



M C K E L L I N S T I T U T E

ANNUAL
REVIEW

2021

ABOUT THE MCKELL INSTITUTE

The McKell Institute is an independent, not-for-profit, public policy institute dedicated to developing practical policy ideas and contributing to public debate.

SYDNEY

Michael Buckland CEO

Marni Lefebvre POLICY ANALYST

Alice Stafford COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Jesse Thomas EVENTS & OPERATIONS OFFICER

Felix Zerbib ECONOMIC POLICY ANALYST

MELBOURNE

Ryan Batchelor EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MCKELL VICTORIA

BRISBANE

Rachel Nolan EXECUTIVE CHAIR, MCKELL QUEENSLAND

ADELAIDE

Edward Cavanough DIRECTOR OF POLICY

FOR MORE INFORMATION

PHONE (02) 9113 0944

OR VISIT www.mckellinstitute.org.au

PHOTO CREDITS: Anna Kucera (P4-5, 7), Graham Denholm (P20-21)

Contents

6	Chair's statement / Hon. Dr Craig Emerson
7	CEO statement / Michael Buckland
8	McKell Queensland / Hon. Rachel Nolan, Executive Chair
9	McKell Victoria / Ryan Batchelor, Executive Director
10	Key Events
14	Reports & Research
19	Impact
23	Governance



“We must ensure the next chapter of our national story is about building a nation where our economy works for all Australians and where all of our people, not just some of our people, have opportunities to thrive and prosper.”

HON ANTHONY ALBANESE MP,
MCKELL INSTITUTE PRE-BUDGET
ADDRESS ON 6 MAY 2021.





CHAIR'S STATEMENT

Hon. Dr Craig Emerson



Once again, the McKell Institute spent much of 2021 online as many of us returned to life in lockdown. Having adjusted to work from home and the delivery of virtual events in 2020, we were able to maintain our positioning at the forefront of state and federal policy debates. For a decade now, McKell has been committed to big ideas – and in light of the COVID crisis, big ideas have never been more important.

This year, Premier Dominic Perrottet and the NSW government have ramped up their support of our proposal to replace stamp duty with land tax – our first ever policy recommendation put forward 10 years ago in our report *Homes For All*.

McKell also had a landmark win in November of this year. After exposing rampant wage theft in NSW's blueberry industry in our 2020 report, *Blue Harvest*, the Fair Work Commission announced that farm workers in the agriculture industry will now receive a guaranteed minimum wage. This announcement came after the AWU's year-long case to ensure that these workers have a safety net and get the fair day's pay they deserve.

We've released more than 20 reports this year and hosted more than 40 events. Speakers at McKell functions included Reserve Bank Governor Phillip Lowe, Shadow Treasurer Dr Jim Chalmers MP, former Obama Adviser Betsey Stevenson, NSW Opposition Leader Chris Minns MP, Queensland Treasurer the Hon Cameron Dick MP and NSW Secretary of Health Elizabeth Koff.

In May we hosted the annual pre-Budget address with the Leader of the Opposition the Hon Anthony Albanese MP. The Labor Leader outlined his priorities for Australia's economic future ahead of the Federal Government's Budget.

McKell also published a report, *Power to the People*, analysing the economics of community batteries to store surplus solar power. Our recommendations were adopted as Federal Labor policy.

A big welcome to the newest members of the McKell Institute's Research Committee, which now comprises Professor David Peetz, Dr Angela Jackson, Professor Richard Holden, Professor Emeritus Joellen Riley, Dr Tim Williams and Professor John Hewson AM. This team brings extra depth and rigour to McKell's fantastic research program.

We have a big year ahead of us in 2022, with a federal election on the way. Under the leadership of CEO Michael Buckland, the McKell Institute will continue to advance its progressive policy agenda and influence reform across the country.

CEO STATEMENT

Michael Buckland

2021 marks ten years since the McKell Institute was founded and the impact of our team and supporters has never been clearer.

The Australian Workers Union won their landmark case to set a minimum wage for fruit pickers following our report that found workers in the industry were paid as little as \$3 an hour.

