



**THE HON JULIA GILLARD MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Minister for Education
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Minister for Social Inclusion

SPEECH

NSW ALP State Conference

15 November 2009

Sydney

Delegates, today I'm here to stand in for the Prime Minister who is attending APEC.

Now, I realise there's a bit of history with stand-ins at this party conference.

There's the story about the year that Prime Minister Bob Hawke was unable to attend the New South Wales Conference and with his deputy Lionel Bowen also away, Hawkey asked Bill Hayden to fill in on his behalf.

Hawkey had recently replaced Hayden as the Federal Party's leader, so Bill was more than a little surprised – especially given the NSW Branch's role in the loss of his leadership.

With his trademark dry, laconic Queensland sense of humour, Bill observed that being asked to go and speak to the NSW Branch on Hawkey's behalf felt something like being invited to give an address to the mafia.

But he went ahead and gave a fine speech.

And the NSW Branch rose to the occasion too – when the next day, General-Secretary Loosley sent a bunch of red carnations to Bill Hayden’s office.

With all the subtlety for which Sussex Street was then famous the message on the accompanying card read: *“Thanks for the memories”*.

So Matt – no pressure, but I prefer roses – without a card.

But I do feel at home here in New South Wales.

Why wouldn’t I feel at home in a State with an AFL team coached by Kevin Sheedy?

Why wouldn’t I feel at home in a State where every one recognises that Melbourne Storm is the best NRL team?

And delegates why wouldn’t I feel at home here in a State with such a proud Labor history?

Labor values - Labor history

And I come here today to pay tribute to the work of the members and the delegates of the NSW Party who have toiled so hard for so long because of commitment to Labor values.

It was the NSW branch that began our Party’s resurgence back in the mid-90s, when we held office in just one State.

A resurgence which 14 years later has Labor holding government in every jurisdiction across the nation but one.

Labor has had greater success in this State than any other in Australia, with Labor governments holding power here for 50 of the past 68 years. Remarkable.

The NSW branch has given the nation leaders like Chifley, Whitlam and Keating.

And it has produced legendary State Labor leaders like McKell, Wran and Carr.

But what has fired the cause of Labor in this State, through all those years since the formation of the Labour Electoral League in 1891, is not the personalities - extraordinary though many have been, but principles.

Not the pursuit of power, but the pursuit of progress.

And unlike our political opponents, not the protection of the privileged - but creating opportunity for all.

That is what keeps you as members of the Party attending the branch meetings, pounding the pavements, letterboxing the neighbourhood, supporting the fundraisers and handing out how-to-votes on Election Day.

The vision of a stronger, fairer society, offering opportunity whoever you are and wherever you grew up.

Conference, the lesson of history is that when you combine those values with that hard work, it makes a difference.

Just think of the backgrounds of the first Labor Premiers of this State – James McGowen and John Storey, both boilermakers; William Holman, a cabinetmaker; James Dooley, a tailor.

They were the sons of shipbuilders, boilermakers, struggling actors and farmers.

They were imperfect people who battled imperfectly against powerful vested interests and the forces of conservatism.

And yet their achievements were extraordinary.

Emerging as a strong political force from the moment Labor candidates began contesting elections.

And, eventually, corralling those candidates into a united and disciplined force that delivered government.

Today's Australian Labor Party has one of the longest traditions of any social democratic party in the world.

In a few months' time we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Labor government elected in NSW.

And though we've seen many generations pass in this past century, today we are the Party of the future.

The Party committed to tackling the great challenges of the century ahead.

The reality of climate change and water shortage.

Training a new generation of Australians for the high-skilled jobs of the future.

Building 21st century infrastructure, including the National Broadband Network.

We remain the party not of privilege, but of opportunity.

We are driven by the belief that government must never be captured by the loudest voices, the best social connections or the largest chequebooks.

As Ben Chifley said to this same conference sixty years ago, in his famous Light on the Hill speech – we are:

“a movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people.”

Delegates, consider our Party today.

Sixty years from Chifley’s address we are led by a Prime Minister who grew up on a share farm in country Queensland and who was the first in his family to make it to university.

Around the Cabinet table in Canberra you find men and women of modest backgrounds.

Men and women who benefited from opportunities never afforded to our parents’ generation.

But made possible by successive Labor governments, Federal and State, determined that the next generation would have greater opportunities than the generation that went before.

I know this from my own life.

My dad was a bright and capable kid, but things were tough in the coalmining communities of South Wales, especially in the war years when he grew up.

Those circumstances denied him the educational opportunities he would have loved to pursue.

