



MCKELL INSTITUTE'S

# Annual Report 2024

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## A Message from the Chair

In April, I was honoured to be appointed as the third Chair of the McKell Institute.

Having previously served on the board of directors, it is a privilege to now lead the organisation during a critical period for the Institute, and for progressive policy in Australia.

2024 has been the most active year in the McKell Institute's 12 year history.

We have released 19 major research reports, spanning workers' rights, cost-of-living, housing, poverty alleviation and more.

Our events program has grown considerably, with almost 50 events held across 4 states.

Our footprint has expanded, with the establishment of a new branch in SA/NT.

And our international engagement has been revived, with the re-establishment of McKell's US program.

McKell is in a strong position today, and this is in no small part due to the work of my predecessor, Hon. Dr Craig Emerson.

For six years, Craig provided exemplary leadership and guidance to the Institute, helping the organisation build a strong foundation to make a the impact to our policy debate it is today.

I also want to thank every McKell Institute sponsor, project partner, and supporter: without your engagement, McKell wouldn't be able to do the work it does.

As we reflect on a busy and transformative 2024, we also are turning our eye towards what comes next.

2025 will be a consequential year in Australia's policy debate, with a Federal Election due by May.

Australia is confronting a number of complex long-term policy challenges, exacerbated by an increasingly fragile and unpredictable global economic and political environment.

In this context, the McKell Institute is focused on making and even larger impact on the policy debates to come in 2025 and beyond.



**DAN WALTON**  
CHAIR, MCKELL INSTITUTE

# CEO Statement

2024 has been the **McKell Institute's** biggest year since its founding in 2012.

Our events program has grown, our policy contributions have been consequential, and our reach has expanded into new jurisdictions across Australia.

## MAKING THE CASE FOR A FAIRER AUSTRALIA

We started the year on the front foot with our pre-budget submission, *Easing the Burden*, offering ideas aimed at easing inflation such as reforming HELP repayments, cutting nuisance tariffs and reforming non-competes.

Our focus then turned to the growing housing crisis.

Ahead of the NSW budget, we made the case for a \$5bn surge in social housing spending — an initiative we were thrilled to see adopted by the Minns Labor Government.

We made the case for a fairer tax treatment for those working multiple jobs; pushed for reproductive leave; examined Tasmania's wages challenge; and shone a spotlight on the growing need for poverty-alleviation in Western Sydney.

As the year ended, we pushed for safer workplaces for children with our *Safety Not Guaranteed* report delivered directly to the Attorney General.

Throughout 2024, we released 19 separate reports, covering four states and territories

as well as the Commonwealth, and commenced a number of projects we're excited to reveal in 2025.

## OPENING A BRANCH IN SA/NT

In March, South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas launched the McKell Institute South Australia/Northern Territory, to a packed house in Adelaide.

McKell is committed to driving policy change across the country, and the establishment of our latest branch represents a significant milestone in the organisation's history.

## EMBRACING NEW LEADERSHIP

McKell was happy to welcome our new Chair, Daniel Walton, in April.

Having spent a decade leading the AWU and now holding a senior executive role in the corporate sector, Dan brings a unique blend of experience that is helping guide us through a pivotal period.

We thank outgoing Chair, Hon Dr. Craig Emerson, for his six years of service to the Institute.

## BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

McKell works best when it brings people together to solve big problems.

This year, we have worked hard to do just that, pursuing collaborative projects with new partners to make the case for change. We have:

- Worked with Unions NSW and Business NSW to offer a consensus-driven path forward on essential worker housing.
- We brought together unions, business and government to find solutions to the AUKUS workforce skills gap, in partnership with the United States Studies Center.
- Kicked off a new policy partnership with the Blueprint Institute and the Susan McKinnon Foundation, identifying best-practice policy design.
- And found common ground between the Australian Workers' Union and Woolworths on labour hire licensing, to protect fruit pickers from exploitation.

## BUILDING A THRIVING EVENTS PROGRAM

Meanwhile, our Events program has gone from strength to strength.

With 47 events across four states, this was our largest program of activity, and included three Premiers, four Treasurers, Senior Bureaucrats and public officials, as well as a bipartisan roster of policy leaders across Australia.

## REVIVING OUR INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A particular highlight this year has been the revival of McKell Institute's International Program.

In September, I led a delegation of McKell sponsors to the United States, visiting policymakers, advisors and fellow think tank leaders in DC and NYC, getting an up close look at US political process.

We look forward to making our US program an annual tradition.

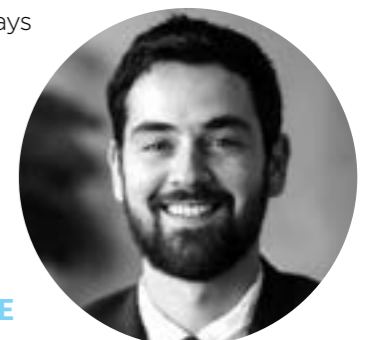
## PREPARING FOR A CHALLENGING 2025

As we turn our attention to an Australian election year in 2025, the McKell Institute is focused on making a continuing impact on the national policy conversation.

There are profound challenges facing whomever forms government after the 2025 Federal Election.

No one can predict the future. But we know that new ways of thinking, new policy ideas, and new coalitions to back in those ideas, are needed now more than ever.

**ED CAVANOUGH**  
CEO, MCKELL INSTITUTE





## MCKELL INSTITUTE VICTORIA

# ED Statement

We officially launched the Mckell Institute Victoria's 2024 agenda at Parliament House alongside Premier Jacinta Allan, a few months after she took over the leadership. We emphasised the critical need for greater economic equality, to press on with energy transition in the face of climate change naysayers, and to frame policy decision-making around fairness and opportunity for communities struggling under cost-of-living and housing market pressures.