When Labor Leader Anthony Albanese outlined his overhaul of the Childcare Subsidy, he was addressing the McKell Institute for the launch of our report – “Why reform of the Child Care Subsidy would strengthen Australia’s economy.”

When NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet was challenged in parliament to outline the benefits of his transition from stamp duty to land tax, he cited the McKell Institute submission to his tax review.

The NSW Government extended the toll relief program to small businesses as one recommendation from our package of proposals to support shift workers and tradies.

And just weeks after the McKell Institute outlined how pharmacies can accelerate the vaccination roll-out, the Prime Minister increased the number of pharmacies delivering COVID-19 vaccines from 65 to over 2,000.

Our reports this year covering community batteries, land tax, childcare, the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, gender equality and representation, support for shift workers and tradies, infrastructure, wage theft, wage growth and the digital divide all led to action taken by leaders.

Our impact on policy debates was a result of our hard-working and growing research team. Their passion, insight, and ability to translate complex policy into workable solutions are what makes the McKell Institute unique.

2021 was a challenging year for most Australians. Young people and women were impacted severely by economic lockdowns while support for some sectors remained stubbornly inadequate.

It was heartbreaking to see so many people shut down in inadequate housing, compounded by social isolation. When governments make the big decisions that affect



our lives, they have a responsibility to support the people most affected.

While our national attention was rightly focused on the immediate needs of workers and industry, we cannot ignore the pressing issues that will continue long after the pandemic abates.

Insecure work, housing affordability, gender inequality, wage theft and wage growth are just some of the issues that have been left unaddressed.

The McKell Institute is proud of championing big reform. We will take on these issues in 2022 as we strive for a more equal society.

Good policy begins with dialogue. Despite the disruption throughout 2021, we continued to host state and Commonwealth Ministers and Shadow Ministers. Bringing people together to discuss big ideas felt more important during those days stuck at home.

Thank you to our Chair, Craig Emerson, and all our Directors whose guidance and support has been invaluable.

And a special thanks to our members and sponsors who sustain the McKell Institute. Your engagement and insight allow us to continue to make the changes Australia needs.

EXECUTIVE CHAIR, THE MCKELL INSTITUTE QUEENSLAND STATEMENT

Hon. Rachel Nolan



2021 was an extraordinary year for Queensland. The state closed its borders and took an aggressive approach to the suppression of Covid-19. The result has been that Queensland has avoided the harshest impacts of the pandemic which locked down New South Wales and Victoria for months and which ravaged public health in the Asia Pacific and the world.

And yet from this position of isolation, our state's political leaders – Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, Brisbane Mayor Adrian Schrinner and the federal Minister for Sport ventured to Tokyo where Brisbane and South East Queensland were named host for the 2032 Olympics, the most global and interconnected event in the world.

This juxtaposition of the domestic and the international; the inward and outward looking has always been at the heart of Queensland's civic debate and the theme ran through the research and events program the McKell Institute Queensland delivered in 2021.

In the year passed, McKell Queensland has expanded its membership to include corporations from a broader range of key economic sectors. We now bring together business and union leaders from tech, law, resources, energy, banking and finance, property, education, retail and health. We have provided those members with access to a diverse range of speakers including Opposition Leader David Crisafulli, Deputy Premier Steven Miles, Shadow Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers, new Under Treasurer (Treasury Secretary) Leon Allen, Environment Minister Meaghan Scanlon and the perennially colourful voice from the North, the longstanding Federal Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter.

Our boardroom discussions have offered members insight into a range of critical and influential views and informed the policy research the Institute has undertaken.

In addition to influential national policy work on the importance of infrastructure, the policy architecture suppressing wages in Australia, the importance of universal childcare and the costs of the delayed vaccine rollout, McKell Queensland has developed research projects including – *Bridging Queensland's Digital Divide*; *Active transport* (not coal fired cars), and *How only more women can fix Parliament's "culture" problem*

As Executive Director, I have developed a new podcast, Deep North, which seeks to get to the critical thinkers and issues in Queensland's civic debate and I provide regular media commentary, arguing the case for good policy, particularly through a weekly spot on the ABC.

