjected the McKell model to attack with years of self indulgence, ultimately breaking it during the electricity conference of 2008. Iemma and Costa went where no McKell, Wran or Carr had ever gone, in open defiance of a party they had failed to persuade.

The McKell model will not survive in its present form, as we rebuild.

At the heart of the McKell model is a centralisation of politics which is out of step with the new politics of dialogue and engagement now necessary to mobilise a much broader range of supporters.

We need to broaden the franchise of the McKell model, by requiring the Party to engage more strongly with its supporters.

We need to retain its spirit of compromise, but include the community in a far more open discussion. Previously Government has taken responsibility for maintaining the relationship with the broader community. Now both the Party and the Government must see it as their role, if we are to adopt to the demands of the modern political environment.

Twenty first century politics requires a far reaching and rapid sharing of information with a party's supporters. We need to reach out

and engage with our supporters asking for their support, and requesting their opinion.

Increasingly, that broad range of supporters is necessary to campaign and win.

Labor should embrace a Community Labor model, returning to its roots, where the Labor Party:

- Builds a bigger party, and focuses on the participation of its members, with a renewed focus on community organising.
- Sets a target for growth and for the number of community organisers it trains, to open up its branch network to the community.
- The members of the Parliamentary Party play a leading role in community organising, along with branch and trade union members and supporters.
- Focuses on the public interest, returning to its central values and Platform.
- Conducts election campaigns in conjunction with large scale mobilisations of supporters, including those who are not party members.
- Recognises that the campaign finance laws have changed and shifts its fundraising effort to rely more on small individual, rather than large corporate, donations.
- Opens up its policy process with a more deliberative and consensus based Policy forum, and takes key policies out to plebiscites of its members.
- Invites supporters to participate in community preselections.
- Provides information to its supporters free, and online.
- Has branches that work as a part of their community, and where both branches and the Parliamentary Party find innovative ways to solicit and harness community opinion.
- Focuses in all three of the areas originally envisaged in the Labor Principles of Action – government, the industrial movement and the community.

This Community Labor model is suited to the fast paced, modern media and campaign environment.

It draws its strengths from Labor's traditions.



1. We need a bigger Labor party

At the heart of the Carr/Faulkner/Bracks national review with its ninety seven recommendations, lies one view that is the key to Labor's future path - its call for growth in the size of the Labor party.

The review sets out some of the facts that underpin Labor's decline - a record low vote share, booths not staffed in former Labor towns and dramatically falling membership.

Rodney Cavalier published figures showing that NSW Labor's membership had fallen to 15,385 in September 2009. The steady decline of recent years has been exceeded by the number of our members who did not renew this year.

Perhaps it may be possible to rebuild Labor without a membership base, in the style of some other Parliamentary parties here and abroad. It would be a very different Labor party.

That is the choice we now face, between existing simply as a parliamentary party or as a broader labour movement.

Growth in the Party - genuine growth - will be resisted in many quarters. But we simply must regrow our member and supporter networks if we are to continue as we have as a movement for the last one hundred and twenty years.

Such a decision would reflect the choice that the Australian union movement has consciously made over the last decade. It chose to confront its declining power with a return to growth and to organising. This required tough choices for unions – choices about how to allocate precious resources, choices to put organising at the centre of activity and to put the union interest above narrow factional or personal interests. Labor now faces the same choices.

We should build upon the lessons from centre-left parties and movements abroad, where parties are making use of new technology to organise their supporters more rapidly, more effectively and in greater numbers than had been previously possible.

It should also reflect Labor's strengths as a membership based party - we have many loyal and longstanding members who have been stalwarts for Labor, and we need to enhance their role at the same time as we strengthen the role of our supporters.



Our Members of Parliament and Party leaderships must play their part – by providing leadership that encourages Party growth and by doing the hard work of organising genuine community campaigns at the local level that build Labor's strength.

The barriers to entry for political activism have fallen dramatically in recent years. We are living through the most informed political age of any generation. It is easier today to watch political events on the other side of the world, to receive and transmit political ideas and policies between states and countries, to fire off a letter to a newspaper, to contribute towards a political advertisement or to become deeply involved in a single issue than it ever has been.

Yet many people choose not to do so, or feel less empowered as politics becomes a specialist, full time professionalised profession.

Are movements dead?

Our discussion of Labor party decline often returns to the 'Bowling Alone' theory authored by Robert Putnam; since people are not

joining churches, sporting groups or community groups in the same numbers, nor should we expect them to join political parties.