We applauded the Allan Government's bold policy to increase housing density around activity centres, and commitment to prioritising affordability over density protest.

Having advocated for the Suburban Rail Loop to be a place-making project that drives new housing and community services, we'll continue talking about opportunities to maximise Victoria's largest-ever infrastructure investment.

Our participation in Treasurer Tim Pallas' economic development discussions provided opportunities to advocate for workers in emerging industries, explore manufacturing growth, and support microbusinesses.

In partnership with Lifeline, we urged the Victorian Government to address growing demand for mental health crisis support. We outlined a plan to leverage Lifeline's expertise to tackle systemic workforce shortages, particularly acute in regional areas.

With Maurice Blackburn, we championed reforms to legal concession fees, showing how Victoria's model enhances access to justice and deliver better outcomes for claimants.

Throughout the year, our members enjoyed direct and meaningful conversations with leaders, decision-makers and up-and-comers.

The year ends with even more urgency to ease the cost of living, and to align progressive solutions with outcomes that show people the decision-makers are on their side.

We carry this urgency into 2025, looking ahead and always striving for progressive solutions.



**REBECCA THISTLETON**

Mckell Institute Victoria  
Executive Director





MCKELL INSTITUTE QUEENSLAND

# ED Statement

2024 has been a pivotal year for the McKell Institute Queensland, as we continued to champion progressive ideas, drive impactful research, host a variety of events with key thought leaders and shape policies that support a fairer and more prosperous future for our state.

With the election looming over the year, the Future Queensland program was established to group election relevant research, events and briefings with the program offering a unique insight for McKell Queensland members and supports into the election.

The election delivered the anticipated change of Government in Queensland with Hon. David Crisafulli becoming the 41st Premier.

With every change in government comes a unique set of challenges and opportunities as the new Premier and their team seek to execute their mandate and deliver on the promises made in opposition.

At McKell we are excited to work in this space to identify the policy challenges a new government will face as they seek to drive the economy and respond to the ongoing cost of living and public safety issues that were central to the recent election.

As the year comes to a close we look forward to the new year.

With a change of Government in Queensland behind us, the new year will see a Federal election due by May with attention turning to the lessons that can be learnt from the recent state result.

We will continue to drive the discussion, create space to discuss ideas, to debate the policy challenges and to advance the solutions that are crucial to the success of this State.

**SARAH MAWHINNEY**McKell Institute Queensland  
Executive Director

## MCKELL INSTITUTE SA/NT

# ED Statement

We officially opened the McKell Institute SA/NT at the Adelaide Town Hall in March of this year.

The new branch was launched by South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas, in front of over 100 community, union, business and civil society leaders, as well as notable guests, including Attorney General Kyam Maher and former Premier Mike Rann.

The organisation's establishment in South Australia was the natural next step for McKell and an important milestone in the Institute's journey towards becoming a truly national public policy organisation, informed by communities on the ground right across the country.

The intervening 9 months have been productive. In March, I travelled to Darwin to meet with NT stakeholders. It was a valuable opportunity to hear about the issues affecting the NT and we look forward to spending more time there in 2025.

Policy and research highlights include launching our policy agenda with Fuel on the Fire: Fixing the Policy Gaps Driving Petrol Station Robberies in SA, a three-point action plan to improve workers safety in petrol stations in SA.

It was well received; many of the recommended changes are being considered by the government, and the SDA are using it as part of a wider campaign against retail violence. We collaborated across state borders with a Transition Framework devised for Mount Isa following the announcement Glencore copper mine will lay off 1,000 workers in 2025.

And we partnered with our Queensland branch and the Queensland Council of Unions to deliver Suffering in Silence - making the case for reproductive leave in Australia ahead of the ACTU National Congress. The ACTU have adopted the call for reproductive health leave to be added to the National Employment Standards.

We hosted the SA Attorney-General Kyam Maher as part of our Boardroom Lunch series and look forward to starting the new year with South Australian Treasurer Stephen Mulligan.

**GEMMA BEALE**

McKell Institute SA/NT  
Executive Director





# McKell's 2024 Highlights

The McKell Institute / Across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and South Australia

## JANUARY

**Launched Easing the Burden cost-of-living package.**

McKell published its pre-election cost of living package, which advocated for reforms to HELP loans, nuisance tariffs, non-compete clauses and more.



## MARCH

**The Launch of McKell Institute SA/NT**

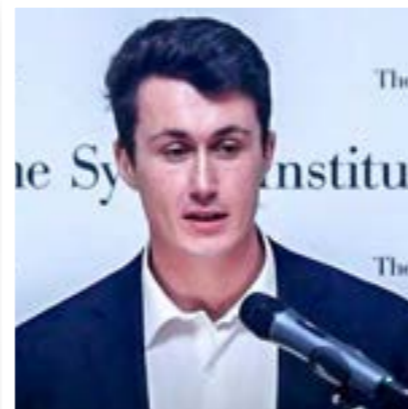
Premier Peter Malinauskas launched the newest branch of the McKell Institute, to a packed house at the Adelaide Town Hall.



## JULY

**Debating the Future of Energy**

As the nuclear energy debate ramps up, McKell's Max Douglass debated the merits of the proposal at the Sydney Institute.



## MAY

**First SA/NT report launch**

McKell SA/NT Executive Director, Dr. Gemma Beale, launched Fuel on the Fire, alongside SDA Secretary Josh Peak, calling for safer workplaces for service station workers.



## NOVEMBER

**Pushing for safer workplaces for children in Canberra**

In the final weeks of the parliamentary calendar, we stood side by side with the SDA to push for safer workplaces for young workers and children, taking our message directly to the Attorney General.