In November this year, I stepped down as Executive Director of McKell Queensland but I retain involvement in the Institute by joining existing Chair Eleanor Dickens as co-Chair. I believe very firmly in the need for a strong, expert, independent voice for good policy. The McKell Institute provides that and I believe that its growth will continue under our next Executive Director.

I thank the Board for its support in 2021 and extend best wishes to departing director Dr Linda Colley, who is taking up an important public sector role. I thank the corporate, union and NFP members for their contribution and engagement and our many supporters for backing our work and being part of a movement that consistently says good policy matters.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE MCKELL INSTITUTE VICTORIA

Ryan Batchelor



No one likes to admit they were wrong, but last year I wrote 2020 was a year like no other, and it turned out that 2021 was a convincing rerun of our pandemic *annus horribilis*.

Public policy is about learning, analysing, and coming up with new and better solutions for the policy challenges we confront. The job of policy reform is never complete because circumstances change, and we are required to think and rethink about the issues that confront us. Our role here at the McKell Institute is to be active participants in thinking about how we can improve the way we live, work, and interact as a community. These two years have given us more time stuck at home than ever before to be contemplating these questions.

While 2021 has felt like an endless rerun of 2020, the opportunity it provides us as policy professionals is to change the reasons why we got stuck here in the first place and to address these problems at their core. Repeating the same mistakes is not a sign of determination or conviction, but a stubborn intransigence.

To my mind, the central lesson from the pandemic is that a well-functioning government that takes active and purposeful steps to deliver what the nation (or state) needs is fundamental to a prosperous community. A purposeful government that makes sure our health services are well resourced, that we have a domestic industrial capability to provide us the goods we need, access to local amenity with healthy and green communities, and a place to call home with a secure roof over our heads. The Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine rollout was the exact opposite of this, and the shambles and delay had serious consequences. A lesson we need to learn from.

On a relative scale, the COVID disruptions to our activities here at the McKell Institute were insignificant compared to what has happened to others during the pandemic. But nevertheless, as Melbourne became the most locked down city in the world, 2021 once again saw our program of events interrupted. After a good start to the year with a series of Executive Luncheons including with Commonwealth Minister for Superannuation, Senator the Hon Jane Hume, and Chair of the Productivity Commission Michael Brennan, and a pre-budget breakfast with the Victorian Treasurer Tim Pallas MP, restrictions in the second half of the year prevented further in-person events.

Our research agenda has remained strong and active, with new research published examining insecure work, portable entitlements, housing, infrastructure, aviation support, early childhood education, and much more. The diversity of our research portfolio definitely keeps us busy and engaged. Of significance has been a landmark report with Lifeline Australia on how Victorians responded to the pandemic, their mental health, and when they called for help.

At an organisational level, it has been a pleasure working with Michael as he commenced as McKell's national CEO in January. Michael brings enthusiasm, policy curiosity, and solid values to the task of running a think tank. It was also a pleasure working with outgoing Queensland Executive Director Rachel Nolan, along with the rest of the McKell staff.

My particular thanks to Kelvyn Lavelle, Chair of McKell's Victorian Advisory Board, and Victorian advisory board members Liberty, Luke, Mary, Chris and Susie. You have all provided invaluable counsel, ideas, advice and much needed reality checks during our second year of extended lockdowns.

Here's to a very different 2022.



Key Events 2021

FEBRUARY

Senator Hon Jane Hume, Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and the Digital Economy,

kicked off our events program for the year to discuss the current state of superannuation, a year into the COVID-19 pandemic.

HOSTED BY MLC LIFE INSURANCE

Virtual Summit in partnership with

Thrive by Five on Australia's early childhood education and care system, featuring ACTU President Michele O'Neil, The Parenthood CEO

Georgie Dent, Thrive by Five CEO Jay Weatherill AO, philanthropist Lucy Turnbull AO and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia CEO Mohammad Al-Khafaji

MARCH

Secretary for the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Simon Phemister,

on the Department's COVID recovery plan for business precincts and industry development.

