



Annual Review

2025



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A message from the Chair

DAN WALTON CHAIR, MCKELL INSTITUTE

2025 has been a significant year for the McKell Institute. We have contributed to major debates, such as the interventions in smelting and steel sectors; the tax treatment of housing; and a number of critical policy issues at the state levels, ranging from public transport to health workforce development, energy supplements to teacher's workloads.

Our events program has scaled across the country, with 55 boardroom discussions and public events featuring a bipartisan roster that included two premiers, three treasurers, and a suite of state and Commonwealth cabinet ministers.

And our footprint has grown in line with our objective to extend McKell's offering across the country.

Having established McKell South Australia/Northern Territory in 2024, we were pleased to formalise the establishment of McKell Institute Western Australia, which was launched by Premier Roger Cook in August.

The McKell Institute now has presence in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory, and Western Australia, and we look forward to leveraging this capacity to make a meaningful contribution nationwide in the years ahead.

2025 has also brought welcome additions to our boards.

In September, we were honoured to welcome Tim Pallas, former Treasurer of Victoria, as Chair of the Victorian Advisory Board. Tim replaces long-serving Victoria Chair Kelvyn Lavelle, who we thank for his years of dedicated service to the Institute.

And in November, McKell Institute WA announced its inaugural Chair, Hon Bill Johnston, who brings years of ministerial experience in the Western Australian Government to this role.

I also want to express our ongoing gratitude to every McKell Institute member, project partner, event sponsor and follower.

Your support, ideas, and collaboration are integral to McKell's ongoing development.

As we near the end of a consequential year, we also look ahead to 2026.

Two state elections will be held next year, in South Australia and Victoria. In NSW, the Minns Government will be readying for its re-election bid early in 2027. And in Canberra, the Albanese Government will continue to implement its progressive agenda on the back of a sweeping victory in May of this year.

We look forward to leveraging our growing footprint and team to continue to make a meaningful and impactful contribution to Australia's policy debate in the year ahead.



CEO statement

ED CAVANOUGH CEO, MCKELL INSTITUTE

This year has brought developments in Mckell's footprint and impact; the largest output since our founding; and the execution of Mckell's strategic plan to expand to Western Australia

At the outset, I wanted to congratulate two new *Executive Director* appointments this year.

Hannah MacLeod has assumed the role of South Australian and Northern Territory Executive Director, in May.

And our new Western Australia branch is being led by inaugural Mckell Institute WA Executive Director, Jessica Bukowski, who formally commenced the role in July.

Both are already making an enormous contribution to the policy debate in SA, NT and WA, and we're excited to see what both can achieve in the years ahead.

While we have been building our organisation, we have also focused on offering meaningful policy reform.

We started the year with our plan to make renting fairer for all.

Our *Rewarding Renters* policy made the case for renters to be centered in our national debate, with actionable ideas like a renters dividend and streamlined, portable bonds across state lines designed to make life cheaper and easier for the third of Australians who rent.

As the election came, we examined the track record of the Albanese Government.

Our labour market analysis highlighted the unemployment achievements of the government, while our analysis of *Same Job Same Pay* was launched by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at an event in Cessnock, NSW.

We argued for structural reform on housing, tax, industry and productivity

- Our *Future Made in Whyalla* plan outlined the case for supporting the Whyalla steelworks.
- Our *Harnessing Aspiration* plan proposed a comprehensive reform to the capital gains tax on housing, promised to boost supply and make housing fairer.
- Our *Securing Sovereign Capacity* plan explained why government support in critical refining was so important.
- Our *Achieving the Productivity Promise* called for workers to get more from productivity gains.

And we led on practical policy research and debate at the state level

- We argued for *safer rentals* in Victoria
- We argued for low income *energy subsidies* in New South Wales
- We argued for *better pay and conditions, and stronger rental laws for workers* in South Australia.
- We pushed for a *reformed public transport* sector in Tasmania
- And we launched our *Inclusive Prosperity* forum in Western Australia.

We delivered on our largest events pipeline in our 14 year history

Mckell will end 2025 having held 55 events across six jurisdictions. These were typically intimate boardroom discussions with key decision makers and Mckell members. This represents the largest calendar of events in Mckell's history, and included a bipartisan roster from across the country.