## SEPTEMBER

**Reviving our International Program**

Ahead of a consequential US election, McKell convened members and supporters in the US, engaging key stakeholders in Congress, the White House, the Harris Campaign and more.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

## FEBRUARY

**First event of 2024, with Treasurer Jim Chalmers**

The Treasurer kicked off McKell's events calendar, outlining the government's proposed reforms to the Stage 3 Tax cuts in an address in Brisbane.



## JUNE

**Major Social Housing Win**

With the NSW Budget came a \$5bn commitment on social housing — echoing McKell's pre-budget submission proposal co-written with St Vincent De Paul Society NSW.



## AUGUST

**Convening AUKUS stakeholders with the United States Studies Center**

In partnership with the USSC, McKell brought together AUKUS supply chain stakeholders to explore challenges facing the program's implementation and workforce development.



## OCTOBER

**Bringing Unions + Business together on housing**

As the Housing Crisis escalated, McKell collaborated with both Unions NSW & Business NSW to find answers to the issues facing essential workers.

## DECEMBER

**Pushing for investment in mental health**

We argued for the Victorian Government to invest more in frontline mental health services, in partnership with Lifeline Australia.



## APRIL

**Welcomed our new Chair, Daniel Walton**

The Institute farewelled outgoing Chair, Hon. Dr. Craig Emerson, and welcomed new Chair Daniel Walton at a ceremony in Sydney.



# Events 2024

**The McKell Institute** / Across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and South Australia

## FEBRUARY

- Treasurer of Australia Hon Dr Jim Chalmers joined us in Brisbane just days after the Albanese Government announced changes to the Stage 3 tax cuts, making the powerful economic and moral case for reform.  
*Held in partnership with MLC Life Insurance*
- Victorian Premier Hon Jacinta Allan emphasised the importance of progressive policy solutions in tackling wealth inequality and driving the government's plans for energy transition and affordable housing in Melbourne.  
*Held in partnership with Maurice Blackburn*
- Former Queensland Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women Shannon Fentiman joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Brisbane.  
*Held in partnership with Deloitte*

## MARCH

- SA Premier Peter Malinauskas formally launched The McKell Institute's new state branch in Adelaide, established to address policy challenges across South Australia and the Northern Territory.
- We joined forces with the Progressive Policy Institute out of Washington D.C., to launch a new report into encryption and innovation as it relates to the future of work in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.
- Victorian Minister for Development, Precincts and Creative Industries Hon Colin Brooks joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.  
*Held in partnership with Mirvac*







# Events 2024

**The Mckell Institute /** Across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and South Australia

## APRIL

- Former Lord Mayor of Brisbane and 2032 Games Venue Review Lead Graham Quirk spoke to our members for a boardroom dialogue in Brisbane.  
*Held in partnership with Allens*
- The Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury Hon Dr Andrew Leigh delivered an address to the Institute on non-compete clauses and the effect of such clauses on labour mobility, wage growth and innovation in Sydney.  
*Held in partnership with Allens*
- New South Wales Minister for Police and Counter-Terrorism and Minister for the Hunter Hon Yasmin Catley spoke to our members as part of our boardroom dialogue series in Sydney.  
*Held in partnership with the Police Association of New South Wales*
- The Mckell Institute's former Chair Hon Dr Craig Emerson handed over the reins to our new National Chair Dan Walton, in celebration with the organisation's members and friends in Sydney.
- New South Wales Treasurer Hon Daniel Mookhey MLC spoke to us ahead of the state budget, highlighting NSW Labor's priorities across housing, education, energy and the cost of living crisis in Sydney.  
*Held in partnership with Clayton Utz*

## MAY

- Victorian Minister for Climate Action, Energy and Resources, and Minister for the State Electricity Commission Hon Lily D'Ambrosio joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.  
*Held in partnership with Allens*
- Victorian Treasurer Hon Tim Pallas addressed our members ahead of the state budget in Melbourne.  
*Held in partnership with Plenary*
- Victorian Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Outdoor Recreation Hon Steve Dimopoulos joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.  
*Held in partnership with the Port of Melbourne*
- Former CEO of Housing Australia Nathan Dal Bon spoke to us as part of a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.  
*Held in partnership with Stockland*
- New South Wales Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Work Health and Safety Hon Sophie Cotsis addressed our members for a boardroom dialogue in Sydney  
*Held in partnership with IAG*
- Former Deputy Queensland Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment Hon Cameron Dick joined us ahead of the state budget.  
*Held in partnership with Suncorp*



# Events 2024

**The McKell Institute** / Across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and South Australia

## JUNE

- Former Queensland Premier Hon Steven Miles delivered an address on Queensland Day, speaking to his government's priorities for the future of the State.

*Held in partnership with Maurice Blackburn*

- Independent Member for Goldstein Zoe Daniel joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.

*Held in partnership with The Parenthood*

## JULY

- Former Queensland Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services Hon Bart Mellish spoke to our members as part of a boardroom dialogue in Brisbane.

*Held in partnership with John Holland*

- New South Wales Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage Hon Penny Sharpe MLC joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.

*Held in partnership with Allens*

- Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health Hon Ged Kearney delivered a keynote address as part of our boardroom dialogue series in Melbourne.

*Held in partnership with Anacta*

- New South Wales Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast Hon Ryan Park joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.

*Held in partnership with AbbVie*







# Events 2024

**The Mckell Institute /** Across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and South Australia

## AUGUST

- Minister for International Development and the Pacific Hon Pat Conroy addressed the Mckell Institute on the Albanese Government's Pacific agenda, highlighting the importance of Australia's relationship with the Pacific through climate change resiliency, labour mobility and sports diplomacy.

***Held in partnership with Lendlease***

- Victorian Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Employment Hon Vicki Ward spoke to our members as part of a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.

