

Review²⁰¹⁰

2010 National Review

Report to the ALP National Executive



Steve Bracks | John Faulkner | Bob Carr

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Premier Anna Bligh
President
Australian Labor Party
PO Box 6222
Kingston

11 February 2011

Report of the 2010 National Review

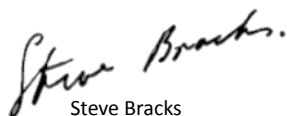
Dear Anna

Please find attached the report of the 2010 National Review, commissioned by the National Executive on 23 September 2010.

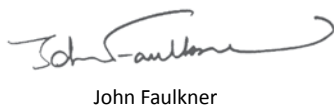
The Review Committee has spoken with hundreds of Party members, senior figures in the Party and union movement, and our supporters in the community.

This report will be presented for viewing to National Executive members on 18 February 2011, and the Review Committee will also provide a briefing for members at that meeting.

Yours sincerely



Steve Bracks



John Faulkner



Bob Carr

Terms of reference for the Review



Noting the result of the 2010 election and the need to continuously improve the campaign capacity of the ALP at all levels, the National Executive resolves to establish a review of the 2010 federal election and associated issues.

The Review will be conducted by a panel of Former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks, Senator John Faulkner and Former NSW Premier Bob Carr.

The Review will examine the following areas:

- The political strategy and tactics of the Party from 2007 through to the 2010 election including the 35 day campaign period.
- The policy development process, achievements, communication of policies, programs and achievements, and third party relationships from the Party's first term in government.
- The campaigning of the Party from government including continuous campaigning culture and continuity between government and Party.
- The preparedness of the Party for the 2010 election campaign, including campaign structures and logistics.
- The resourcing and fundraising of the central campaign and state branches.
- The development of strategy, messaging, and campaign priorities in the lead-up to and during the 35 day campaign.
- The communication strategies employed by the Party during the election campaign including through paid media, free media and online.
- The demographic and electoral impact of the election on Labor's vote.
- The execution of on the ground campaigning in targeted seats including the relationship between central campaign headquarters and the state branches of the Party.
- The relationship between the Party campaign and other progressive campaigns, including those of affiliated trade unions.
- The need to review and modernise Labor's vision and purpose in the 21st century.
- The need to broaden participation in the Party to ensure a greater say for members, supporters and stakeholders.
- The need to improve dialogue and engagement between progressive Australians and the Party, including progressive third party organisations.
- The Review Committee should feel free to explore any other Party matters as they may relate to Federal Labor's performance in future elections.

The Review will be provided with secretarial support by the National Secretariat.

The Review will seek submissions in writing or by email from party units, affiliates, party members and supporters and it will travel to relevant areas to conduct meetings or hearings in person.

The Review will finalise its report and recommendations to the National Executive no later than January 2011.





The 2010 National Review was conducted by Former Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks; Senator for New South Wales, John Faulkner; and Former Premier of New South Wales Bob Carr.

Building a 21st century Labor Party

Foreword

When working people came together to form our Party they carried with them hopes for change and reform which they believed would serve their children and future generations of Australians. In creating the Australian Labor Party, they aimed to build a political movement and institution which could withstand the greatest challenges of the industrial era and could secure the Australian 'fair-go' for working people.

For the founders of our Party, Labor was created to perform two important tasks: to secure government and to use the powers of government to implement immediate legislative reform; and to exist as a community movement involved in local issues: tackling unfairness and discrimination at grassroots level and providing a real and genuine connection to the broader community.

Modern Labor continues to live by these organisational principles; our Party now faces new challenges as we enter our 120th year of existence. Labor faces real threats to its survival which, if unaddressed, will deprive future generations of Australians with a real progressive voice in politics.

We have an opportunity at the National Conference in December 2011 to embrace a bold agenda to rebuild the Australian Labor Party by:

- growing our Party membership
- deepening our connection with the community
- opening up our Party to greater participation.

The Review Committee has spoken to hundreds of Party members and received many more written submissions from branches and sub-branches, FECs and FEAs, unions and from some of Labor's many millions of supporters in the community. We would like to thank all who have contributed to this process for the many hours of work that went into these submissions and presentations. The Review Committee believes that our members and supporters continue to be the greatest strength and asset we have as a political force in this country. Their views are reflected in this report.

As the members of the Review Committee we have taken the task presented to us by the National Executive seriously, and present these recommendations to the National Executive, and the membership of the Australian Labor Party, for their implementation.

1 Background to the report

- 1.1 In September 2010 the National Executive of the Australian Labor Party established the 2010 National Review, with a three person membership of:
 - Former Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks
 - Senator for New South Wales, John Faulkner
 - Former Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference for the Review were broad and related to the work of the first term of the Labor Government, the 2010 national campaign, and also the future organisation and operation of the Party. The relevant terms of reference for this section of the report are:
 - The need to review and modernise Labor's vision and purpose in the 21st century.
 - The need to broaden participation in the Party to ensure a greater say for members, supporters and stakeholders.
 - The need to improve dialogue and engagement between progressive Australians and the Party, including progressive third party organisations.
- 1.3 This section of the report will deal exclusively with the future of the Labor Party and the changes that the Review Committee believes must occur for the Party to survive and prosper.

2 Consultations

- 2.1 The Review Committee visited every state and territory capital and parts of regional Queensland in developing this Review Report and its recommendations. The committee held membership forums in Cairns, Brisbane, Darwin, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Hobart. The forums were attended by hundreds of Party members.
- 2.2 The Review also received written submissions from Party members, organisations and supporters from right around the country. Submissions were primarily received through the specially created Review 2010 website (www.Review2010.alp.org.au). Many members and supporters also lodged written submissions with the Review. All submissions were read and acknowledged by the Review Committee. Over 800 submissions were received through this process, all of a very high quality. The Review Committee believes this is the highest number of submissions received by a national review in the Party's history, demonstrating the deep interest and concern our members and supporters have in the Party's future.
- 2.3 For the first time, the Review also made use of online consultation forums through www.alp.org.au. The Review created a 'Think Tank' area for members and supporters to put forward their brief suggestions for Party reform. An extraordinary 3500 members and supporters chose to participate in the Review in this way. These short submissions were then compiled into one document, with views highlighted and aggregated. A number of recommendations for this report are directly drawn from this consultative process.
- 2.4 The Review conducted a series of interviews with leaders and prominent members of our Party, at parliamentary, industrial and organisational levels.
- 2.5 The Review Committee has also examined the recommendations of previous review reports commissioned by the Party. In particular, the 2010 National Review is indebted to the work done by former Prime Minister Bob Hawke and former Premier Neville Wran in 2001, the so-called 'Hawke–Wran Review', which generated the last serious reform process in the Australian Labor Party.