We launched our WA branch, and grew in NT and Tasmania

In August, we were thrilled to formally launch Mckell Institute Western Australia, at an event with WA Premier Roger Cook. We made our NT presence official, with a launch event in Darwin in late September, where local MP Luke Gosling made the case for a bigger NT presence in our national policy debate. And we made inroads into the policy debate in Tasmania, putting forward our ideas for a better public transport future

In October, Mckell's inaugural UK program was convened

with a delegation visiting United Kingdom Labour Conference and various policy think tanks and political offices in London, including 10 Downing Street.

We rounded our 2025 where we started — proposing ambitious policy ideas, on renters rights; rare disease; more paid leave for workers; in the two months leading to the Christmas break.

Alongside our public-facing agenda, we have also undertaken significant efforts to strengthen our internal structures.

We welcomed former Victorian Treasurer, Tim Pallas as Chair of our Victorian Advisory Board and Hon. Bill Johnson MP as Chair of our Western Australian Advisory Board, whose expertise is already paying dividends as we work to strengthen our governance frameworks and organisational structure.

We're excited to keep building on this momentum in 2026 and beyond.

A big thank you to each and every member, project partner and supporter—without you, Mckell wouldn't be where it is today.





Executive Director statement

SARAH MAWHINNEY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, QUEENSLAND

As Queensland continues to navigate the challenges of infrastructure delivery, Olympic preparation, and cost-of-living pressures, Mckell has remained a trusted space for evidence-based, solutions-focused policy discussion.

2025 has delivered a strong calendar of events for Mckell Queensland, strengthening our role as **a trusted forum for collaboration among policy leaders and experts.**

We held the highest number of events of recent years, with our guest list reflecting the depth of Mckell's engagement across Queensland's policy landscape. Spanning state and federal ministers, opposition members, CEOs of major government organisations, and state directors-general the event series reinforced our commitment to bipartisan, expert and evidence-led debate.

A highlight of the year was hosting the new Queensland Treasurer on two occasions — firstly, in partnership with the Economic Society of Australia (Queensland Branch) for a post-budget economic forum, and later at a Mckell Executive Boardroom Dinner.

Providing opportunities like this, for members to hear directly from the State Treasurer as he navigated the first year of government, exemplifies the Mckell Institute's role in connecting decision-makers, industry leaders, and policy thinkers in open, constructive dialogue about Queensland's economic outlook and reform agenda.

Our policy program advanced key areas of reform this year, with major work on freight-to-rail strategy and a strong contribution to the retail regulatory reform debate, building on the foundations laid by Mckell Queensland in this space in previous years.

Looking to 2026, Mckell will deepen its focus on housing, cost-of-living, and energy policy, while turning to the emerging challenge, and opportunity, of delivering the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Games will be a defining test of Queensland's ability to coordinate investment, deliver major projects, and manage the labour force pressures that come with such an ambitious infrastructure pipeline and there is plenty still to work out before the Opening Ceremony kicks off.

In 2026 Mckell Queensland seeks to build on the strong foundations from 2025 as we expand our research partnerships, continue growing our membership network, and deepening our contribution to the state's policy conversation. Our goal remains clear: to inform, curate and challenge in pursuit of a stronger, fairer, and more productive Queensland.





Executive Director statement

REBECCA THISTLETON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VICTORIA

Nothing sparks a year of ideas, events, and policy action quite like an election campaign.

The McKell Institute Victoria marked week one of the federal campaign with the pithy observations of pollsters and political commentators **Kos Samaras** and **Tony Barry** in a live-streamed forum at the Wheeler Centre.

As election day neared, we hosted a lively policy discussion between rising Labor MP for Macnamara, **Josh Burns**, and the then- Liberal MP for Menzies, **Keith Wolahan**.

We also welcomed state and federal ministers, parliamentary secretaries and senior bureaucrats to 12 boardroom events in Victoria. Our members valued the calibre of guest speakers, the depth of discussion, and the value of high-level, informal conversations while sharing a meal.

We have released a series of influential reports this year and have enjoyed collaborating with members, unions, and governments.

In Tasmania, our report with the RTBU coincided with another unexpected state election. Amidst Tasmania's ongoing political instability and media focus on a future football stadium, ***Driving Tasmania's Future*** prompted a Hobart Mercury front page about our case against privatising public transport.

In a year cluttered with housing crisis debate, we remained opposed to first homebuyer raids on their superannuation to get into the market and quick fixes that risk market inflation.

For renters, we examined the legislative loopholes undermining gas, electrical and smoke alarm checks. ***Unchecked: Strengthening safety measures for Victorian rental properties*** proposed solutions without increasing costs for renters.