***Held in partnership with CBRE***

- New South Wales Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Customer Service and Digital Government James Griffin joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.
  - The Mckell Institute's Future Queensland event series kicked off ahead of the October election, starting with a boardroom dialogue featuring former members of parliament Lawrence Springborg AM and Kate Jones.
  - We partnered with the United State Studies Centre to convene a stakeholder workshop on the AUKUS trilateral partnership, attended by trade union officials, defence industry leaders and representatives from the state government opposition.
  - Minister for Industry and Science Hon Ed Husic joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Brisbane.
- Held in partnership with Anacta and the Translational Research Institute***
- Political pollsters and Redbridge directors Kos Samaras and Tony Barry gave the Institute's network a masterclass on voter sentiment, based on their work through focus groups and data analysis.

## SEPTEMBER

- Minister for Tourism and Trade and Special Minister of State Senator the Hon Don Farrell briefed the Mckell Institute in Sydney on the Government's electoral reform agenda.

***Held in partnership with Zurich Financial Services***

- We held our second Future Queensland event showcasing perspectives from the cross bench, featuring Katter Australian Party Leader Robbie Katter and Independent Member for Noosa Sandy Bolton.

Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health Kat Theophanous spoke to our members as part of a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.

***Held in partnership with Built***



# Events 2024

The McKell Institute / Across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and South Australia

## OCTOBER

- We held our third and final Future Queensland event featuring Queensland Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth Hon Sam O'Connor and former Queensland Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice Di Farmer.

**Held in partnership with Origin**

- New South Wales Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Hon Jenny Aitchison joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.

**Held in partnership with John Holland**

- South Australian Attorney-General and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector Hon Kyam Maher MLC spoke to our members as part of our inaugural boardroom dialogue in Adelaide.

- Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Infrastructure Delivery Josh Bull joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.

**Held in partnership with Incolink**

- New South Wales Attorney-General Hon Michael Daley addressed our members as part of a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.

**Held in partnership with Maurice Blackburn**

## NOVEMBER

- New South Wales Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Water, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast Hon Rose Jackson MLC spoke to our members as part of a boardroom dialogue in Sydney.

**Held in partnership with the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW and the PAYCE Foundation**

- Assistant Minister for a Future Made in Australia and Assistant Minister for Trade Senator the Hon Tim Ayres delivered a keynote on the Albanese Labor Government's strategic priorities in Sydney.

**Held in partnership with Business NSW**

- The McKell Institute hosted an end of year drinks function in Melbourne to close out 2024 and celebrate with friends and members.

**Held in partnership with Anacta**

## DECEMBER

- Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services Hon Stephen Jones reflected on fifty years of the Trade Practices Act in Sydney, emphasising the need to revitalise consumer law in 2024.

- The McKell Institute hosted its annual Chairman's Dinner in Sydney to toast the end of a busy year.

- CEO of Homes Victoria Simon Newport joined us for a boardroom dialogue in Melbourne.

**Held in partnership with Stockland**

- Minister for Financial Services Hon Stephen Jones spoke to our members as part of a boardroom dialogue in Brisbane.

**Held in partnership with MLC Life Insurance**



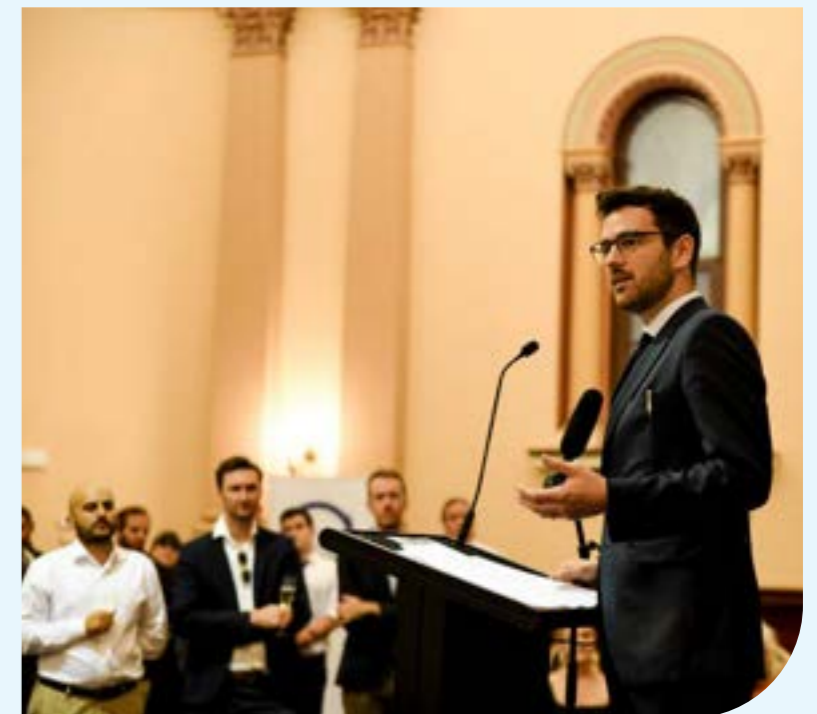


SPOTLIGHT

# Launching McKell SA/NT

“The establishment of the McKell Institute in South Australia probably comes as one of the most timely choices McKell has made”

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIER PETER MALINAUSKAS.**



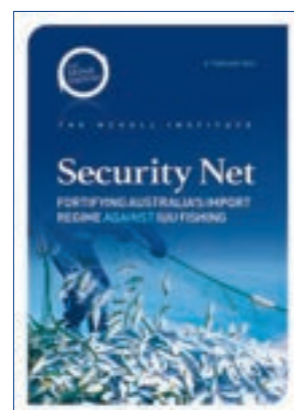


# Policy & Research



## Easing the Burden

Our plan to address the cost of living crisis.