But they made him determined to pass on to his two daughters a passion for

education, and a resolve to work hard and seize every opportunity that came our way.

The people in this hall could share hundreds and hundreds of similar stories from their own lives and families.

Including the story of your very own Nathan Rees.

Premier Nathan Rees is rightly proud of his origins as a westie and a garbo .

And you don't go from being a garbo to being the Premier of NSW without resolve and determination.

And in doing the job of Premier, each and every day we see Nathan work his guts out to lead this State to a stronger and fairer future.

And delegates that demands the courage to make hard decisions.

Yesterday, I know that as required by your leader, Nathan Rees, delegates you made a tough decision.

A decision to break with the traditions of the past and modernise your Branch of the ALP for the future.

A decision to allow the Labor Leader to hand pick the team they believe will deliver for the people of New South Wales.

The Rudd Government made the same hard decision following the 2007 election.

It wasn't without controversy.

But it was the right decision.

Delegates, the Labor way is to celebrate the best of the past while always being prepared to renew for the future.

Delegates, as we embrace the future, we are driven by a burning, nation-building ambition for Australia's future.

We are driven by the belief that every Australian should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, no matter where they start in life.

Delivering Together

No longer is it good enough just to get our kids through to the end of high school.

That's why, together with Verity Firth and Nathan Rees, we are delivering an Education Revolution, building on the good work already being done in NSW. Developing a world class school curriculum, together. Improving literacy and numeracy, together. Rewarding the best teachers for their work in the schools where they can make most difference. Insisting that, by facing the future together, armed with more information than ever before, we can make a difference for the better for every school and every child.

Incredibly, Barry O'Farrell and the Liberal Party are committed to denying the parents and community of New South Wales the right to read new information about school education in your newspapers.

Driven by political wheeling and dealing rather than care about the future of the children of this State, Barry O'Farrell continues his education cover up.

Barry O'Farrell believes the people of this State are fools who can't understand information when they read it.

But delegates, he is the real fool.

In my view, with this one craven act, Barry O'Farrell has disqualified him from being seriously considered as a potential leader of this State.

Delegates, the silliness of the Liberal Party is not confined to NSW.

This week, the Opposition's Senate leader Nick Minchin informed us global warming is a continuation of the global left-wing communist conspiracy.

Delegates, the Liberal and National parties have learned nothing in Opposition.

They're still in denial.

Still stuck in a world where:

- the planet's not warming;
- the Berlin Wall still stands; and
- it's expected that working Australians know their place when serving their master.

Out of touch with today's realities and reckless towards our nation's future.

Delegates, when the global economic crisis was bearing down upon Australia last year, we understood what was at stake.

And Labor did what a Liberal Party government could never bring themselves to do.

We backed Australians. With every tool and every action that Government can use: to save jobs, to support families and strengthen local communities at greatest risk from the crisis.

We never accepted that working families in our nation should become the casualties of the greed and irresponsibility of Wall Street financial firms.

Conference, the results speak for themselves.

That stimulus plan is creating jobs today and it is building the infrastructure we need for the future.

Almost 50,000 building and construction projects have now been approved. More than 23,000 are underway.

Building the Education Revolution projects are being delivered in more than 9,500 schools across the nation.

In NSW, almost \$5 billion is going to more than 7000 projects in more than 3,000 schools .

That means jobs for tradies, builders, bricklayers, plasterers, electricians, carpenters, carpetlayers, architects and many more – in every part of the State.

Some of the best features of the program are the least well known.

Like the innovative partnership between the construction business Brookfield Multiplex and the Salvation Army – to hire people from the Salvo's lists of job seekers to fill the newly created BER jobs, ranging from cadet jobs to project management .

We are maximising the social returns as well as the economic benefits of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus plan.

Delegates, this is Labor in government – combining the great traditions of fairness for working families and nation-building for our future.

Social housing

Delegates, I want to acknowledge the importance of our partnership with the NSW Government to deliver so much of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

Take our \$6 billion Social Housing Initiative, helping some of the Australians who most need it. I would like to thank the Member for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek for her leadership and commitment in this area.

We are building almost 20,000 new homes –the single largest investment in social housing ever undertaken by an Australian Government.

Conference, I am happy to say that the roll-out of this nation-building investment is being led by New South Wales:

- NSW was the first state to complete a new house under the program;
- Construction has begun on over 1,000 houses in this state; and
- Another 1,000 properties are set to commence this month.

The NSW Government is also investing a further \$1 billion to deliver an extra 3,000 homes.