That excuse has been eclipsed in recent years as political activism enabled by the internet dramatically increases the number of people who participate in politics. We have lessons to learn when a US Presidential campaign raises more than \$500 million from a record breaking number of small donors to win a campaign; when the British Labour leader announces a plan to create 10,000 community organisers through the Movement for Change and when an organisation such as getup! claims more than 500,000 members.

I don't accept that we no longer have political movements. If anything we have more of them. It is true that they are often now built around a shared single interest, and that they risk being undermined and fragmented by the individualism of our concerns.

The modern case for Labor is as a party that participates in, and brings together, such movements.

A political movement or a Parliamentary Party

NSW Labor's Principles of Action encapsulate the vision of a broader movement that operates across Government, the union movement and the community.

C. Principles of Action

The Australian Labor Party believes that the task of building democratic socialism

is a cooperative process which requires:

- 1. constitutional action through the Australian and State Parliaments, municipal and other statutory authorities;*
- 2. union action; and*
- 3. ongoing action by organised community groups.*



2. We need to return to Labor's central values and Platform

2. We need to return to Labor's central values and Platform

Of the hundreds of emails, letters and phone calls from Labor Party branch members I have received since the election one stood out.

It was this:

"As policies and then principles and then values were jettisoned for the sake of power, many of those who had joined the party for idealistic reasons felt betrayed and left. Members of the party need to know there is a line that will not be crossed in the future – that there are some things that will not be jettisoned overnight for electoral advantage."

Labor must return to its core values and platform and apply them to the modern world. Just three of the areas that Labor should focus on are these – challenging rising inequality, tackling insecurity and setting out a broad case for the role of the state in the twenty first century.

Australia – inequality rising

Labor needs to tackle head on the growing inequity in all market based economies around the world. Despite a rising tide of affluence, Australia is now a less equal society. Amidst the wealth, we are less equal in incomes, wealth, health education and life chances, and a society more prone to mental illness, depression, homelessness and suicide.

The case is argued recently in the recent book *The Spirit Level – Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*: by Wilkinson and Pickett, which details the loss of health, of trust, and of intergenerational mobility accumulating in market societies such as Australia over recent decades.

Unless political parties such as Labor tackle this directly, our economic system will not just allow this inequality to continue, it will accelerate.

An increasingly precarious life

Our economic system is producing great wealth, even as it generates great insecurity.

We are now living in a new age of fear, as Tony Judt argues in his recent book *'Ill Fares the land'*.
"Insecurity born of terrorism

of course; but also, and more insidiously, fear of the uncontrollable speed of change, fear of the loss of employment, fear of losing ground to others in an increasingly unequal distribution of resources, fear of losing control of the circumstances and routines of our daily life."

It was precisely such insecurity amidst wealth that saw the birth of the Labor Party. We have much to contribute to thoughtful, modern responses to these pressures on the lives of Australians.

The case for Government

"The important thing for Government is not to do things which individuals are doing already, and to do them a little better or a little worse; but to do those things which at present are not done at all." John Maynard Keynes

Each generation since Keynes wrote this has had to re-imagine the role of the state as the economy evolves. Labor needs to articulate the modern needs that the state could fulfil, that individual action will not. In the first instance this requires an act of political imagination.



**3. We need to strengthen
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A decade ago the union movement faced a crisis of membership and relevance. The result of the debate that followed was a union movement that was more mobilised, more democratic, and less factional.

It is now time for a similar debate inside Labor.

Labor's success is inextricably linked with the future success of the union movement. The union movement is key to the goal of growing the ALP and to improving its grassroots campaigning capacity. The relationship between the Party and unions needs substance, including legislative support from Labor Governments for union's rights to organise.

The most obvious public manifestation of the rebuilding of Australian unions was the lead up to the 2007 Federal election campaign, where unions combined a campaign that aimed at influencing the electoral middle ground with a highly mobilised base of unionists concerned with Workchoices and its impact. The *Your Rights at Work* campaign was an example of the community campaigning that our sister parties around the world are moving back towards.

Together, working with union families, we are well placed to put an argument in our communities about the sort of state and country that Labor would like to see.