## Security Net

Our plan to prohibit seafood generated from exploited labor from entering Australia.



## A Better Deal

Our plan to fix Tasmania's broken public transport system.



## Immediate Aid, Measurable Impact

Our analysis of St Vincent de Paul Society's poverty alleviation work in NSW.



## Breaking the Cycle

Our plan to improve wage justice in Tasmania.



## Security Through Social Housing

Our plan to inject \$5bn into NSW social housing.



## A Model for the Nation?

Our plan to improve class action policy in Australia.



## Bridging the Gap

Our plan to improve wage justice in Tasmania.



## Gig Work Reform & Workers' Compensation

Our plan to deliver more rights to gig workers.



## A Stronger Safety Net

Our plan to deliver more financial services to low income Queenslanders.



## Fuel on the Fire

Our plan to make service stations safer for workers.



## A Closure Framework for Mt Isa

Our plan to ensure workers in Mt Isa have a future after a mining closure.



## Suffering in Silence

Our plan to provide paid menstrual leave.



## A Healthy Queensland

Our pre-election analysis of the state of Queensland's health system.

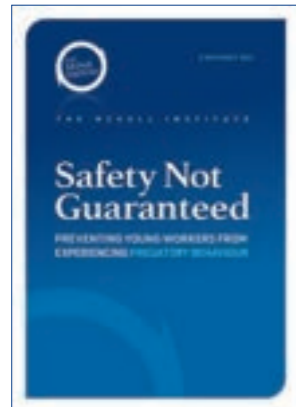


## Submission: NSW Essential Worker Housing Inquiry

Our 7-point plan to deliver essential worker housing in NSW.

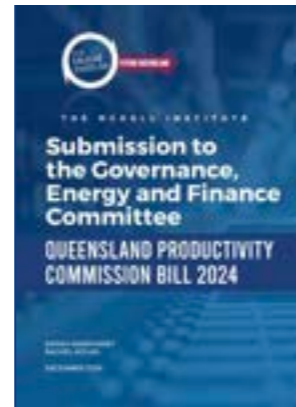


# Policy & Research



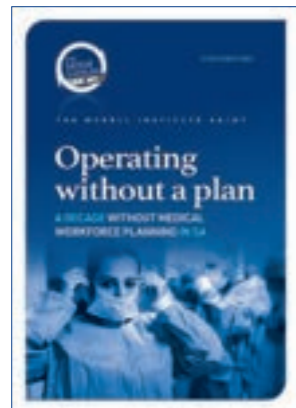
## Safety Not Guaranteed

Our plan to protect vulnerable young workers in the workplace.



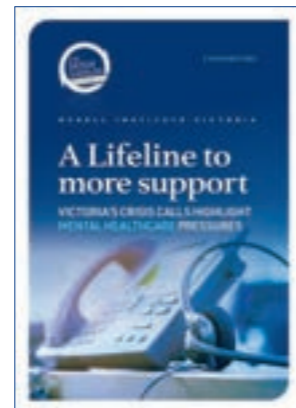
## Submission: Queensland Productivity Commission Bill

Our plan to strengthen Queensland's productivity commission.



## Operating Without a Plan

Our plan for improved workforce planning for doctors in South Australia.



## A Lifeline to More Support

Our plan for more mental health services in Victoria.





## SPOTLIGHT

# McKell's US Tour

Between September 16-20, McKell Institute CEO Ed Cavanaugh led a 9 person delegation in Washington DC, Philadelphia and New York City to learn about the policy debates shaping the 2024 US election.

For five days, the McKell delegation heard directly from think tanks, policymakers, staffers, and other experts who are shaping the political discourse ahead of November 5.

The McKell Institute delegation  
with President Joe Biden's  
Communications Director, Ben La Bolt,  
in the White House, September 2024





### SPOTLIGHT / US TOUR



### A UNIQUE WINDOW INTO THE US POLITICAL PROCESS

McKell's 2024 International Program granted its participants a rare insight into the political process during one of the most consequential election years in memory. We look forward to convening another group in 2025.



# McKell In the Media

McKell research, commentary and analysis has been featured in media around the country throughout 2024.

## Labor must fix housing crisis or share the House with Greens

**Property**  
Drastic action is necessary or the Greens' moral outrage over the cost of homes for young voters will keep Labor on the path to minority government.



Ed Cavanough

The idea of the Greens holding the balance of power in the House of Representatives is a visceral horror for Labor. But that's exactly what will happen unless the Albanese government becomes much more forceful – and passionate – about addressing the housing crisis.

Right now there's a gaping emotional void in the housing debate that only the Greens are filling. They have become the only party effectively expressing the moral outrage that struggling Australians feel about the cost of homes.

The housing crisis is not an abstract economic debate. It is shaping millions of Australian lives. About 70,000 people aged 25-34 have left Sydney in recent years. We now have not only a working poor community, we've developed a working homeless community – people with jobs who are unable to afford a roof for their families.

The federal Coalition's astute, debunked super-fix housing parlor games have alienated the Liberals from a serious role in the housing debate. The real opposition on housing is now the Greens – and they're gaining ground.

For those already comfortably established on the housing ladder it can be hard to recognise just how effective the Greens are being. But make no mistake: Man Chandler Mather's very visible frustration with the status quo is resonating. It's hitting hard not just with young voters, but with everyone who has been left behind by unaffordable housing.

Labor hasn't publicly and privately about Chandler Mather, who they view as a cynical player of student-style politics who champions impractical way fixes. But the



The housing crisis needs urgent action from Labor. PHOTO: DION GEORGIOPOULOS

**What the government should do now is further leverage its unique historical advantage – allied state governments.**

way Chandler Mather expresses his outrage on housing is more important than the specifics of the policies he is championing.