This is a massive investment.

I thank Nathan Rees' for his resolve to tackle disadvantage and make housing affordable for the long term.

Delegates, this is a commitment of which you can be proud.

And today I am pleased to announce the next stage of the national Social Housing Initiative here in New South Wales.

Stage 2 will invest one and a half billion dollars in over five and a half thousand affordable homes across this State.

Conference, 71 per cent of new housing investment in the Social Housing Initiative will be located in the six identified Priority Employment Areas in this State.

I would like to thank Senator Mark Arbib and Jason Clare for their work in the Priority Employment Areas.

Our investment is targeted where jobs and affordable housing are most needed.

- Canterbury-Bankstown and South Western Sydney will receive \$431 million.
- Central Coast – Hunter will receive \$319 million.
- The Illawarra will receive \$162 million.
- The Mid-North Coast will receive \$61 million.
- Richmond-Tweed and Clarence Valley will receive \$48 million; and
- Sydney West and the Blue Mountains will receive \$224 million.

Delegates, this is a Labor Government providing extra investment where it is needed most by working families.

I am also pleased to announce today new measures to target assistance to older Australians through the Social Housing Initiative.

Already in this State, over 80,000 aged pensioners live in public housing – representing one third of total public housing tenants.

Yet there are still many aged pensioners in the private rental market who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

Today, over 4,600 aged pensioners in this State pay more than 50 per cent of their income on rent – even after Commonwealth Rent Assistance is taken into account.

That's why we have set aside 2,000 of the new social housing dwellings in New South Wales to be occupied by people over 55 who would otherwise be struggling in the private rental market.

We are investing together in dignity, decency and independence for older Australians.

World class cancer care for regional Australia

And delegates, at the same time, we are investing in the health care of all Australians.

Through our historic COAG agreement with the States, the Australian Government is providing \$64 billion for public health – an increase of 50 per cent. More than \$20 billion is going to NSW.

Delegates, of the health care issues of our age, none loom larger than cancer.

Cancer touches us all, through our own experience or the experience of those close to us.

Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in this nation.

Already, the Australian Government has invested over \$2 billion in the fight against cancer.

Our reforms are modernising Australia's cancer services, aiming to improve outcomes for the 100,000 people diagnosed each year and for the projected 30 per cent increase of new cases expected over the next decade.

Today, along with Health Minister Nicola Roxon, I am announcing the next stage in the Government's plan to deliver world class cancer care.

We will focus on the needs of the 30 per cent of Australians living in rural, regional and remote communities. From tomorrow, applications are open for proposals to establish best-practice regional cancer centres with accommodation facilities for families and carers.

These centres will be linked to two new leading edge integrated cancer centres – the Chris O'Brien Cancer Centre down the road in Camperdown and the Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre in Melbourne.

People in regional and rural communities face a higher incidence of several cancers, and are less likely to survive their fight against the disease.

A cancer diagnosis is enormously stressful for any of us, in any place, and at any time in life.

But it is far more difficult when you need to travel long distances to see multiple specialists who may not even be working together in the delivery of your care.

The regional cancer centres will make a difference by improving access and support for cancer patients from regional communities.

This will lead to more cancers being detected and prevented, and improved survival rates.

In New South Wales we will target support to the over 2 million Australians living outside the greater Sydney area.

Conclusion

Delegates, supporting Australian jobs, building housing for those in need, improving life's chances for Australian children and providing health services for those who require care – this is what we each joined Labor to do.

This is Labor's work and Labor's way.

This is why you are here this weekend.

And delegates, when you leave this hall when this conference draws to a close, I ask you to pause and reflect on what has happened here and on the demands of the future.

You are members of the Branch of the ALP that has most often gained the trust of Australians to be their government.

You are members of the most successful Branch of the Labor Party.

And that places on your shoulders special obligations.

The obligation to recognise that trust can never be taken for granted, it has to be earned anew each and every day.

The obligation to recognise when you haven't met people's expectations and to resolve to do better.

The obligation to recognise that even when you have done your best, the next day you must strive to do even better.

This is the Labor way.

Never to seek power for its own sake.

But to serve the common good and deliver for our communities.

For those millions of Australians who rely on Labor governments for a fair go in life.

Delegates, we must deliver for those Australians by ensuring we focus relentlessly on building a better future.

We deliver most for those Australians when we have the courage to take and be judged by the hard decisions.

We take inspiration from the past, that the discipline of overcoming the most difficult challenges is worth the effort and the sacrifice.

Delegates, this is the Labor way. This is the NSW Labor way.