Hon Kristina Keneally and **Hon Wayne Swan** joined our Digital Event Series to discuss their contributions to the book

'The Write Stuff: Voices of Unity on Labor's Future', edited by Nick Dyrenfurth and Misha Zelinsky.

APRIL

Michael Brennan, Chair of the Productivity Commission,

addressed our members on budget policy, retirement incomes, Commonwealth-State relations, social policy and infrastructure financing.

HOSTED BY ALLENS

Zoe Daniel, former ABC News US Bureau Chief,

joined our Digital Event Series to discuss her latest book, 'Greetings from Trumpland'.

Shadow Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care, Clare O'Neil MP,

delivered a public address to outline the economic case for aged care reform.

Rod Sims, Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission,

joined us for an exclusive roundtable discussion.

HOSTED BY ALLENS

NSW Shadow Treasurer, Hon Daniel Mookhey

MLC, on the NSW Property Tax Proposal.
HOSTED BY PLENARY



Senior Fellow of the United States Studies Centre, Bruce Wolpe; ABC journalist Fauziah Ibrahim; and McKell Institute Chair Craig Emerson featured as part of our Digital Events Series to discuss the Biden presidency.

MAY

Deputy Under Treasurer, Leon Allen, joined us to discuss the state of Queensland's economy, as Treasury prepared the June budget.
HOSTED BY ORIGIN ENERGY

Victorian Treasurer Tim Pallas MP joined us for a Pre-Budget Address breakfast.
HOSTED BY PLENARY

Treasurer and Minister for Investment, Hon Cameron Dick joined us for a Pre-Budget Address Dinner.
HOSTED BY PLENARY

Professor Andrew Wilson, Chair of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, spoke on the impacts of the Budget 2021-22 on the pharmaceutical industry and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.
HOSTED BY ABBVIE

Leader of the Opposition, Hon Anthony Albanese MP, joined us for our Annual Pre-Budget Address.
HOSTED BY EY

JUNE

Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation, and Minister for Sport, Hon Stirling Hinchliffe, on South East Queensland's 2032 Olympic bid.
HOSTED BY ALLENS

Philip Lowe, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, addressed our members on recent

developments in Australia and global economics.
HOSTED BY ALLENS

Treasurer and Minister for Investment, Hon Cameron Dick, joined us to discuss the Queensland 2021/2022 budget.
HOSTED BY ENERGY QUEENSLAND

Senator Pat Dodson, Dr Jackie Huggins and Minister Leeanne Enoch joined us for our public event, 'Voice, Treaty, Truth: The Pathway to a Better Australia'.
HOSTED BY DELOITTE



JULY

Federal Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter, on how Australian super funds can invest in Northern Australia.
HOSTED BY QIC

In partnership with the **Progressive Policy Institute**, we hosted a virtual summit on civil integrity, misinformation, free speech and the role tech has played in elections.

AUGUST

Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Hon Chris Bowen MP, addressed our members on the climate-related jobs opportunity for Australia.

Peter Van Onselen, academic and author, featured on our Digital Event Series to discuss his new book, 'Who Dares Loses: Pariah Policies'.

SEPTEMBER

Minister for the Environment and Youth Affairs, Meaghan Scanlon MP, joined us to discuss the Queensland Government's new climate action plan.

Former Obama Adviser Betsey Stevenson joined our Digital Event Series, along with **economist Angela Jackson** and **McKell Institute Chair Craig Emerson**, to discuss big reform.

Author Gideon Haigh spoke to us in an online conversation run in partnership with the Melbourne Writers' Festival, about his new book 'The Brilliant Boy'.

Shadow Treasurer Dr Jim Chalmers MP addressed our members on the economy, before and after COVID.
HOSTED BY STOCKLAND

In Conversation with Lech Blaine, on his Quarterly Essay 'Top Blokes: The Larrikin Myth, Class and Power' as part of our Digital Event Series.