3 What members and supporters said

3.1 The following are verbatim extracts from face-to-face consultations and submissions made by members to the Review process. They are a sample of what members and supporters believe is wrong, and what needs to change, in our Party. The Review Committee was struck with the consistency and strength of the views put to it.

“As a party member for nearly 39 years it seems that branches are now treated as irrelevant by head office—only good for handing out on election days.”—Member, Sydney

“A branch member no longer has any power and hasn’t for a long time.”—Member, Melbourne

“Many branches feel very frustrated and ignored these days.”—Member, Adelaide

“At the moment, the party branches are dying, because the rank and file are given no voice in the Party. The members and branches no longer have any say in preselections or in policy. Unless this trend can be reversed, we will become a party that exists just to provide a path for ex-trade union leaders and ex-staffers of politicians to enter parliament.”—Member, NSW

“The [issue is the] rise of the central Party apparatus and the decline of the branches. If the resolutions of branches are ignored, if the rules of the Party are ignored, if preselections are determined by head office and not the relevant electoral councils, if we remove democracy as the beating heart of our Party why would people join a branch, why would people get involved in our Party, why would people vote for us?”—Member, NSW

“To make meetings more relevant and dynamic a pool of guest speakers should be available for branches to request to come to speak to them. The Central Policy Branch was considered a good idea.”—Branch submission

“The demand that branches be respected meant that a branch’s local knowledge and concerns should be taken seriously. There was a sense that the party leadership did not take seriously or wish to involve itself with a branch’s participation in issues and policies that profoundly affected its members and its local community. Branches, it was argued, could be at the forefront of pivotal community battles.”—Branch submission

“The grassroots organisation of the ALP used to be something that we left the Liberals for dead in.”—Member, Cairns

“Members have given up. They feel that their only function is to turn up on polling day and spend a day in the sun handing out how-to-vote cards. Members want to be involved at a local level at a bare minimum.”—Member, Queensland

“We have lost our heartland. We have lost our heart.”—Member, Perth

“Branch meetings are not the most exciting events. We used to have strong branch structures with conventions and alike and now members don’t have an opportunity to raise their issues. We need to get back to having those strong debates.”—Member, Adelaide

“We should set up some sort of mission statement for the branch, make things a more positive approach. Try and turn things around from the current rules so that people are encouraged to do things for and with the branch. To run for positions people should be encouraged to organise speakers and alike.”—Member, Tasmania

“Branches feel undervalued and unappreciated by head office as decisions are made beyond the desire of the Rank and File who speak directly to the community and through the community to the electorate. This long held disconnect has disintegrated into distrust.”—Member, Sydney

“All branch’s membership are the older generations and young people don’t seem to be encouraged to join.”—Member, Sydney

“The Labor Party has forgotten how to consult and listen to those who work at the ‘coal face’.”—Member, Canberra

“At the state level and as a delegate to conference, I feel like I am expected to be a mere rubber stamp and that we are not valued as informed voices.”—Member, Brisbane

“Community groups could be included more in policy reviews. It would help make the Party more relevant.”—Member, Tasmania

“Young people that I speak to might want to contribute but go to ALP Branch meetings and see the antiquated way in which they are conducted and decide to support from afar on election day or go to the Greens.”—Member, Perth

“While we continue to allow the factional carve up of positions and decisions are taken on faction grounds, people will continue to be turned off.”—Member, Tasmania

“We need to make branches more relevant and factions less relevant.”—Member, Tasmania

“You need to give branch members something to do, and right now branches have nothing to do”—Member, Tasmania

“How are we going to keep our branch members and actually grow our membership? We’ve lost a lot of members who we got in 2007 and if we don’t have those members we can’t campaign on the ground.”—Member, Brisbane

“People in the Party are deeply angry and upset about where the Party is at. It would be fair to say morale is in the gutter. We should have member ballots for Administrative Committee, President and General Secretary.”—Member NSW

“We need a new campaigning model. We rely on TV and direct mail at the expense of training our members to get out there and have conversations with people one on one. If we treat our members with enough integrity we can actually have our members rebuild our electoral campaigns.”—Member, Sydney

“We face a real challenge from the Greens. If the trends continue we will lose our most progressive members of parliament to the Greens. Some in the Party seem to think that’s okay. There is a progressive vote right across every seat. We should never allow our party to give up on these people.”—Member Victoria

“The FPLP should be disciplined but we should let our members debate things. Why shouldn’t the FEC pass a motion asking the government to look at tax concessions for kids to learn to swim? They don’t embarrass the party or the government, so why shouldn’t they pursue that if they want.”—Current MP

“We need to balance the need for discipline with the need for open and fair debate in the party. That’s what’s disillusioning our members.”—Member, Adelaide

4 Building the Labor Party of the 21st Century

- 4.1 Labor's structures and practices are largely drawn from the time of the Party's formation 120 years ago. Adaptation and change have always been a part of Labor's DNA. While values remain timeless, our policies must always be in-touch with modern Australia. So too must our organisation be based on the best practice available to any political party in the world.
- 4.2 Australian Labor is not only Australia's oldest political party, it is also one of the oldest continuing political parties in the world. It predates British Labour by more than 10 years and New Zealand Labour by 25 years. Australian Labor has been one of the most electorally successful progressive political parties in the world. The first Labor Government in the world was formed in Queensland in 1899. The first national Labor Government in the world was formed in Australia in 1904. For good reason, Australia was viewed as the 'social laboratory' of the world for the reforming spirit the Labor Party brought to parliamentary affairs. This legacy of practical reform has informed much of our work as a party for the last 120 years. Today, it continues to inspire the Party to implement the hard policy decisions required to build Australia's future.
- 4.3 Labor's ability to form government and implement its reform program has always been based on the strength of its organisation. Labor's model of branch organisation was adopted by many political parties here and abroad, including the Liberal Party's predecessor, the Nationalist Party. Our structure has served us well over a long period of time. Labor has always had a stronger connection directly into the community and the workplace than our opponents. Our local level organisation provides us with the eyes and ears to listen to the concerns of everyday Australians. Our union connection links us to two million trade unionists and their families. No other Party in Australia can claim to have such capacity for generating, and maintaining, public support.
- 4.4 The electoral benefits have been great when Labor's organisation works well. Such a strong win in the 2007 election would not have been achieved without the tens of thousands of branch members and hundreds of thousands of trade unionists campaigning in the community. Structurally though, the Party is in decline. Membership has continued to fall, and while it has stabilised in some states, it has done so because it has reached 'ground water'. In some of the larger states the Party continues to haemorrhage members. In NSW alone, more than 100 branches have closed in the last ten years. The Labor Party now faces a crisis in membership.