We urged the Federal Government to invest in educational support staff by exposing the millions of hours teachers lose to administrative tasks in ***Freeing Teachers to Teach: Driving Productivity Through Classroom Support***. The Australian Education Union submitted this report to the Productivity Commission's inquiry, *Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce*.

In August, we announced former Victorian Treasurer **Tim Pallas** as the new Chair of our Victorian Advisory Board. Tim served as Victoria's longest-serving Treasurer from 2014 until his retirement in December last year, after being a member of parliament for nearly two decades.

Tim succeeded **Kelvyn Lavelle**, who has been a valued member of the Board since 2017 and served as Chair since 2020. We thank Kel for his leadership and energy for the Institute and I am personally so grateful for his time and guidance.

Support and involvement from our members continues to strengthen McKell's impact in Victoria, and we already have a growing schedule of events and projects to look forward to next year. Our work in 2026 will drive more conversations and policy solutions ahead of a critical state election.



Executive Director statement

HANNAH MACLEOD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SOUTH AUSTRALIA/NORTHERN TERRITORY

2025 was a year of consolidation and growth for McKell SA/NT. In South Australia we cemented our place in the policy discourse with a number of research pieces influencing government actions, while in the Northern Territory we marked our presence with an official launch.

The year began with ***A Future Made in Whyalla***, which helped shape the future of steel manufacturing in our country, regional jobs, and South Australia more broadly. This work informed major actions by both the South Australian and Federal Governments.

A foundation member, the Health Services Union SA/NT, secured a stand-alone Enterprise Agreement for allied health workers following our advocacy in ***The Case For A Public Sector Allied Health Enterprise Agreement In SA***.

McKell's national report, ***Securing Sovereign Capacity***, proved instrumental in government intervention at the smelter in Port Pirie.

I was delighted to join as Executive Director mid-year as we started rolling out boardroom lunches in Adelaide with Assistant Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, Michael Brown MP, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, the Hon Chris Picton MP, and the Minister for Housing and Urban Development, the Hon Nick Champion MP.

In September we launched the branch in Darwin bringing together business, unions, not for profits and civil society, with a clear statement that the Northern Territory should not be forgotten in public policy debates.

At Parliament House, the Australian Services Union SA/NT launched McKell's report ***More Than Books: Libraries on the Frontline*** highlighting the evolving role of libraries as digital and community support hubs and advocating for more investment in libraries and their staff.

As the 2026 South Australian election approaches, McKell SA/NT is releasing a series of advocacy papers including ***Rewarding Renters to Make SA Competitive***.

We're entering 2026 with strong momentum, hosting pre-election events and driving advocacy in South Australia, and advancing targeted research and engagement in the Northern Territory.





Executive Director statement

JESSICA BUKOWSKI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This year marked an exciting new chapter for **The Mckell Institute in Western Australia.**

We officially launched **The Mckell Institute Western Australia** in August alongside **Premier Roger Cook**, joined by more than one hundred business, community, political and union leaders representing the breadth of expertise and ambition that defines our state.

As Mckell WA builds its presence in the west, we aim to be useful and impactful — helping frame the big questions, foster robust debate, and contribute to evidence-based policy thinking here in WA and nationally.

Our **Inclusive Prosperity** series was launched to start that conversation. It asks how WA can shape change for the benefit of all people, invest ambitiously in the future, and ensure no one is left behind.

Our first event, **Electrification and the Energy Transition**, explored how WA can ensure equitable access to the benefits of electrification — from reliable, affordable power for households to new, secure jobs in the regions. In her address to Mckell WA members and supporters, **Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA**, Minister for Energy, Decarbonisation, Skills, Training, TAFE and the Pilbara, emphasised that every community will experience the transition differently — and our approach must reflect that.

Mckell WA also welcomed Federal Cabinet Ministers **Hon. Madeleine King MP**, Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia, and **Hon. Andrew Giles MP**, Minister for Skills and Training. Their remarks captured two sides of the same coin: the road to net zero runs through Western Australia, but we will only get there by reimagining our workforce and investing in the skills of our people.

The global trends reshaping our world — from the energy transition and decarbonisation to the rise of artificial intelligence — are converging with Western Australia's bold economic diversification agenda. **Mckell WA's focus is on the people within this transformation:** ensuring that as we build new industries, we also build opportunity — good jobs, quality training, and stronger, more liveable communities across the state.

A special thank you to the inaugural members of Mckell WA; The Minderoo Foundation, Fortescue, ReGen Strategic and Australian Workers Union WA — thank you for placing your trust in Mckell.