4. We need to engage our members

Twelve ideas for giving our members greater say

- a. Allow direct election of the following positions by the Party Membership – Party President, sections of the Administrative Committee, and branch delegates to National and State Conferences, allowing party members to vote and creating a culture of debate.
- b. Launch a trial of Public Office Selection Meetings for preselections, which would allow candidate forums and small group discussion with candidates on the day of the preselection vote.
- c. Allow issue based branches and provide official standing to organisations such as LEAN, Labor for Refugees and Rainbow Labor.
- d. Make it easier to get a preselection vote by allowing long term party members an automatic vote.
- e. The practice of allowing dual delegates to conference should cease.
- f. Compulsory consultation before central intervention – the General Secretary should report to an Electorate Council meeting to set out the justification for intervention to members.
- g. Regional Assemblies should be reinstituted as a regular part of party life.
- h. An Independent Appeals Tribunal should be implemented.
- i. The Party should launch a review of the number of Concessional members, and of the structure of its fees.
- j. Central Policy Branch members should have the right to propose, second and debate resolutions.
- k. Widen the use of proportional representation in Party elections, including for Conference delegate elections.
- l. Shift the way Labor campaigns to a focus on community organising.



4. We need to engage our members

a. We need to allow party members to vote and to create a culture of debate

Allow direct election of the following positions by the Party Membership – Party President, sections of the Administrative Committee, and branch delegates to National and State Conferences.

The open secret of Labor party membership is that it is possible for members to go for decades without a vote in a labor party ballot.

We need to move to a system where party members have some direct say in who runs their party. The following positions could be directly elected;

- Party President,
- delegates to National conference from the NSW party,
- additional members of the Administrative Committee of NSW Labor,
- the election of Electorate Council delegates to Annual Conference and
- members of a newly created Policy Forum.

Direct election of these positions puts them in the hands of the membership directly. It encourages people running for these positions to set out their platform and spell out what they are campaigning for. We need this measure to create a culture of debate inside NSW Labor.

Party President - as the chair of the Administrative Committee and of the Annual Conference this position is an important one for the membership. Party members should be able to directly elect it.

This has already happened at a National level where the President is elected, although in a complicated panel of three presidents who rotate. It is no coincidence that exactly twenty years after Labor's National Conference produced the 1982 'three mines' policy, it went on to produce the 2002 'three Presidents' electoral system. They are both a creature of Labor's culture of the factional fix, and the latter should be amended to have a single President at this National Conference.

National conference delegates

- should be elected directly from electorate councils - one per FEC. They should be required to report back locally following National conference. The remainder should be elected from the NSW conference, as is the case currently. The latter provides that key union leaders, members of Parliament and others can be selected to participate in National Conference, while allowing a more general delegation to be elected from the party membership.

The Administrative Committee

- between Conferences, the Administrative Committee is NSW Labor's governing body. It is where the leader comes to address the party, and where the timing of preselections and often

the preselections themselves are determined. It consists of members elected from conference and then the seven party officers, themselves elected from Conference. Additional members should be added elected directly from the rank and file party membership.

Delegates to Annual Conference from Electorate Councils

- provisions already exist in the rules for electorate Councils to directly elect their delegations to conference. These provisions are rarely used, as it requires the same people who would elect the delegates to give up their power to select the delegates.
- should be directly elected by the whole membership of the Electorate council.



4. We need to engage our members

b. Hold Public Office Selection Meetings for preselections, which would allow candidate forums and small group discussion with candidates on the day of the preselection vote.

The Party should hold these meetings in its next preselection rounds, which would allow greater discussion and participation by members in the process of vetting candidates. All financial members of twelve months standing should be able to participate regardless of whether they are able to exercise a vote. The trial should be reported back to Annual Conference.

c. Allow issue based branches and provide official standing to organisations such as LEAN, Labor for Refugees and Rainbow Labor.

We should provide official standing to some of the social movements inside the Labor party such as the Labor Environment Action Network, Labor for Refugees, Rainbow Labor and others. These groups represent some of the most dynamic elements of the modern Labor party. They should be given incentives to grow party membership in their areas-speaking rights and delegates at conference, official committees, regular meetings with Ministers and shadow Ministers, and funding.

d. Make it easier to get a preselection vote by allowing long term party members an automatic vote.

As is the case already for life members, party members of seven years standing should receive a preselection vote in their local area regardless of whether they meet the current branch activity tests.

e. The practice of allowing dual delegates to conference should cease.

This is a recommendation of the National Review, and is a way to increase the number of union delegates who participate at Conference.

f. Compulsory consultation before central intervention – the General Secretary should report to an Electorate Council meeting to set out the justification for intervention to members.