Figure 1: Total Party membership, 2002–2010

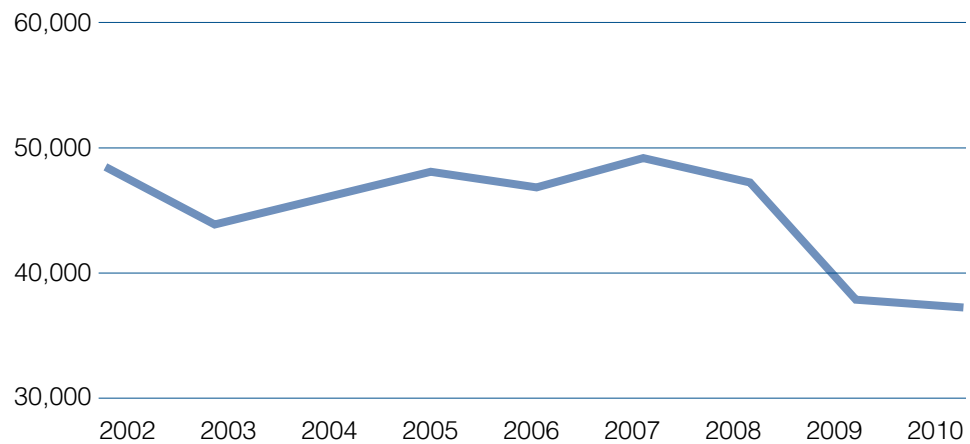
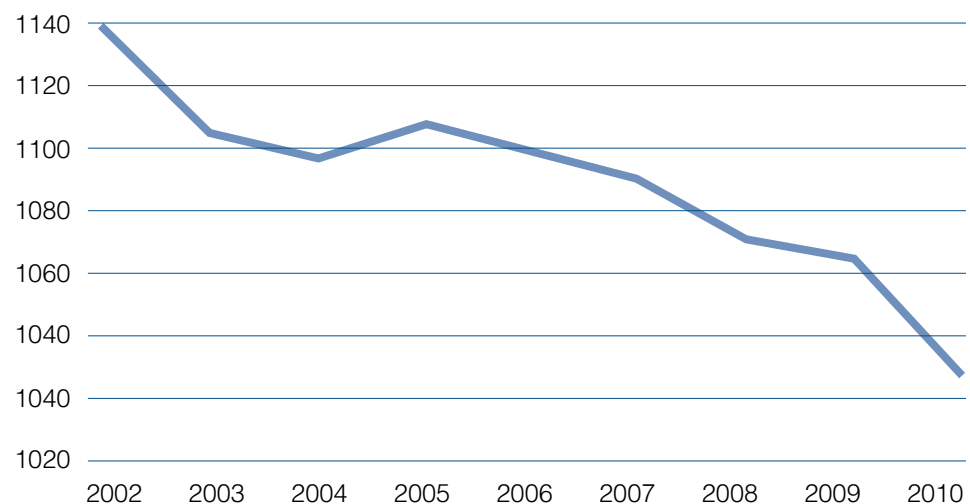
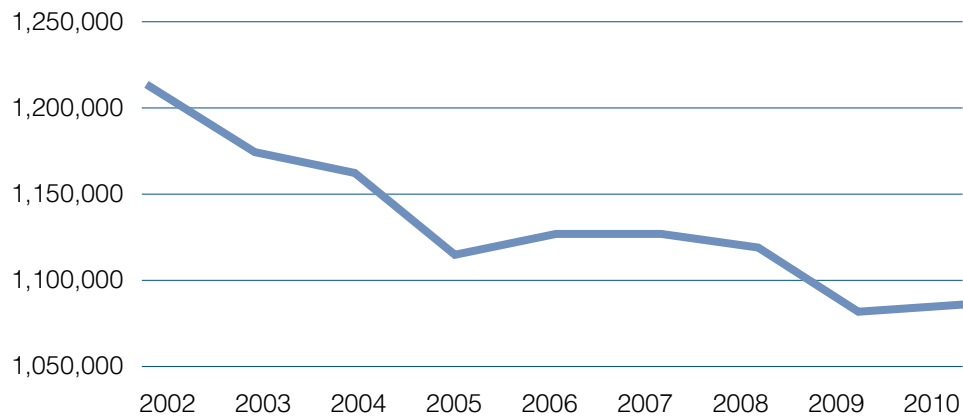


Figure 2: Local branches total, 2002–2010



- 4.5 Additionally, Labor’s membership continues to age. Throughout the Review process and in every part of Australia, the Review Committee was continually reminded by members that the membership of the Party is aging. As existing members retire from active membership in coming years, the decline will become even more severe.
- 4.6 The affiliation reporting required by the 2002 Special Rules Conference changes, now provide evidence of the state of Labor’s affiliated union membership. In recent years, there has been a stabilisation in affiliated union membership, driven in part by new affiliations from previously unaffiliated unions. It is unlikely that further unions will affiliate into the future. This was confirmed in evidence provided to the Review by senior affiliated and non-affiliated union leaders.

Figure 3: Union affiliated membership



- 4.7 Along with a decline in membership and a decline in affiliated membership, the Party also faces a decline in participation. Members feel alienated and disenfranchised in the modern Labor Party and there are many causes for this. Modern campaigning techniques introduced over the last 30 years have diminished and degraded the role members once played in political campaigning. As one Labor member emotionally told the Review:

"We used to be inspired to fight for Labor like it was a crusade."