Annika Smethurst, state political editor for The Age, on her new book, 'The Accidental Prime Minister'.

OCTOBER

Shadow Health Minister, Hon Mark Butler MP, addressed our health members on the Government's COVID response.

Shadow Minister Infrastructure, Transport & Regional Development, Hon Catherine King MP, on Labor's approach to infrastructure policy and investment.

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Art, Hon Paul Fletcher MP, joined our Digital Event Series to discuss governing in the internet age.



QLD Opposition Leader David Crisafulli MP on Queensland's pathway to prosperity.
HOSTED BY TELSTRA

David Bradbury, Head of Tax for the OECD, joined us in discussion on international tax challenges and reform opportunities.

NOVEMBER

David Gonski AC discussed corporate social responsibility in modern Australia, as part of our Digital Event Series.

Minister for Digital and Customer Service, Hon Victor Dominello MP, spoke on the NSW Government's digital infrastructure and data projects.
HOSTED BY TIKTOK

Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development, Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, delivered a public address on the economic case for investment in early childhood.

Paul Martyn, Director-General for the Department of Energy and Public Works, addressed our members to discuss energy and innovation in Queensland. *HOSTED BY AGINIC*

QLD's Deputy Premier, Hon Dr Steven Miles, spoke on how the Olympics may shape Brisbane as a city.
HOSTED BY ALLENS

Sean Kelly joined our Digital Event Series to discuss his latest book, 'The Game: A Portrait of Scott Morrison'.

DECEMBER

NSW Opposition Leader, Chris Minns MP, joined us to discuss Labor's emerging priorities, in the final year before the NSW election.
HOSTED BY AFTERPAY

NSW Secretary of Health, Elizabeth Koff, addressed the final executive luncheon for the 2021 Health Policy Series.
HOSTED BY ABBVIE

Van Badham and Nina Jankowicz featured as part of our Digital Event Series to discuss internet cults, disinformation and democracy.



Reports & Research

As COVID-19 continued to impact Australia throughout 2021, keeping Australians safe remained the primary focus of policymakers. But important debates also emerged regarding Australia's post-COVID recovery.

In 2021, the McKell Institute released fifteen major reports examining issues as diverse as portable entitlements and wage growth, housing affordability and superannuation, the troubled vaccine rollout, reforms to redundancy and improving our health system – each advancing new ideas aimed at ensuring our recovery from COVID-19 leads to a fairer, more prosperous Australia.

2021

Submission into the IR Omnibus Bill

Early in 2021, the Federal Government proposed radical new legislation dramatically altering Australia's industrial relations framework. In this submission and testimony to the Senate, McKell Director of Policy Edward Cavanough argued that the changes would accelerate Australia's insecure work crisis, and fail to adequately respond to wage theft.

Insecure Work & Portable Entitlements: A Solution for Australia

The rapid proliferation of insecure working arrangements have created a divided labour market, with one half enjoying access to entitlements such as sick and holiday leave, and the other missing out. This report proposed a new portable entitlements fund model which would extend paid leave to Australia's growing non-permanent workforce.



IN THE MEDIA

FEBRUARY 2021

Insecure Work & Portable Entitlements was authored by McKell Institute Victoria Executive Director Ryan Batchelor. The analysis from the report featured in *The Sydney Morning Herald*



The Crumbling Australian Dream: An Examination of Australia's Housing Sector

In this major report, federal member of parliament Josh Burns MP guest-authored a deep dive into the state of Australia's housing market, making the case that housing should be formally considered a human right in Australia.

Power to the People: Proposals to Increase the Rollout of Community Batteries

This report outlined how the proliferation of community batteries can help Australian households save on power bills, and make the most of Australia's unique solar-energy assets.

Counting the Cost: Australia's Delayed Vaccine Roll-out Part 1

As major mistakes in the Federal Government's COVID-19 vaccine procurement strategy became clear, this report quantified the economic costs of that blunder, focusing on the economic impacts of lengthier lockdowns that would result from the slow vaccine rollout.