We are proud to contribute to the **thinking architecture of Western Australia** — and we look forward to building on this foundation in **2026**.

McKell's 2025 Timeline

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



'Rewarding Renters' plan released.



Released "The Case for a Public Sector Allied Health EA in South Australia", which helped inform changes to the SA Government's enterprise agreements with allied health staff.



Pre-Budget address with NSW Treasurer Daniel Mookhey. Pre-election policy debate with Labor MP Josh Burns and Liberal MP Keith Wolahan.



McKell makes a major intervention into the housing tax debate, launching its CGT reform proposal to widespread national coverage.



Our Northern Territory branch is officially launched.



Launch of McKell's South Australian election policy series, starting with our plan for renters and to make community services more sustainable.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Foreshadowed Whyalla intervention with 'The Case for Government Intervention in Whyalla'



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese launches our report into the Same Job, Same pay policy, in Cessnock, NSW.

'2025: What makes this election different?' with Redbridge pollsters and commentators Kos Samaras and Tony Barry in Melbourne.



NSW Premier Chris Minns address.



Launched our case for public transport investment over privatisation in Tasmania.



McKell Institute Western Australia launched by Premier Roger Cook.

Our inaugural delegation to the United Kingdom visits 10 Downing Street and more.



Roundtable launch of 'A Rare Kind of Care', with NSW Health Minister Ryan Park.





FEBRUARY

- SA - Hon Stephen Mullighan, Treasurer of South Australia **Deloitte**

MARCH

- VIC - Hon. Dr Daniel Mulino MP, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services **Suncorp**
- QLD - Hon. Sam O'Connor MP, Queensland Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth **Deloitte**
- VIC - The Hon. Sonya Kilkeny MP, Victorian Attorney-General, Minister for Planning **CBRE**
- NSW - Hon. Pat Gorman MP, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, Assistant Minister for the Public Service, Assistant Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations **KPMG**

APRIL

- VIC - Tony Barry and Kos Samaras
- QLD - Hon. David Janetzki MP, Queensland Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership
- VIC - Josh Burns MP and Keith Wolahan MP **NAB**
- NSW - Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations **Vinnies**
- QLD - Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, Queensland Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Women **Maurice Blackburn**

MAY

- NSW - The Hon. Daniel Mookhey MLC, Treasurer of New South Wales **Clayton Utz**
- NSW - The Hon. Natalie Ward MLC NSW, Shadow Minister for Transport and Roads, and New South Wales Shadow Minister for Infrastructure **Plenary**
- QLD - David Shankey, CEO, Net Zero Economy Authority **Anacta**



JUNE

- VIC - The Hon. Melissa Horne MP, Victorian Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety and Minister for Health Infrastructure **Built**
- VIC - Hon. Harriet Shing MP, Victorian Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts **Incolink**
- NSW - The Hon. Ryan Park MP, New South Wales Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast **Clayton Utz**
- VIC - The Hon. Nick Staikos MP, Victorian Minister for Consumer Affairs and Local Government **Stockland**

- NSW - Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP, Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition, Charities and Treasury **Zurich**
- QLD - Post-election panel: Ali France, Corinne Mulholland + Madonna Jarrett **Maurice Blackburn**

JULY

- NSW - The Hon. Penny Sharpe MP, New South Wales Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage **Allens**
- NSW - The Hon. Chris Minns MP, Premier of New South Wales **NAB**

AUGUST

- NSW - Josh Murray, Secretary, Transport for New South Wales **Allens**
- WA - Hon. Roger Cook, Premier of Western Australia **Anacta**
- QLD - Hon. Andrew Powell MP, Queensland Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation **Origin**
- NSW - Dr Marjorie O'Neill MP, New South Wales Parliamentary Secretary for Transport
- NSW - Blair Comley PSM, Secretary of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing **Lifeline**
- QLD - Bart Mellish MP, Queensland Shadow Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Shadow Minister for Veterans **Anacta**

SEPTEMBER

- SA - Michael Brown MP, South Australian Assistant Minister for Artificial Intelligence (AI), Digital Economy, Defence and Space Industries **Stone and Chalk**
- VIC - The Hon. Danny Pearson MP, Victorian Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs and Minister for Finance **Port of Melbourne**
- QLD - Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Assistant Minister for Resources
- NT - Luke Gosling MP, Member for Solomon
- NSW - Kellie Sloane MP, New South Wales Shadow Minister for Health **Plenary**