- 4.8 Labor's decline in membership reflects social changes at work in other mature democracies. In some European states the once impregnable social democratic base has been devoured by Green or left-leaning parties on the one hand and right-wing populist parties with a largely anti-immigrant agenda, on the other. Underlying this has been a statistically measured decline in employment in the manufacturing, mining and transport sectors. In Liverpool and Glasgow, in Hamburg and the Ruhr, the old industrial working class has contracted or shrunk as these sectors of the economy have contracted or shrunk.
- 4.9 Deeper cultural changes have also been at work. This is reflected in declining membership of churches and community groups as well as political parties. These changes are extensively documented and proceed at a different pace in different societies. In other words the problems faced by Australian Labor are not unique. They are common to most traditional political parties in western societies in the post-industrial era.
- 4.10 Very often the adept or inspirational political leadership of the Australian Labor Party has made the party's strength and survival look more secure than the underpinning social and cultural circumstances might have justified. In retrospect the political leadership of the Hawke and Keating years stands out. Between 1983 and 1996 these governments implemented a raft of economic reforms without forcing a left-leaning breakaway from party ranks as occurred in similar circumstances in New Zealand and the Federal Republic of Germany. The government won the support of voters committed to nature conservation and an environmental agenda while maximising support from traditional Labor regions and communities.

- 4.11 It held office with a command of campaign techniques that at times won the envy of fraternal political parties elsewhere.
- 4.12 Today, the Labor Party struggles to staff polling booths, even in held seats. The 2010 election saw many important polling booths around Australia unstaffed or understaffed for the first time in living memory. Labor has always been proud of its ability to generate and rely on its membership for strong electoral organisation on the ground. For many members this has been a source of great disappointment. As one member said to the Review Committee in Perth:
- "We are not drones or worker bees. We have looked at most other parties and seen that they do not represent our core values and that is why we are members and help or contribute in any way that we can."*
- 4.13 Added to this, members are not participating in branch affairs, policy committees and conferences to the degree they previously have. The Review Committee was overwhelmed by the weight of opinion in the Party on this matter. The membership of the Party want to see democratic life in the Party enhanced with a clear role for member decision making at all levels of the Party. Fundamentally, the Review Committee accepts the view put to it by a member in Hobart:
- "It's about respect: respect the members and members will be there."*
- 4.14 The Review Committee believes developing a modern and meaningful role for members within a democratic party is the fundamental challenge facing the modern Labor Party.
- 4.15 For Labor to effectively develop and articulate a modern reform agenda, it must stay closely connected to the broader progressive community, and our connection to Australia's youth must be revived. This is best done by ensuring that we are open and authentic about our values and committed to involving members and reaching out to supporters. Labor must reach out to the progressive movements which already exist in Australia and which previously have provided the Party with innovation in policy and ideas.
- 4.16 New ideas and approaches available to the Party must be utilised. Using online strategies have been at the core of the Party's work since we became one of the first political organisations in the world to have a website. Using social media to connect with supporters is essential. So too is building new opportunities for feedback and involvement online, like that encouraged for participation in this Review. The Party must recognise that plurality in progressive politics allows us to consider new organising models that can help the Party grow and develop into the future.
- 4.17 In this Report the 2010 Review Committee maps out a path for the Party to rebuild and prepare itself for a tougher electoral battleground. No longer can the Party consider itself as solely occupying the progressive political space in Australia. We *must* take this opportunity to build the Labor Party of the 21st century.

Recommendation 1: That these recommendations be forwarded directly to the National Conference of the ALP, as resolutions, rule changes, and amendments to the National Principles of Organisation (NPOs) for debate and determination by delegates.

5 Growing the Labor Party

“There is a huge rift, a massive divide between rank and file members and the leadership who show them very little respect. A solution may be to review the servicing versus organising systems for their operations. We should move away from servicing the membership and look at training and organising the membership.”—Member, Brisbane

Labor’s national membership of approximately 45,000 represents only 0.002 per cent of the Australian population. This proportion for the Labor Party represents an alarming and historic low. Public estimates now put the number of members of third party campaign organisations at ten times the size of the Labor Party.¹ To tackle the dual problems of an aging and declining membership Labor must now invest resources into growing and building Party membership.

- 5.1 The Party must recognise how difficult the challenge we face is: if we do not grow and expand our membership, if instead membership continues to decline, then discussions about ‘party democracy’ become meaningless with so few members participating in decision making processes. The Review Committee recognises that much effort must be dedicated to growing Party membership in the first instance.
- 5.2 The Party’s focus on election campaigning has often come at the expense of dedicating resources to party-building activities. Maintaining a vibrant and democratic party requires resources, and too often these resources have not been available or have not been made available.
- 5.3 Some examples from previous generations should provide context for the decline in party-building activities.
 - sports clubs for tennis, cricket and bowling were a feature of Party life in the 1930s
 - in the 1940s, Labor created an outreach organisation for young people called the Australian Labor League of Youth (ALLY) which was autonomously run by young people with camps, excursions and social events organised for young people to introduce them to Labor politics
 - through the 1970s and 1980s in NSW, the Party ran evening classes and tutorials on policy, ideas and campaigning through the Henry Lawson College. These activities were open to all Party members to broaden their participation, and skills, in Party affairs
 - the Party nationally, until 2004, circulated a national *Labor Herald* magazine to all members.
- 5.4 These examples cannot be totally replicated in the current era. Nor should blind nostalgia dominate our understanding about Labor’s past. Labor parties in the Anglo-Saxon world rarely had the mass membership and rich and well-funded community and cultural life that were characteristic of socialist and social democratic parties in the Scandinavian and German speaking world. Complaints about the decline of ALP branches and the involvement of young people are not new. But it does appear to the Review that, when all allowances are made, our Party is facing historic challenges because of social and cultural changes.

¹ Third Party organisation GetUp! is now cited as having 350,000 members. Media report, *So loudly they cannot be ignored*, Sydney Morning Herald, June 19 2010.