Those who hear his message and vote for the Greens aren't doing so expecting Adam Bandt to be prime minister. They will do so to vent frustration at the status quo that they see Labor and the Coalition basically upholding.

When Labor uses technocratic language to deride Chandler Mather as intransigent, it

only serves to intensify this appeal. Effectively, Labor is telling those animated by the Greens' housing anger that if you really think drastic intervention is needed in the Australian housing market, you're immature too.

This all feels like a recipe for boosting the number of Greens in parliament and granting them the role of kingmaker. The Greens think so, too. Victorian Greens state leader Samantha Ratnam's nomination for the federal seat of Wills, a Labor stronghold, signals their confidence.

So, how can Labor avoid the freight train coming for it? Most obviously, the Albanese government needs to better articulate the frustration that most people feel with the housing crisis.

To be fair, the government is hardly sitting on its hands. The Housing Assistance Future Fund and setting a target for 1.2 million homes over five years is bold. But these measures also won't deliver enough homes to solve the crisis. And other initiatives, such as Help-to-Buy, will only help a few thousand families per year.

What the government should do now is further leverage its unique historical advantage – allied state governments.

Labor is in power in every single state and territory, save Tasmania. That creates potential for something genuinely game-changing when it comes to the provision of social housing. It is state governments, not the Commonwealth, which determine the quality and quantity of social housing in Australia.

The McKell Institute recently partnered with the St Vincent De Paul Society NSW to propose a \$5 billion multi-year funding

surge in NSW to help arrest the appalling state of social housing stock and its availability in the state. We did this because we recognise that it is at state level that social housing delivery happens.

The Greens, by contrast, advocate building a new Commonwealth entity to do, in large part, what the states are already doing. This is a bad idea. It would institutionalise a form of social housing delivery at a level of government dominated by conservatives, who ideologically oppose social housing, while minimising the role for the states, which are more often run by progressive governments.

The federal government could champion a National Social Housing Surge – the wholesale transfer of many billions from the Commonwealth to the states to accelerate and expand existing social housing pipelines.

Such a surge would ultimately take the sting out of private rentals, particularly at the low end of the market, where too many families are getting squeezed out.

And, most importantly, in a political sense, it would demonstrate real, immediate action. It would show people that Labor means business on the housing crisis. It would make clear that genuine frustrations in the electorate are shared by those with real power.

Either way, drastic action is necessary, and soon. Careful not to respond to the Greens by playing the steering policy card or the groupy-dad will keep Labor on the path to minority government.

Ed Cavanough is chief executive of the McKell Institute.

## The Daily Telegraph

### Often scorned, but social housing works for all of us



Edward Cavanough & Yolanda Saiz



**S**ocial housing has been unfairly maligned for decades as undesirable. It wasn't always this way. After WWII, states and territories wrecked with the commonwealth to build thousands of homes annually to meet the needs of the growing population.

This culminated in a moment under Menzies where governments, not the private sector, built one in five new homes.

Fast forward to today and social housing accounts for just 3.8 per cent

of all housing nationally and 4.5 per cent in NSW. The total number of social housing households has actually gone backwards according to the most recent census.

But social housing offers a way forward for everyone. Yes, it provides homes for those who are desperate. But it also helps cut the cost of rentals for the lower end of the market by reducing competition for private properties.

What would help everyone is a model of social housing that delivers people who need it a place to live near

local services and transport. Social housing that doesn't tack the problem away, but rather provides residents with actual support to address the issues they may be facing.

The good news for the NSW government is this model isn't theoretical.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW currently runs 502 properties that house close to 900 people. These are brand new homes built to high energy and accessibility standards that give people a dignified place to call their own.

Vitality, these housing complexes provide residents with professional wrap-around support, tailored to meet their individual needs. This more sophisticated approach is vital and it's how the Society has been able to support people like Lisa.

After leaving an abusive relationship and living in an overcrowded granny flat, Lisa was able to secure a home at one the Vincent NSW social housing sites.

This new home has allowed Lisa to balance part-time work, study, and caring for her child.

She's close to local services, such as public transport.

Her son is now able to bring over friends from school.

The details of Lisa's life may seem unremarkable, but the scary reality is that for so many this kind of existence is increasingly out of reach. Where Lisa previously had to live one day at a time, she can now look ahead with certainty and security. These needs are what must be at the core of how we treat housing as a society.

During the last state election, the now-NSW government committed to a target of 30 per cent of public land being used to develop social and affordable housing. This is a commendable ambition.

But it should not be used by some as a loophole of convenience to build housing in areas that lack infrastructure.

Building in the usual or unsuitable areas is an easy option that will only perpetuate the failures of the past.

We know that good-quality social housing can transform lives for the better. We want to see housing that gives people support and stability in areas close to services.

Edward Cavanough is chief executive of the McKell Institute. Yolanda Saiz is chief executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

“If you’re a teacher, you don’t get to choose your own pay rate. You can’t side-hustle your way to a \$200,000-a-year job and just aspire harder to get more money,”

**ED CAVANOUGH IN THE AFR, ON THE STAGE 3 TAX CUT REFORMS.**



“If the parliament adjusts the Stage Three package to include those making less than \$45,000 a year it could make a significant difference to the lives of low-income workers,” Ed Cavanough, CEO of the McKell Institute. “Given the cost of living crisis, and its disproportionate impact on women, including those on less than \$45,000 a year could make a very significant social difference.”

**ED CAVANOUGH IN WOMEN'S AGENDA, ON THE STAGE 3 TAX CUT REFORMS.**

“The federal government could champion a National Social Housing Surge – the wholesale transfer of many billions from the Commonwealth to the states to accelerate and expand existing social housing pipelines.”