OCTOBER

- QLD - Damien Walker, Director-General of the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet **Telstra**
- VIC - Paul Edbrooke MP, Victorian Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention **Pharmacy Guild**
- NSW - The Hon. Paul Scully MP, New South Wales Minister for Planning and Public Spaces **Mirvac**
- QLD - Hon. Dr Daniel Mulino MP, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services **QIC**
- WA - Hon. Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources, Minister for Northern Australia **KPMG**
- VIC - Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth **York Park/ The Parenthood**

- NSW - Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP, Assistant Minister for Immigration and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade **Zurich**
- SA - Chris Picton MP, South Australian Minister for Health and Wellbeing **Healthcare Australia**
- VIC - Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP, Victorian Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services **Pfizer**
- WA - Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA, West Australian Minister for Energy and Decarbonisation; Manufacturing; Skills and TAFE; Pilbara **Tactica**
- NSW - The Hon. Jihad Dib MP, New South Wales Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Youth Justice **Telstra**

NOVEMBER

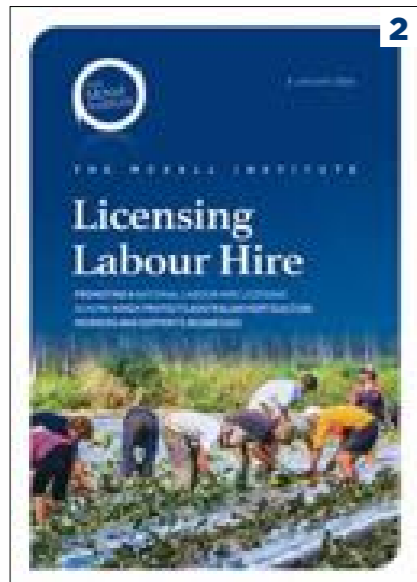
- NSW - The Hon. Jodie Harrison MP, NSW Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault **Vinnies**
- NSW - Senator the Hon. Jenny McAllister, Minister for the NDIS **York Park**
- QLD - Hon. David Janetzki MP, Queensland Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership **Allens**
- SA - Nick Champion MP, South Australian Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Minister for Housing Infrastructure, Minister for Planning **Built**
- WA - Hon. Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Skills and Training **Fortescue**
- QLD - Christmas Drinks: Ariana Doolan MP + Hon. Cameron Dick MP

- VIC - The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Victorian Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women **Maurice Blackburn**
- VIC - Ingrid Stitt MLC, Victorian Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs

DECEMBER

- QLD - Hon. Dan Purdie MP, Queensland Minister for Police and Emergency Services **Telstra**
- NSW - Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy **Allens**

Year in Review: Research



1 Rewarding Renters

Renters are facing significant challenges in 2025.

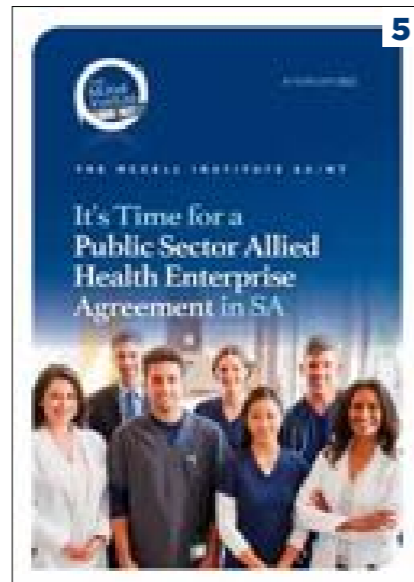
While state governments hold primary responsibility for regulating rental markets, the federal government has viable options to help ease the burden and promote greater fairness for renters across Australia.

This report outlines five key proposals designed to alleviate pressures on tenants.

2 Licensing Labour Hire

Australian governments have committed to creating a uniform national licensing system for labour hire.

Backed by both businesses and unions, this report outlines key features for the new regulator and explains how it can safeguard workers and companies in Australia's horticulture sector.



3 A Future Made in Whyalla

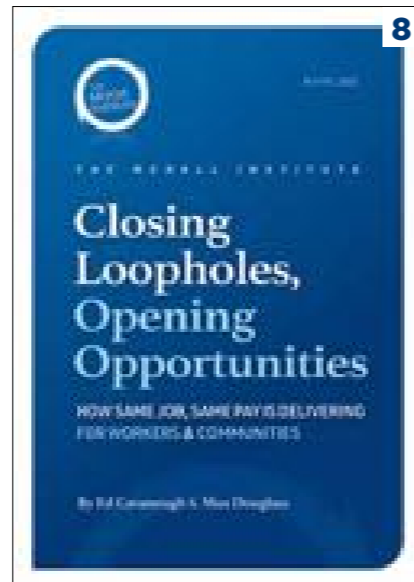
South Australia's Whyalla Steelworks has encountered severe difficulties lately.