Central intervention in preselections should be a last resort, and this measure is one step that adds some process around intervention. It would require the General Secretary to meet with branch members at the regular place and time to set out the pressing need for the party to centrally intervene. This role could not be delegated.



4. We need to engage our members

g. Regional Assemblies should be reinstituted as a regular part of party life.

The Party should move to regularise Regional Assemblies and hold them annually across all areas for the next four years. This measure could be crucial to allowing members to meet and to rebuild Labor in the many regional areas where our representation has been wiped out.

h. An Independent Appeals Tribunal should be implemented.

The Party should replace its current Review Tribunal with a new appeals body which is comprised of agreed senior representatives, who make binding decisions in writing, setting out their reasons and reporting them to the Administrative Committee and then Conference. The Party's appeal processes should owe more to the rule of law than the rule of the factional jungle.

i. The Party should launch a review of the number of Concessional members, and of the structure of its fees.

While party membership has fallen in general, the fall in non-concessional members has been even steeper. We need to carefully examine the reasons why, including whether membership fees are at the appropriate rate.

Our joining and renewal systems should be rigorous. Party members should pay their own membership fees personally, and members should be asked to provide proof of their right to any concession.

j. Central Policy Branch members should have the right to propose, second and debate resolutions.

This proposal allows the Central Policy branch members to participate in the branch process in the same way as any other branch member. It is a sensible step to creating a culture of debate in the Labor Party.

k. Widen the use of proportional representation in Party elections, including for Conference delegate elections.

Despite changes four decades ago to introduce proportional representation to Conference ballots, many ballots in the Labor Party are still based on a winner-takes-all model. This measure would create a culture of healthy internal competition across the party.

l. Shift the way Labor campaigns to a focus on community organising.

Donations reform has made redundant the old Labor campaign model of paid TV and paid mail. We now will rely once again much more on community organising to win elections. The NSW Branch implemented a member mobilisation strategy at this election which is radically different to its previous election model. While still new, it represents a positive future direction for the party.



5. We need to engage our supporters

Six ideas to involve our supporters

- a. Debate a trial of community preselections in our preselection process.
- b. We should relaunch and support Labor's Community Dialogue programme.
- c. Ensure candidates are able to engage in community campaigning, by strengthening the requirement that nominations be called at least one year prior to the expected date of an election.
- d. "Friends of Labor" should be encouraged.
- e. Party units should be encouraged to use the internet.
- f. Party units should be open to the community.

a. Debate a trial of community preselections in our preselection process.

In the lead-up to the NSW election and again ahead of Annual Conference, the General Secretary has proposed a trial of 'community preselections' for NSW Labor.

These community preselections or primaries could, if done properly, allow the community to have greater say in who their representatives are. In places where only thirty people currently preselect the Labor candidate we cannot argue that this is representative of the local community. Any trial needs to contain strong protections and

a weighting for existing branch members.

If community preselections were not carefully introduced they may introduce the worst of the money politics which has come to characterise American politics to the Australian political landscape.

As a single measure a community preselection trial of a small number of seats in 2015 does not represent reform. Without a package of measures to change our party culture, by itself it will do little, and should be opposed.

Labor must change its culture if we are to remain politically relevant.



5. We need to engage our supporters

b. We should relaunch Labor's Community Dialogue programme.

We should relaunch and support Labor's Community Dialogue programme, which is now twinned with Labor's Business Dialogue Programme. With NSW Labor in Opposition, this programme is more relevant than ever.

c. Strengthen the requirement that nominations be called at least one year prior to the expected date of an election.

This is an essential measure if our candidates are going to engage in community campaigning.

d. "Friends of Labor" should be encouraged.

We should stop charging people to be our friends – the Friends of Labor model of charging people for information needs to change. We should invite all Labor voters to become an online Friend of Labor and receive information from the Labor Party for free. Eligible Friends of Labor would be entitled to participate as community members in community preselections.

Such a model far better represents the new importance of wide networks of political supporters than the current cut rate 'Associate member' model does.

e. Party units should be encouraged to use the internet.

Party units, in particular electorate councils should be encouraged to establish a homepage, website or blog with ongoing consultation and support from the Party Office. Our current party rules discourage this communication.

f. Party units should be open to the community.

National Principle of Organisation 13 – Organisation and Training states that:

"(c) Branches should be involved in local community activities, and should provide regular updates and suggestions of events in which members might participate.

(d) Local branches and MPs should institute, and participate in, regular joint community consultation processes in their electorates to raise the profile of the ALP and provide feedback on policy and Party initiatives."