- 5.5 Growing and rebuilding the Labor Party should not be seen as something divorced from our electoral challenges. A strong, well organised branch membership undoubtedly contributes to electoral success. We are in fact seeing a return to the importance of the 'local' in campaigning as voters become more desensitised to mass advertising, more diverse in their social interactions and more exposed to competing political viewpoints. At a time when the Party has moved into opposition in a number of states, the power of a strong, locally based and respected organisation should not be under-estimated. As one national official of the Party put to the Review:

"Labor's future campaign victories depend on both the 'ground war' and the 'air war'. We need a motivated, skilled campaign force that builds on our real presence in Australian neighbourhoods and communities. We also need alternatives to the resources provided by corporate Australia, which are likely to become less available over time as a result of community distrust of the donations process, and associated changes in corporate behaviour, as well as legislative responses."

- 5.6 The Party started its life through members and Party organisers explicitly seeking to build a local presence for Labor. Organisers would travel incredible distances by bicycle, on horseback, train, car or even on foot to go to towns and centres to establish a Labor branch. Local members would regularly engage their community to recruit prominent members to Labor's cause, encourage them to consider becoming candidates or simply to ensure that Labor's message was heard by a larger audience. These men and women were the 'community organisers' of their day.
- 5.7 It should be noted that the new British Labour Leader, Ed Miliband, has recently encouraged the Labour Party in the United Kingdom to re-embrace community organising as a model for growing and building the Party. Mr Miliband has argued that the British Labour Party must be rebuilt 'from the bottom up'. He aims to recruit and train 10,000 community organisers for British Labour. That party is now looking to the lessons from the US experience of mass participatory member and supporter politics, employing President Obama's organising mentor to assist them.² It should be remembered by Australian Labor members and supporters that British Labour has a membership in excess of 200,000, almost five times our current membership.
- 5.8 The Review Committee believes that resources must be dedicated to party-building work and to community organising initiatives. This should start in a systematic way, including looking to boost the skills of existing members.
- 5.9 The Review Committee believes that the Party should also explicitly adopt an organising approach to growing the Party membership. This should be realised in the form of a National Director for Party Organising, directly employed by the National Executive, to deliver on a membership target agreed by the National Executive.
- 5.10 The Party should also formalise training activities through the creation of a national organising and training institute or academy. This body would be responsible for organising classes and courses for members and supporters on building the Labor presence in local communities, as well as becoming a new home for the Party's campaign training initiatives. The experience internationally is that without

2 'Miliband hires Obama mentor to revive Labour', in the New Statesman, January 6, 2011.

a dedicated program of training and skills development, growth initiatives lack depth and often, after a burst of enthusiasm, fall by the wayside. For the Party to re-establish itself on firmer ground, a permanent repository for organising work must be established by the Party.

- 5.11 An initiative which would recognise the continuing efforts of the membership of the Party, would be for the National Executive to establish a small grants scheme to facilitate positive community engagement by branch members. Under such a scheme, members could apply for grants to conduct membership drives, produce recruitment materials, host community BBQs, or contribute to existing community campaigns around local issues. To ensure that a grants scheme was not abused, a board of prominent senior Party members could oversee its operations. Creating a small grants scheme would be a genuine recognition of the value members bring to the life of the Party.
- 5.12 The Review Committee makes these recommendations against a background of electoral law reform in NSW which has removed the capacity for donations to be received by the Party and which mandates expenditure of funds on party-building activities. The impact of these new electoral laws on Party processes and behaviour will warrant close attention by Labor at the national level.

Recommendation 2: That, as a first step towards re-engaging with Party members, the National Secretariat conduct the first national survey of Party members to seek their views, expectations and attitudes to the Party. Suggestions about improving Party organisation should also be sought. That the results of the survey be published in summary form to members.

Recommendation 3: That the National Executive discuss and determine a membership growth target for increasing membership over the next five years, with progress targets set for each year. That membership numbers achieved be reported on an annual basis to the membership.

Recommendation 4: That the National Secretariat and state branches dedicate an adequate and meaningful budget allocation to new party-building activities. That state and territory branches of the Party report to the National Executive on their budget allocations and activities annually.

Recommendation 5: That the Party explicitly adopt a community-organising model which aims to empower and equip members to work in their local communities on campaigns, to build stronger community connections and to recruit members.

Recommendation 6: That the Party appoint a National Director of Organising as a standalone position to grow membership and to assist the building of better branches. That the National Organising Director report growth activities to the National Executive.

Recommendation 7: That the Party establish a cost-effective national campaigning, organising and training academy to boost the skills, awareness and knowledge of members to allow them to better participate in party-building and recruitment activities.

Recommendation 8: That the Party grant an amnesty to former members who have left the Party over the past five years, but who are willing to rejoin. That the amnesty include the restoration of full membership rights; but that this amnesty not be extended to any former member who has brought discredit on the Party or its representatives.

Recommendation 9: That a system of small, annual grants be established at national level to assist with party-building activities. That local branches be encouraged to apply for grants and the scheme be overseen by a panel of senior Labor Party members, removed from the day-to-day affairs of the Party.

Recommendation 10: That branch correspondence to parliamentary representatives and state and territory branches should be responded to promptly to ensure branch members are aware their contribution has been considered. That Party units be permitted to have correspondence not responded to within three months brought to the attention of National Executive members by automatic inclusion in the agenda papers of National Executive.

6 A real voice for members

“There’s a disconnect here between us and the national level of the party. Branches could elect conference delegates directly to the National Conference”—Member, Victoria