This report explains why government intervention is essential for long-term survival and the future of workers.

4 Delivering AUKUS with Australia's Premier State

This report outlines New South Wales' pivotal role in the AUKUS partnership, leveraging its industrial base, skilled workforce, and strategic location to contribute to submarine construction, maintenance, and broader defence capabilities.

It highlights opportunities for NSW in workforce development, supply chain integration, and innovation, particularly around the SSN-AUKUS program, while recommending state-level strategies to maximise economic benefits, job creation, and global positioning as the "premier state" in Australia's defence transformation.



5 The Case for an Allied Health EBA in Australia

Allied health professionals are essential in meeting South Australia's healthcare demands.

Yet many earn less than peers in other states and lack the power to negotiate tailored conditions for their specialised roles locally.

This report advocates for a standalone allied health enterprise bargaining agreement in SA's public sector.

6 Identifying Best Practice Energy Reform

Australia's energy sector faces a major shift as coal exits and renewables rise, reshaping the grid and economy. Hitting emissions targets requires huge investments and policy reforms.

Uneven governance splits between federal, state, public and private players complicate progress. Delay is costly, so coordinated, evidence-based decisions are essential.

This report reviews Australia's energy policymaking to address this.

7 Albanese Government's Employment Record

This report finds the Albanese Government's first-term employment record historically strong, with average unemployment at 3.8% (the lowest sustained since 1972) benefiting women, young people, less-educated, and Indigenous workers.

Most states set record lows, participation hit 67.3%, underutilisation fell, job searches averaged eight weeks, quits exceeded layoffs, and real wages returned to neutral after inflation. The report credits these results with lifting incomes, health, consumption, and productivity through broad-based labour market strength.

8 Closing Loopholes, Opening Opportunities

Australia's *Same Job, Same Pay* reforms closed the labour hire loophole, ensuring equal pay for identical roles. In mining, 1,500 workers gained \$33,500 annually on average; aviation and retail saw similar boosts via orders and bargaining.

Updated estimates show \$920 million yearly wage uplift, yielding \$2.556 billion in economic benefits, mainly for regions. Fears of job losses proved unfounded in a tight market.

9 The Cost of the Coalition's War on Awards

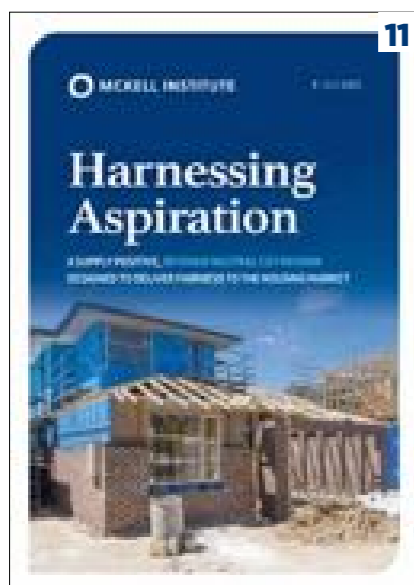
Proposed Coalition policies to weaken or dismantle modern awards would strip minimum wages, penalties, and conditions for millions of Australian workers.

It estimates annual wage losses of up to \$10 billion across sectors like hospitality, retail, and healthcare, disproportionately hitting women, young people, and regional communities. The report contrasts this with Labor's award protections, arguing the changes would exacerbate inequality and undo decades of fair work gains.

10 Driving Tasmania's Future: The Case For Public Transport Investment Over Privatisation

Tasmania is urged to invest \$200 million in public transport upgrades rather than privatise. This report warns that privatisation risks fare hikes, service cuts, and \$50-100 million in extra annual subsidies.

It projects public investment creating 500 jobs, cutting emissions, and would create \$300 million to the economy via tourism and productivity, while advocating electrification and regional expansion for fair access.