In order to allow Labor branches to operate as a part of their community the General Secretary should publish publicly, a complete list of the names and appropriate contact details for the Secretaries of all Labor Party units, including branches, in order to encourage members of the community to contact them.



6. We need to renew Labor's policy process

6. We need to renew Labor's policy process

Introduce a NSW Policy Forum which develops Labor's electoral platform in between conferences.

Labor's conference, held in the Sydney Town Hall, with its more than eight hundred delegates is still a vital political affair. With all the pressures of television news scrutiny, it still holds a measure of unpredictability and theatre. Conference matters in the NSW Labor party. We need to continue to evolve the conference tradition, allowing more input from party members.

The NSW Annual conference in 2008 broke the hearts of many Labor Party delegates. Unwillingly forced to choose between the Labor Government and the Labor Party, they chose the Labor Party at a rate of seven to one. It was an unwelcome choice. For seventy years the Parliamentary and the Party leadership of the Labor Party had managed to find a way through, a compromise to allow a Government to proceed to some extent. There were rare flare-ups.

The party's policy committees by and large exist for the purpose of defending the Government of the day's priorities. They are populated by factional appointees. They exercise very little influence and rarely meet, except in the lead-up to Conference. They may as well come encased in a small box headlined 'In case of Conference, break glass'.

We need a policy process that sits between the Conference, with its ability to put a stop to a particular policy proposal, and the practice of the Government of the day going on its own merry way with no reference to the Labor party and its policy.

The British Labor Party's model of a National Policy forum could provide one way to do so. With its emphasis on dialogue and consensus decision making, and its ability to recommend majority and minority positions to Conference for decision, it may prove a useful model for NSW Labor to consider. One of its attractions is its practice of having sessions co-chaired by Government and Party nominees, to ensure a dialogue of equals.

If such a Policy Forum was adopted, branch members to such a body should be directly elected. Such a body should support, but not supplant, our Annual Conference which remains our supreme decision making body.



6. We need to renew Labor's policy process

The British model

With the election of the Blair Labour Government in 1997, British Labour implemented a new policy development framework which operated to the following principles:

- A need for continual modernisation of Labour's policies and manifesto.
- A representative role for all the Party's stakeholders (MPs, Government Ministers, local branches, unions and socialist societies).
- A consensus approach over a conflict driven approach.

This was later improved with two additional principles from 2001 onwards:

- Outward looking not inward looking policy development, involving local communities in Labour's policy development.
- A stronger role for local members in all aspects of policy development, the lack of which had been an ongoing criticism of the process since 1997.

With these principles, the Party developed an innovative policy process, different to any other social democratic party in the world.

Following his election as leader, Ed Miliband has proposed linking policy development more closely to other objectives of the Party, such as to rebuild membership with a new emphasis on community organising.

The community organising agenda involves a direct role for supporters in policy making. Instead of simply *engaging* in the community, British Labour now sees that by *organising* with communities there is real potential for electoral and policy benefit.

“Policy within the Australian Labor Party is not made by directives from the leadership, but by resolutions, originating from branches, affiliated unions and individual Party members”

- Basic principles of the Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch)



7. We need to reinvent Labor's campaign model

Campaign funding caps in NSW have driven a different Labor party approach to anything we have seen in NSW Labor for generations. For NSW Labor to rely heavily on volunteer labour in the way it did in 2011 is not an incremental change in its campaign model - it is a complete reversal.

Just one NSW electoral cycle earlier, Labor relied heavily on paid mail and paid television to get its message to the disengaged, undecided voters who decide elections.

Even in the toughest of political environments Labor in NSW launched a massive effort to directly contact voters as a part of its ongoing electoral strategy.

We still have some way to go before using the massive direct contact programmes used in the best overseas election campaigns. These rely on campaign teams which are directly talking to electors in authentic conversations, describing in their own words why they support a particular candidate.

If Labor is to succeed in reconnecting with its electoral base we need to work to have those community discussions as a part of our electoral approach. The best campaigns elsewhere are doing so – relentlessly and systematically reaching out, interacting with members of the community to create a relationship of trust that is available to draw on come election time.



8. We need to refresh Labor's training agenda

We need to massively step up the provision of training, and changing the culture of NSW Labor's campaign machine. We are simply not equipped to fight the campaigns of the twenty first century without investing more in our people.



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I welcome your response to
this discussion paper at:

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