Counting the Cost: Australia's Delayed Vaccine Roll-out Part 2

Following on from the first Counting the Costs report, this piece quantified the economic impact of international border closures, which were maintained as Australia's vaccination rate lagged in the first half of 2021.



IN THE MEDIA MARCH 2021

The Crumbling Australian Dream featured in *The Age* was launched by Josh Burns MP at Parliament House.



IN THE MEDIA APRIL 2021

Both parts of *Counting the Cost of Australia's Delayed Vaccine Roll-out* were authored by CEO Michael Buckland and Economic Policy Analysts Connor Wherrett and Felix Zerbib. The reports made national headlines.



Buy High, Sell Low: The early super access scheme and forgone returns on investment

This report examined the costs of the government's early access to superannuation scheme – a controversial emergency stimulus measure that resulted in more the \$30b being withdrawn from Australian superannuation accounts.



IN THE MEDIA MAY 2021

Analysis featured in the *Financial Review*.



Incentivising Tradeswork & Shiftwork Post COVID-19

While millions of Australian workers quickly shifted to work-from-home arrangements during the pandemic, at least two-thirds of the workforce remained on the job outside of home. This report highlighted the impacts this cohort were feeling in NSW during the pandemic, proposing a suite of measures aimed at alleviating cost of living pressures on working families.

Build it Here

In recent years, the NSW Government have prioritised international procurement over domestic procurement when investing in new public transport assets. This report examined the jobs impact of this offshoring policy, finding that over 4000 jobs were forgone in NSW as a result.



IN THE MEDIA JUNE 2021

McKell Institute CEO Michael Buckland appeared on 9News to discuss the *Build it Here* report.



Stuck in Neutral

Budget 2021-22 include troubling forecasts for Australian wages, predicting a real wage decrease over the forward estimates. This report examined why this was occurring – critically examining the policy preferences of the federal government that were impacting the pay packets of everyday Australians.

The Missing Link

Building on the Counting the Cost reports into Australia's vaccination rollout, this report argued that community pharmacies needed to be rapidly activated to expedite the vaccine rollout across the country.



IN THE MEDIA JULY 2021

Michael Buckland on 9News pushing for pharmacies to be incorporated into the vaccine rollout.

Bridge Over Troubled Water

Looking back on the 2020 economic hit that Victoria took, this report identified the key role that major state government investments in essential infrastructure made in keeping the Victorian economy growing.



IN THE MEDIA SEPTEMBER 2021

Analysis featured in *The Age*



Bridging Queensland's Digital Divide

In partnership with the Queensland Council of Social Services, this Telstra-sponsored report examined the state of digital inclusion in Queensland, arguing for a suite of new commitments that would ensure no Queenslanders would be left digitally disconnected as we emerge from the pandemic.



IN THE MEDIA SEPTEMBER 2021

Report coverage in *The Brisbane Times*.



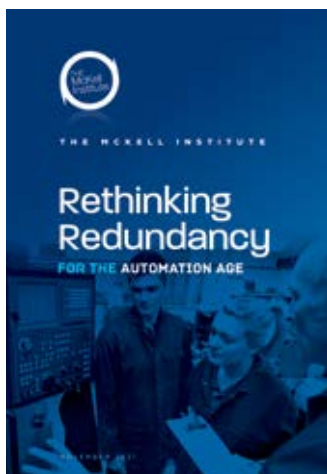
Revenue Contingent Loans to Support Small Business Recovery

Small businesses have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 recession. In this report, authored by Professor Bruce Chapman, a HECS-style income-contingent business loan scheme is proposed as one idea aimed at accelerating Australia's COVID-19 recovery.