11 Harnessing Aspiration

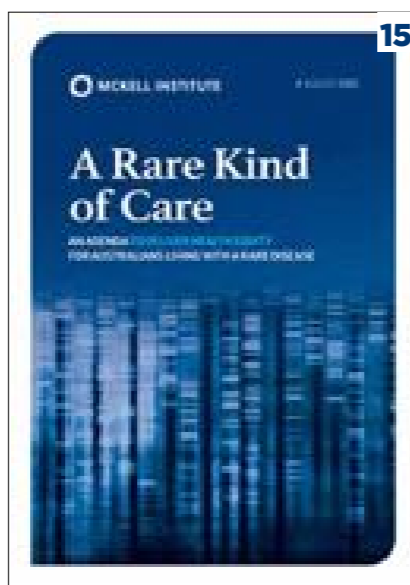
This report proposes tweaking the capital gains tax discount on housing: 70% for new apartments, 50% for new/grandfathered detached homes, and 35% for existing detached homes.

This revenue-neutral-to-positive reform (gaining \$1.4 Billion in 10 years) boosts supply by 75,800-130,000 homes by 2030, aids first-home buyers and renters, rewards investors in new builds, and rules out negative gearing changes.

12 Securing Sovereign Capacity

Australia's refined metals sector faces collapse from Chinese state-subsidised dumping, risking 73,000 jobs and critical sovereign capabilities for defence and the net-zero transition.

A new national strategy must include government equity stakes, tougher anti-dumping enforcement, local procurement rules, scrap export bans, and east-coast gas reservations to secure resilient, value-adding supply chains.



13 Achieving the Productivity Promise

This report urges a national strategy to protect Australia's refined metals sector from Chinese subsidies dumping cheap imports, which threaten 73,000 jobs and sovereign capabilities in defence and net-zero tech.

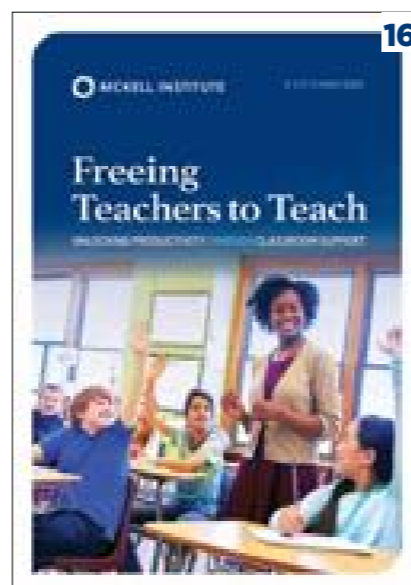
Recommendations include government equity, anti-dumping enforcement, procurement mandates, scrap export bans, and gas reservations to build resilient supply chains.

14 QLD Trading Hours: The Case Against Further Deregulation

Queensland's latest push to deregulate retail trading hours offers almost no economic upside while hitting vulnerable workers hardest, especially the women who make up 62% of the retail workforce and rely on predictable, family-friendly rosters.

Online shopping (\$69 billion in 2024) has already killed the old "consumer convenience" argument, yet big retailers keep recycling it to squeeze more unpaid hours from casual and part-time staff.

Real reform means stronger awards, better bargaining, digital upskilling and guaranteed stable schedules, not 24/7 opening that hollows out small businesses and regional towns.



15 A Rare Kind of Care

A comprehensive plan is needed for the two million Australians living with a rare disease. These people face delayed diagnosis (average 5-7 years), high costs, and fragmented care.

This report proposes a National Rare Disease Strategy with dedicated funding, a Centre of Excellence for coordination, expanded newborn screening, streamlined PBS access for orphan drugs, and workforce training. The plan aims to reduce diagnostic delays, improve access to treatments, and deliver \$1.2 billion in long-term savings through early intervention and better outcomes.

16 Freeing Teachers to Teach: Unlocking Productivity Through Classroom Support

Australia's teachers spend more than 100 million cumulative hours on administrative tasks that should be handled by dedicated support staff.

This report outlines how teacher time can be optimised to reduce burn-out and improve classroom outcomes, as opposed to a proposed national lesson plan which risks de-skilling the profession.

Instead, this plan recommends those tasks be shifted to support staff, fully fund the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement now, hire more aides for diverse learners, and use AI with caution. That frees 67-107 million teacher hours a year for actual teaching and keeps our best educators in classrooms.

17 Unchecked: Strengthening Safety Measures for Victorian Rental Properties

Victoria's rental safety checks (biennial gas/electrical, annual smoke alarms) lack oversight, data, and enforcement, leaving tenants vulnerable and poor providers unchecked.

This report recommends a rental registry, provider accreditation, and universal rules to close gaps and ensure accountability.