- 6.1 In 2001, the Hawke–Wran Review handed down its recommendations, including as its first substantive recommendation that the structure of the National Conference be changed so that:
*“...The increased participation of rank and file members be encouraged through the direct election of a component of the National Conference...”*³
- 6.2 Despite this recommendation featuring so prominently in the Hawke–Wran Report of a decade ago, the Party at a national level has failed to implement this key, democratic reform. Again during this review process, the members of the Party from all states and territories raised the issue of direct membership representation and a member voice in key Party forums.
- 6.3 The 2010 National Review supports the recommendation of the Hawke–Wran Review and recommends its adoption in this report.
- 6.4 Furthermore, we recommend that the delegates be elected by postal ballot with the same voting requirements as the ballot for National President.
- 6.5 In 2002, the Special National Rules Conference also instituted a directly elected National President, so that members of the ALP had a voice at the highest levels of the Party. This was only accepted by the conference with the proviso that the National Presidency was rotated between three directly elected members. This has produced an unworkable situation whereby Presidents are ‘shuffled’ in and out of the role over a three-year term. The original intent of Hawke–Wran should be implemented, with a directly elected President elected to serve a full term, and with two Vice Presidents also elected in a separate ballot.
- 6.6 Additionally, this Review Committee recommends that the National President and Vice Presidents be made voting members of the National Executive, in recognition of their role as advocates for the interests of members.
- 6.7 The Review Committee also recommends that the new system of electing the President and Vice Presidents at national level be replicated for all state and territory branches by an amendment to the National Constitution.
- 6.8 The Review Committee recognises that reform can be difficult and presents challenges for the Party. Some of these are cost related, and others relate to the need for a change to long established patterns of behaviour and culture. We would urge the National Executive and the National Conference to consider the consequences of inaction on these matters. The Review Committee was struck by evidence from state and territory officials of the Party, that while the practice of ‘branch stacking’ has been largely curtailed by the reforms of the late 1990s and 2000s, a new practice of ‘branch stripping’ has arisen in its place whereby branches are discouraged from recruiting members and having

3 Recommendation 1, National Inquiry of Review 2001,

them participate in the affairs of the local area. This allows individuals to then exert greater influence over the outcome of ballots and contests for positions. The Review Committee believes that the only way to confront issues like this is to open up the processes of the Party to greater involvement by the members themselves, thus giving them the responsibility of deciding who will represent them at the highest levels of the Party.

6.9 It is time to give members a direct say in the affairs of the Party.

Recommendation 11: That the structure of the ALP National Conference be changed to enable the increased participation of rank and file members through the direct election of a component of the National Conference.

Recommendation 12: That any rank and file ballot for conference delegates be held concurrently with the ballots for the National President and Vice-Presidents, and that it also occur by postal ballot.

Recommendation 13: That the National Constitution be amended so that the National President, elected by the membership of the Party, serve a full three year term. That a separate ballot of the membership be held to elect a Senior Vice President and Junior Vice President also to serve a full three year term. That all three members elected be granted full voting rights on the National Executive.

Recommendation 14: That the National Principles of Organisation of the Party be amended to provide for the direct election of the Party President and Vice Presidents at state and territory level, based on the model proposed in this Review for the national level.

7 Integrity in our structures

“The Platform has to mean something. It doesn’t have to dictate the minor detail of the policy but it does have to provide a framework for decision making by a Labor government.”—National official

- 7.1 The alienation of the membership from decision-making was evident at the last National Conference of the ALP. At that Conference no contested proposition was put to a vote. The thinking underpinning this is repeated in state conferences, policy committees and even local branches across the country.
- 7.2 Rather than encourage innovation and debate, Party units are increasingly being urged to display ‘discipline’ over ‘diversity’. Through the last decade of government at state and territory level, Party conferences have become bland, anodyne affairs where the colour and movement of the Party has been replaced by set piece speeches and consensus voting. The life has been draining out of the Party.
- 7.3 Our Conferences, both state and federal, are the central democratic forums of our Party. Organisationally, they are the democratic basis for all referred power to executives and head offices. Politically, they set the platform and rules for the Party. The Review Committee believes that the central role of Labor’s democratic conferences must be restored.
- 7.4 The development of the Platform has evolved over time, most notably through the creation of a single National Policy Committee (NPC). This body has now completed three reviews of the National Platform and developed three drafts which were presented at the 2004, 2007 and 2009 National Conferences. These documents all reflected the evolutionary nature of the National Platform and based Platform commitments on the enduring values of our Party. They did not, however, have the resources to reach beyond the Party to find the new ideas and policy innovation which should form part of Labor’s policy development process.
- 7.5 One reform, which has been successfully implemented in New South Wales which has impressed the Review Committee is the creation of a Central Policy Branch, based in Sydney. This body acts as a local branch meeting for many in the city and surrounding suburbs, and through the invitation of guest speakers and a program of lectures, encourages members to engage with major policy questions facing the state and nation. As one member from Tasmania said to the Review:
“I would love more of an opportunity to argue, discuss and thrash things out. I’d love to get a whole heap of branches together to talk about our relationship to the Greens and other parties here in Tasmania. We should have forums to work through the issues.”
- 7.6 The Review Committee recommends that the NSW model be extended to other states and territories.
- 7.7 Preselection processes are critical to the integrity of the Party. Branch members repeatedly raised concerns about the extent of National Executive, and indeed state executive, intervention into the democratic workings of the Party. The Review Committee does not take a simplistic view of these matters. The Labor Party maintains a democratic constitution which includes the capacity for the National Executive and state executives to defend the best interests of the Party.

- 7.8 The Review Committee notes however that the degree and depth of executive intervention has increased in recent years. This ‘corporatising’ of the affairs of the Party, whereby the top echelons of the Party exercise great authority on a regular basis, is now having a deleterious impact on the Party. It has caused a sickness at local branch level leading members to become disillusioned and in some instances leave the Party. The issue of rank and file preselections was most often raised by members in relation to this practice. The Review Committee was struck that in some places around the country members had not exercised a vote in a preselection ballot for nearly ten years, due to repeated National Executive and state executive intervention.
- 7.9 The value of these interventions must be weighed against the impact that they have of the morale of our branch members. The Review Committee believes that the National Conference, through amendment to the National Constitution and National Principles of Organisation, should restrict the current unrestrained ability of the Party’s executives at all levels to deprive members of a preselection ballot.

Recommendation 15: That federal, state and territory ministers be required to report back to respective Party conferences on the implementation of platform and policy commitments.

Recommendation 16: That the National Principles of Organisation ensure that state and territory conferences be solely based on the principle of 50 per cent representation for members and 50 per cent representation for affiliates. That the practice of including additional delegates from administrative committees, policy committees, Young Labor, and the parliamentary parties in the members’ component cease. That any affiliation of non-industrial party affiliates in the future (e.g. LEAN or Rainbow Labor) not be included in the affiliates component, which should be quarantined to trade union representation only.

Recommendation 17: That ‘batt’ or dual voting—a system which offends the principle of one vote one value—not be permitted under Party rules in any circumstances.

Recommendation 18: That only financial members of an affiliated trade union be eligible to represent that union at Party conferences.