IN THE MEDIA OCTOBER 2021

Professor Bruce Chapman's analysis discussed in *The Sydney Morning Herald*



Rethinking Redundancy for the Automation Age

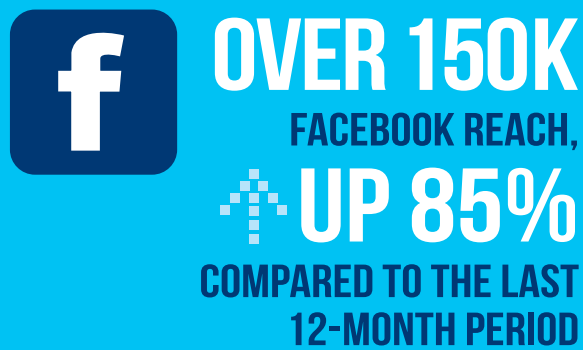
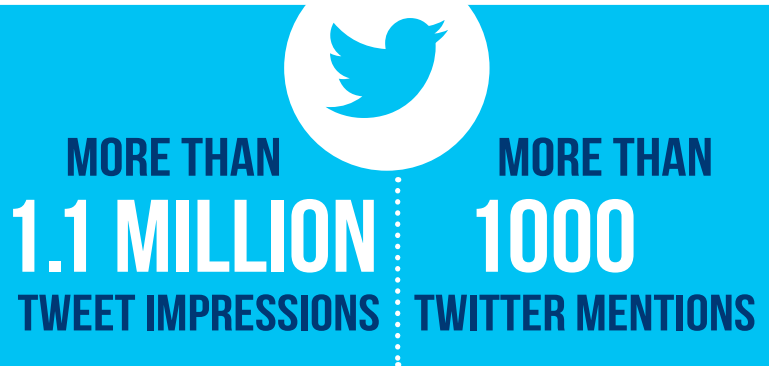
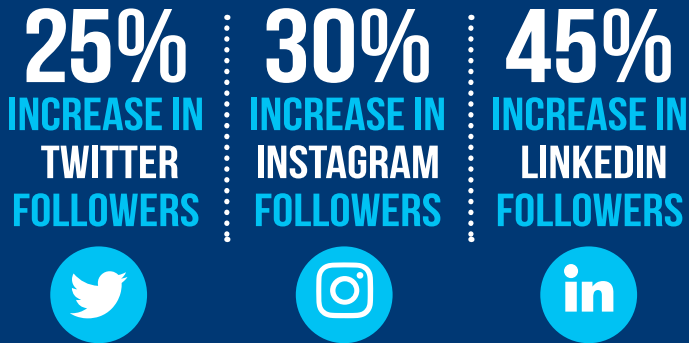
Too many Australians who lose their jobs are being pushed into long-term unemployment, instead of being offered realistic pathways to re-employment. This report explores this dynamic in the context of increasing workplace automation, arguing that improvements in Australia's redundancy framework can create a smoother retrenchment and re-employment process for millions of Australians.



Funding Rare Diseases Therapies in Australia: An Update

While Australia has a world-leading healthcare system, there remains significant gaps – especially for those living with rare diseases. This report – updating a 2014 report by the Mckell Institute – examines the funding of rare disease therapies in Australia, arguing that a more equity-focused approach is needed to extend essential medicines coverage to Australians living with rare diseases.

Impact



MENTIONED ACROSS 20+ MEDIA OUTLETS

ABC, SBS, FINANCIAL REVIEW, THE AUSTRALIAN, SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, CHANNEL 10, CHANNEL 9, CHANNEL 7, THE GUARDIAN, HERALD SUN, THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, THE AGE, DAILY MAIL, SKY NEWS, COURIER MAIL, THE NEW DAILY, THE SATURDAY PAPER, THE MONTHLY, CANBERRA TIMES, BRISBANE TIMES, THE ADVERTISER