## FINANCIAL REVIEW



## McKell In the Media

### MERCURY

“A new report by the McKell Institute has found that Tasmania’s per capita investment in public transport is the lowest in the country.”

### NEWS

“The McKell Institute wants changes made to the way multiple job-holders are taxed so workers can access their own money more quickly,”  
**The progressive think tank’s chief executive Ed Cavanaugh said it was a practical way to help those in need.** “We know that the majority of people that are working multiple jobs are doing so on lower incomes,” he said.

### hack

“Is tax killing your side hustle?”



The cost of Wage theft

### THE NEWDAILY

**Rebecca Thistleton, executive director for Victoria at the McKell Institute, said most first-home buyers won’t have enough super to make a serious contribution towards a deposit.**

“Even though it may appeal in theory to a lot of young people, if they went to their super fund and had a look at their current balance, they’ll find it wouldn’t make much of a difference,” she said.

### THE AUSTRALIAN

**Progressive think tank McKell Institute policy analyst Max Douglass wrote a report published on Thursday and said since it started in July 2020,** “the Supreme Court of Victoria has seen a much larger number of filings indicating it is now the jurisdiction of choice for claimants”.

### ABC

“A 2024 report by the McKell Institute found the current system failed to adequately service areas of most need and recommended transport infrastructure be prioritised — such as additional bus lanes, rapid buses and/or light rail”



McKell In the Media

Sunday Mail, 5 May 2024



PROGRESSIVE BRITAIN

“As Starmer and his team prepare for a difficult budget, and a difficult year ahead, they should start to closely examine the progressive jurisdictions where Labor governments are doing very well – at the state government level in Australia”

The Sydney Morning Herald

“The new way of building housing that could lower construction costs by 20 per cent...”

The Canberra Times

“We need to recognise this [gig economy] model is an anachronism – a capital-labour relationship from the 19th century being rebranded as a model for the future”.

Exploitative platforms sink to new low



AS MILLIONS of businesses absorb a rise in workers' wages, Australia's largest ride-share platform has handed its drivers a pay cut.

Navigating the Fair Work Commission's newly decisions on the minimum wage, which from July 1 rose by 2.75 per cent, to part and parcel of running a business.

Except, apparently, for Uber, Australia's largest ride-sharing platform - which considers the country the "crown jewel" of its business - has sought to insulate itself by ensuring drivers are paid less for the same work.

As cost-savvy Australian entrepreneurs are risk takers struggle to balance the books, Uber, a -100 per cent increase from its corporate HQ in San Francisco - found a workaround. Despite trying to spin this as a win for customers, the lowering of fares is simply another way to cut labour costs and juice its offshore profits.

This is a foreign company that admittedly entered Australia's market illegally, profiting off the below-minimum wages of its workers.

That it is willing to slash the pay of drivers further during a cost-of-living crisis should appall every fair-minded Australian.

This is not just bad for workers.

It undercuts every single Australian business owner who does the right thing by their staff and complies with the law.

It is in the interests of businesses to do right by their workers by creating good jobs with decent career progression while offering genuine flexibility.

The federal government's industrial relations reforms will come into effect next month and more businesses are getting on with the job of compliance, not creating cynical work-arounds and loopholes.

Meanwhile, the gig economy continues to



Uber has given its Australian drivers a pay cut. Picture Shutterstock

This undercuts every single Australian business owner who does the right thing.

still all the risk some workers it treats as disposable.

Platforms that are seeking to circumvent regulations do not contribute to state coffers

through payroll taxes. They pay no super or workers' compensation.

Operators like Uber are piggybacking off the risks taken by small businesses in Australia.

Take restaurants, for example, unable to compete financially unless they pay the minimum overheads and sign-up fees charged by food-delivery giants.

It is past time for businesses to start calling out these platforms' exploitative and underhanded behaviour.

has become increasingly important, but it cannot be a back door to minimum wages and dangerous working conditions.

Ride-share giants often present themselves as a model for this new paradigm, as great innovators leading the way of change.

But we all need to recognise that this model is an anachronism - a capital-labour relationship from the 19th century - being cynically rebranded as a template for the future.

Businesses and workers have a mutual interest in ensuring the success of the gig economy do not impede it.

Ed Cavanaugh is the CEO of the McKell Institute.

The Advertiser

The McKell Institute study, titled “Fuel on Fire: fixing policy gaps driving petrol station robberies in SA”, finds that as fuel shops expanded “so too has a wave of crime targeting these businesses”. Its 33 page report, which includes interviews with crime victims, concludes stations are unsafe and workers “highly exposed to criminal activity”.



McKell In the Media



“McKell Institute Director Rebecca Thistleton said it was common sense for all state governments to fund crisis text and online chat based services”



The Age, 11 December 2024



Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth and local Member for Barton Linda Burney MP launching 'Immediate Aid, Measurable Impact' in Western Sydney, in partnership with St Vincent De Paul Society NSW.



McKell In the Media

The Daily Telegraph

“Without social housing investment, we will see widespread, entrenched generational disadvantage in Sydney”

ED CAVANOUGH, CEO OF THE MCKELL INSTITUTE.

# Housing crisis could make us a wasteland



The multi-generational Jones family George with dad Will, grandparents Margaret and David, father, Chester and Will's sister Clea all in their shared home. Picture: Sam Rutyn

**EXCLUSIVE**  
Joe Hildebrand  
and Tishah Gibson

The state government needs to urgently direct at least \$1 billion a year into affordable housing or it will lose a generation of young people to dysfunction and crime, a landmark report has found. An unprecedented joint budget submission by the McKell Institute and the Society of St Vincent de Paul has warned the demand for social housing will quadruple in just over a decade and a half and if something isn't done, parts of NSW could resemble a wasteland.