Recommendation 19: To encourage the participation of more affiliated trade union members in the Party, that affiliated trade unions be requested to ask members to opt in to Party involvement (e.g. primaries, representing the union at Party conferences) on joining or renewing union membership.

Recommendation 20: That the National Policy Committee be reformed to create a series of National Policy Committees that reflect the Caucus Committees of the FPLP.

Recommendation 21: That the National Policy Committees incorporate into their consultative arrangements a series of workshops and roundtables with key community organisations, academics and researchers working in areas of policy innovation.

Recommendation 22: Noting the power to co-opt members to the National Policy Committee has not been utilised, that in future all National Policy Committees be strongly encouraged to co-opt expert members who are not factional appointees.

Recommendation 23: That NSW Labor's successful model of a Central Policy Branch be extended to other state and territory capitals and to major regional centres such as Newcastle, Wollongong, Launceston, Townsville, Fremantle, and Bendigo or Ballarat. That a National Policy Branch be established online, which would assist state-based central policy branches by providing national lectures, presentations and seminars online for Party members.

Recommendation 24: That the decisions of the National Appeals Tribunal (NAT) be binding determinations on the Party. That the membership of the NAT be expanded and that matters be heard by more than one member.

Recommendation 25: That intervention in Party preselections by the National Executive and state administrative committees only occur as a last resort, rather than a first resort, and then only in exceptional circumstances.

8 Engaging the community

"I think we could be more lateral in how we achieve outcomes in branches. I am an advocate for actively engaging the community and ascertaining what concerns them. I would love to see local members of parliament get involved in regular 'politics in the pub' and support initiatives such as local business women's lunches."—Member, NSW

- 8.1 Labor's many millions of supporters live and work in their communities. Many are active in charitable organisations or on their local P&C. Our supporters are active unionists and small business people, pensioners, students, academics and working parents. Labor's supporters are as diverse as the nation itself and reflect its many skills. Like so many Australians, many are also time poor and juggling work and family responsibilities.
- 8.2 Getting supporters to participate in the development of policy and the selection of candidates is often difficult because of this. It is also difficult because many of the Party's rules require too great a time commitment for Party supporters.
- 8.3 The Review Committee believes that the Party must consider a number of 'bridging' organisations and approaches which enable our supporters to participate in some of the Party activities they are most interested in, without having to formally become a Party member.
- 8.4 The three areas most important in this regard:
 - participating in values-based campaigns
 - having a say on policy
 - helping to select Labor's local candidates.
- 8.5 So many of the Party's supporters participate in campaigning activities, such as through NGOs and social justice causes. Such issues based campaigning has been completely absent from Labor's activity for a number of years. In place of Labor being active in this space, groups like GetUp! have arisen to work with progressive Australians on key areas of social and political change.
- 8.6 Within the progressive political community, there exists more space for organisations of this type to emerge, including those explicitly linked to the ALP. Through such an organisation the Party could engage with our supporters and potential supporters through our core values and key issues campaigns.
- 8.7 Sometimes these campaigns may take positions contrary to existing Party policy, however this should be seen as a positive rather than a negative. Bringing greater political innovation into our policy development process would be beneficial.
- 8.8 The Review Committee supports the idea of the formation of a standalone organisation of progressive Australians, linked to the ALP to conduct campaigns in this way. The organisation should seek donations from the community and be involved in broad political issues rather than the narrow affairs of the Party, and be governed by an independent board.
- 8.9 The Review Committee has also been convinced by the arguments put forward in relation to moving towards a system of primaries for the preselection of endorsed Labor candidates. The Review Committee is impressed by the trial conducted in Victoria which contributed to a significant increase in interest in local Party membership in the region. The committee is also convinced by the ability of a system of primaries to lead to greater participation by members of affiliated unions and our many supporters.

- 8.10 For a primary system to be successful a number of checks-and-balances would need to be put in place, particularly in relation to candidate expenditure. It will be critical to ensure that no primary system is open to abuse.
- 8.11 In New South Wales, the Party has established a new organisation called Community Dialogue, under the stewardship of former Deputy Premier John Watkins, which aims to help community organisations deliver better outcomes for the causes they represent. The concept also broadens the interface and opportunities for both elected representatives and rank and file members to engage with, and better understand, important community issues. An internal advocacy organisation of this type would certainly assist progressive community organisations to ensure that their voices were heard across the organisational, parliamentary and even industrial wings of the Party.
- 8.12 The Review Committee believes many of Labor's supporters are community-minded and would welcome many more opportunities to participate in the deliberations of the Party—on their terms. These recommendations will provide new avenues for participation and also encourage supporters to become full members of the Party.

Recommendation 26: That the Party nationally implement a tiered system of Party primaries for the selection of candidates. That this commence in open and non-held lower house seats and be considered for held seats in the future. That a system with three weighted components be established comprising a 60 per cent component drawn from local Party members, 20 per cent from members participating from affiliated trade unions, and 20 per cent from registered Labor supporters in the community. That safeguards to prevent any corruption of this system be put in place such as:

- the principle of one vote, one value be enshrined to ensure that double or triple-voting not occur
- there be minimum participation requirements in the union and community components of a primary to ensure that low participation does not distort results
- that all participants be enrolled to vote for a minimum of three months and have a verifiable address within the electorate.

Recommendation 27: That the Party at a national level create a outreach organisation, which provides the following for progressive Australians:

- an online presence where they can engage with progressive ideas and policies
- a place to organise progressive campaigns
- an opportunity to engage with the Australian Labor Party.

That this organisation be governed by a board of independent, senior party people and young activists drawn from the Party, union movement and progressive third party organisations.

Recommendation 28: That the Party at a national level institute a Labor Community Dialogue program as has occurred at state levels of the Party, to facilitate access and discussion between the Party, community organisations and community leaders, and that this be supported by an active series of online engagement opportunities that would connect progressive community organisations with the Party at both a membership and parliamentary level.

Recommendation 29: That the Party's National Principles of Organisation be amended to allow the affiliation of like-minded organisations, in addition to industrial unions. Furthermore, that campaign groups such as the Labor Environment Action Network and Rainbow Labor be granted ex-officio delegate rights at state and territory conferences and policy committees, once they are able to demonstrate and verify membership of a sufficient size.