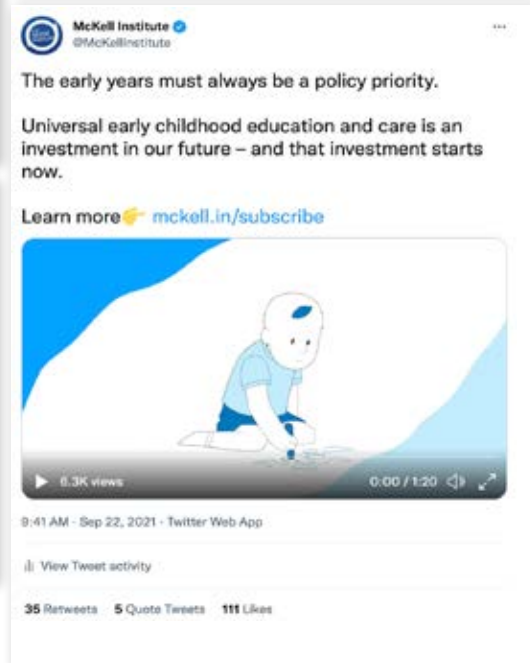
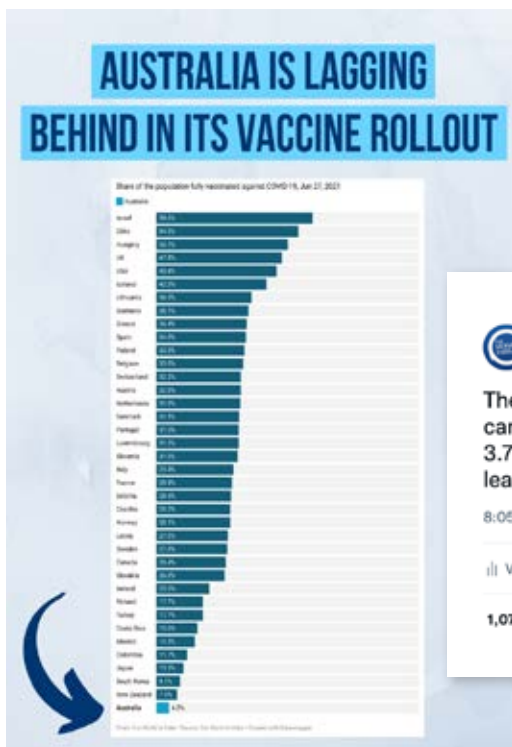
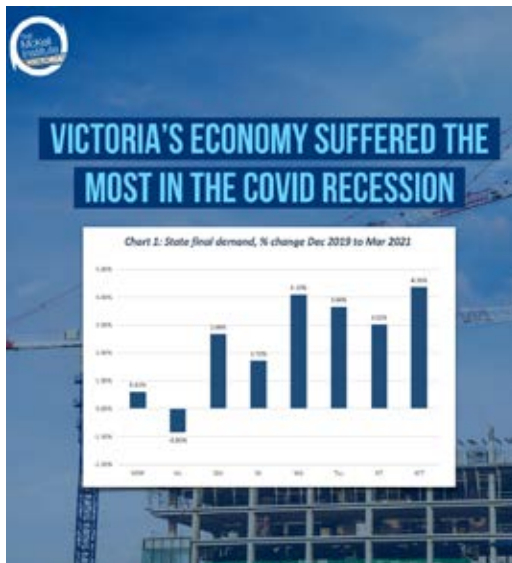
IN 2021 **WE HOSTED** 9 IGTV LIVE INTERVIEWS **AND RELEASED** 5 ANIMATED EXPLAINER VIDEOS



THE MCKELL INSTITUTE VICTORIA HOSTED **VICTORIA'S TREASURER TIM PALLAS MP** WHO OUTLINED HIS PRIORITIES AND VISION FOR VICTORIA'S POST-COVID ECONOMIC RECOVERY AHEAD OF THE 2021-22 STATE BUDGET. THE EVENT WAS PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PLENARY. 13 MAY 2021.



Instagram / Tweets



Governance

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Tim Williams, CEO OF COMMITTEE FOR SYDNEY

CONTACT THE MCKELL INSTITUTE

T. (02) 9113 0944 **E.** mckell@mckellinstitute.org.au

PO Box 21552, World Square NSW 2002

@McKellInstitute **f** www.facebook.com/mckellinstitute **@mckell_institute**

www.mckellinstitute.org.au