McKell Institute CEO Edward Cavanaugh said anything less than \$5 billion over five years "will be like trying to stick band-aids on a gushing wound".

"If something urgent is not

done now, New South Wales will look like a very different society in a decade's time," he told The Daily Telegraph.

"We will be seeing widespread, entrenched, generational disadvantage. Kids that could have been economically productive will end up trapped in the justice system. Communities that could have been safe and prosperous will become dangerous and miserable. This is the trajectory we are on without urgent intervention."

There are currently more than 52,000 households — 125,100 people — awaiting social housing in NSW, with that number projected to reach as high as 221,500 households by 2041.

This means that not only are these low-income residents not receiving affordable housing but they are also stuck in the private rental market,

**“ We will see widespread, entrenched, generational disadvantage. ”**

Edward Cavanaugh  
McKell Institute CEO

reducing access and increasing prices for all would-be renters.

The report found over 20 per cent of NSW renters face housing stress, with poverty rates doubling from 30 per cent to almost 60 per cent in just five years.

The \$5bn over five years would go to \$2.5bn directly for new stock, \$1bn for maintenance, \$1bn on a concessional loan facility for community

housing providers, \$250m for new investments in Aboriginal housing and \$250m for further wrap-around services support.

The "urgent" funding could help deliver 5,000 new homes a year over 10 years, which would slash the waiting list by 75 per cent and alleviate stress for over 31,000 households, while delivering wholesale relief to the rental market.

Veteran Veterans caseworker Anna Scott said the lack of social housing was particularly acute in regional NSW, already in the grip of a crime wave, which made them even more unsafe.

"There are extremely limited amounts of public housing in regional towns," she told the Telegraph.

"We had a woman escaping domestic violence placed in accommodation only to find her former partner had been placed five doors down."

Even in the leafier suburbs of Sydney, families are resorting to desperate measures just to get on the bottom rung of the housing market.

One family has had to pool all its resources, with an adult brother and sister, each with their own families, purchasing a house in Warriewood along with their parents who will also live at the property.

William Jones, his wife and their daughter live in a flat at the back of the house, while his sister Clea, her husband and their two sons share the main house with their parents Margaret and David.

Clea said it was the only way they could afford a home near their kids' schools.

"If I were living on my own with my two children, I would feel a lot more financial pressure, especially with a mortgage to try and manage on my own," she said.





## McKell In the Media

### The Advertiser

“The report by the McKell Institute said that SA could be a national leader by introducing minimum medical staffing standards”.

# Doctors sick of burnout

## Experts call for minimum staff levels

Brad Crouch

An independent report recommends minimum staffing levels for public hospitals doctors amid claims of fatigue and burnout, as a government survey this year showed almost four in 10 doctors did not think they would be in the public system within the next three years.

The report by The McKell Institute, commissioned by the SA Salaried Medical Officers Association (SASMOA), said SA could be a national leader by introducing minimum medical staffing standards.

The state government has indicated it is ready to embrace the idea and also is pushing to lift the federal cap on training local students to become doctors, rather than relying on recruiting doctors from overseas.

The report, titled *Operating Without a Plan*, says years without medical workforce planning has left SA doctors “pushed to their limits”.

“There has been a systematic failure to conduct medical workforce planning for doctors in the South Australian public



SASMOA president Dr David Pope.

hospital system for more than a decade,” it says. It recommends implementing minimum medical staffing standards across the sector in ongoing consultation with clinicians and their union, and re-establishment of a federal medical workforce planning agency.

SASMOA president Dr David Pope said the report was a trigger for the government and the union to work together on developing a medical workforce planning model, including minimum staffing levels.

“Workforce planning must also include things like medical student numbers in our universities and retirement turnover,” Dr Pope said. “Doctors have been incredibly frustrated by the inability of state and federal health authorities to undertake proper workforce planning.”

“It impacts on doctors, other

health staff and the community in ways identified in the report – high rates of staff burn out; low attraction and retention rates; inability to cover staff leave; long patient wait times and frequent delays.

“Failure to plan means the system is getting by on goodwill and unpaid overtime, but goodwill only goes so far.”

Noting the data goes only to 2021-22, Health Minister Chris Picton said the government was adding extra hospital beds, doctors and nurses – with 329 extra full-time doctors already added above attrition.

“We’ve also committed to opening 600 extra beds across the health system,” he said.

“The plan SA Health is working on will help us to plan for the future recruitment needs for the state for all health professions.”

“I strongly believe that Australia needs to train more smart Australians to be doctors.”

“At the moment, there is an artificial cap on places set by the federal government that means that all states are left with no choice but to recruit more and more doctors from overseas.”

## Our Team

ED CAVANOUGH CEO

SARAH MAWHINNEY Executive Director, Queensland

REBECCA THISTLETON Executive Director, Victoria

DR. GEMMA BEALE Executive Director, SA/NT

JESSE KARTOMI THOMAS Director, External Engagement

MARNINA LEFEBVRE Senior Policy Analyst

MAX DOUGLASS Policy Analyst

ANNIKA REES Operations Assistant

## Get Involved

/ Interested in supporting the McKell Institute’s work? /

Get in touch at [mckell@mckellinstitute.org.au](mailto:mckell@mckellinstitute.org.au)  
to learn more about working with McKell.









## **CONTACT THE MCKELL INSTITUTE**

**Ed Cavanough** CEO

**M** 0423 422 948    **E** [edward@mckellinstitute.org.au](mailto:edward@mckellinstitute.org.au)

PO BOX 21552 World Square NSW 2002

**[www.mckellinstitute.org.au](http://www.mckellinstitute.org.au)**