9 Utilising online resources for Party growth

- 9.1 In the last two years the Party has increased its involvement with web based organising and communicating. The 2010 election campaign represented the most connected campaign ever delivered by the Party at any level. The huge capacity for the internet to facilitate greater involvement in politics is being recognised worldwide.
- 9.2 In the early 1990s the ALP was one of the world's first political parties to have a website, however we remain one of the few among comparable countries not to have iPhone, iPad or Google Android applications for supporters.
- 9.3 The development of handheld mobile devices greatly increases the capacity for instant feedback, supporter involvement, or indeed to turn supporters into active participants in Labor's campaigning efforts.
- 9.4 Recently the Party has begun investing in a new infrastructure to facilitate this. The new LaborConnect function as part of www.alp.org.au is powered by Australian developed software 'Community Engine'. This function enables Labor supporters to comment on articles, join affinity groups and participate in online discussions on policies or campaigns. The potential for this tool to be expanded and used to assist party building activities should be obvious. Further resourcing of this area should be considered by the Party nationally.
- 9.5 The creation of the online 'Think Tank' function on www.alp.org.au has also assisted with feedback from members and supporters. This Review was the first major Party consultation to have benefited from the new function. Over 3500 members and supporters participated, the largest single interaction during the Review process. The ability to post brief, targeted contributions seems to have inspired many people to participate.
- 9.6 Through this function contributors suggested that an online branch be created, a recommendation from the Hawke–Wran Review of a decade ago, which perhaps was ahead of its time. As one supporter said:
- "It is time, that the Party ensure branch meetings were conducted via the use of a web based conference room. It would not be practical for all members to have their say, due to time constraints. But it would give every member the opportunity to keep abreast of important matters being raised as well as branch activities. This would, I am sure, encourage more members to attend branch meetings and engage in a wider range of party activities."*
- 9.7 The Party should investigate the ways an online branch would operate, along with establishing whether online activities which assist in building the online Labor community could be recognised formally by the Party.

Recommendation 30: That Labor Connect be expanded as a membership organising and campaigning tool.

10 Making affiliation meaningful

- 10.1 Australia's union movement remains at the bedrock of the Australian Labor Party. The affiliation of trade unions is a key characteristic that makes Labor different from other progressive parties around the world.
- 10.2 The union movement has also been a source of innovation for the Labor Party throughout our history. Successful policy ideas like superannuation and parental leave started their days in the debates and struggles of unions and their members. The Review Committee believes that the Party and affiliated trade unions could cooperate more closely in the Labor interest.
- 10.3 Labor's connection to the union movement links us to the largest non-government organisation in Australia, with two million members. No other political party can claim to be able to draw on so many people for support as Australian Labor. Maintaining a modern link with the union movement is vital to Labor's success in the future.
- 10.4 The union movement has undergone a period of profound change over the last 15 years. Australian unions have 'modernised' at a time when the Party has not. Confronting declining membership levels and the election of the Howard Government, Australian unions from 1996 embraced what became known as the 'organising model' over traditional union servicing of members. This organising model restored the democratic role of members within union structures, sought to develop campaigns from the bottom-up, and looked to broader alliances outside of the workplace to build success. It also embraced the need to grow union membership as the fundamental challenge facing the movement. The Australian Labor Party could learn from this experience and the types of organisational and cultural changes it has driven.
- 10.5 Labor should expand existing forums for cooperation, such as the Labor Advisory Councils, and also create new forums specifically for campaigning and growing membership.

Recommendation 31: That ALAC and state based Labor Advisory Committees be expanded to include a new Campaigns and Growth Forum based on the ACTU model. That this forum be established at national level of the Party to connect affiliated trade unions, the Party and the FPLP into a more meaningful dialogue on shared challenges.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The recommendations contained in this 2010 National Review Report, if implemented, will represent the Party's largest ever modernisation.
- 11.2 The Review Committee believes that the time has come for Labor to re-establish its credentials as the voice for progressive Australians and for our Party organisation to reflect this goal.
- 11.3 The issues raised by members and supporters are real and if they go unaddressed will do damage to the Party electorally and threaten our long-term survival.
- 11.4 By providing a positive roadmap for action this Review Committee has provided the Party with a way forward. It is now up to the members of the Party to ensure that our great Party of reform grows and prospers into the future.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: That these recommendations be forwarded directly to the National Conference of the ALP, as resolutions, rule changes, and amendments to the National Principles of Organisation (NPOs) for debate and determination by delegates.

Recommendation 2: That, as a first step towards re-engaging with Party members, the National Secretariat conduct the first national survey of Party members to seek their views, expectations and attitudes to the Party. Suggestions about improving Party organisation should also be sought. That the results of the survey be published in summary form to members.

Recommendation 3: That the National Executive discuss and determine a membership growth target for increasing membership over the next five years, with progress targets set for each year. That membership numbers achieved be reported on an annual basis to the membership.

Recommendation 4: That the National Secretariat and state branches dedicate an adequate and meaningful budget allocation to new party-building activities. That state and territory branches of the Party report to the National Executive on their budget allocations and activities annually.

Recommendation 5: That the Party explicitly adopt a community-organising model which aims to empower and equip members to work in their local communities on campaigns, to build stronger community connections and to recruit members.

Recommendation 6: That the Party appoint a National Director of Organising as a standalone position to grow membership and to assist the building of better branches. That the National Organising Director report growth activities to the National Executive.

Recommendation 7: That the Party establish a cost-effective national campaigning organising and training academy to boost the skills, awareness and knowledge of members to allow them to better participate in party-building and recruitment activities.

Recommendation 8: That the Party grant an amnesty to former members who have left the Party over the past five years, but who are willing to rejoin. That the amnesty include the restoration of full membership rights; but that this amnesty not be extended to any former member who has brought discredit on the Party or its representatives.

Recommendation 9: That a system of small, annual grants be established at national level to assist with party-building activities. That local branches be encouraged to apply for grants and the scheme be overseen by a panel of senior Labor Party members, removed from the day-to-day affairs of the Party.

Recommendation 10: That branch correspondence to parliamentary representatives and state and territory branches should be responded to promptly to ensure branch members are aware their contribution has been considered. That Party units be permitted to have correspondence not responded to within three months brought to the attention of National Executive members by automatic inclusion in the agenda papers of National Executive.

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