18 More Than Books: Libraries on the Frontline

South Australia's public libraries now serve 10 million visitors a year as frontline community hubs for digital access, social connection, and crisis relief.

Staff are burning out under the weight of these expanded roles.

A funding overhaul, including a social responsibility levy, needs-based allocations, more state investment, new revenue streams, and extra social workers, is urgently needed to keep these vital services alive.

19 Cheaper Energy for NSW

NSW must overhaul energy rebates and crisis support so low-income households aren't priced out of the renewables transition.

Percentage-based, means-tested rebates with auto-enrolment, faster EAPA referrals, minimum efficiency standards for rentals, and vouchers that can fund upgrades will deliver real relief and guarantee vulnerable consumers share the benefits of cheaper, cleaner power.

20 Renting Better in SA

South Australia can attract skilled workers by making renting fairer and more secure for the 22% of households now renting long-term.

A portable bond scheme would transfer bonds automatically between tenancies and pay renters the interest their money earns, while land tax concessions would reward landlords who offer three- or five-year leases with capped rent rises and guaranteed maintenance.

These simple reforms deliver financial relief, housing certainty, and a real competitive edge for SA.



SPECIAL EVENT

McKell Institute's Inaugural UK Program

In early October, CEO Edward Cavanough led a delegation to the United Kingdom for a week of political and policy engagement.

Commencing at Labour Conference in Liverpool, the program took our delegation to the very heart of UK politics, speaking to those in and around government confronting challenging economic circumstances, and the rise of a populist right.

Ed's commentary on Anthony Albanese's visit to the conference was featured in a Sydney Morning Herald piece by Peter Hartcher, examining Albanese's appeal to UK Labour.



Year in Review: McKell in the media

Our presence in the national policy debate grew markedly throughout 2025.

As we expand across the country, we have worked to add evidence to policy debates throughout Australia.

This year, McKell Institute analysis, commentary or research was featured:

- More than **1600 times** in digital stories
- 285 times** on radio
- 132 times** on television news
- And in **130** separate print articles

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

Albo's good for what ails the left

PETER HARTCHER
POLITICAL EDITOR

The moment when Anthony Albanese toted a four-pack of beers into 10 Downing St for dinner with the prime ministers of Britain and Canada was a symbolic one. The beers were the "Albo" label pale ale brewed by his mate, Willie the Boatman, in the inner west Sydney suburb of St Peters, in Albanese's electorate.

Albanese "is not a soaring orator," observes Ed Cavanough, chief executive of the Labor-aligned McKell Institute think tank in Sydney.

"But he has a pretty powerful political brand and little things like that resonate with people." It was a little thing that got a bit of attention in Britain and Australia in the last week.

"A lot of people here," says Cavanough from London, "thought it was pretty cool."



'The contest now is going to be between right-wing populists' - like Trump and Farage - 'and centre-left parties.'

Ed Cavanough, CEO of the McKell Institute

OPINION

Gender equality inaction is costing women and the state alike

State government reform on gender equality is almost a year overdue, writes McKell Institute SA/NT executive director Hannah MacLeod, while a growing number of women are retiring into poverty and struggling to put a roof over their heads.



Hannah MacLeod

Aug 19, 2025, updated Aug 19, 2025



Thursday July 10, 2025 | Hobart Mercury

Public transport failures

Warning of privatisation in a bus system 'inaccessible to so many'

Rob Inglis

Tasmania's investment in public transport continues to lag behind the rest of the nation, according to a new report that has also recommended the state increase transit funding as a "cost-effective" way of delivering economic and social gains across the entire community.

The report, titled *Driving Tasmania's Future: The Case for Public Transport Investment Over Privatisation*, was published by Labor-linked think tank, the McKell Institute, and found that in 2024-2025 Tasmania had the lowest per-capita public transport spend (\$152,000) of all states and territories except the Northern Territory.

This figure compared to \$636 in Victoria and \$247 in South Australia. The report said that the state government had not made any meaningful investment in Hobart's public transport network since the Hobart City Deal was signed in 2019.

The Rockliff government has projected that net debt will rise as high as \$10.3 billion by 2027-28, while Treasury's Projection Financial Outlook has forecast that the figure will reach \$1.2bn.

But the McKell Institute believes that, despite the state needing to look at budget repair, the next Tasmanian government should focus on putting more funds into improving the under-resourced and unreliable public transport network.

McKell Institute executive director Rebecca Thorburn said Tasmania's public transport system was "patchy and unreliable" after decades of "under-investment". "Budget repair is critical, but so is dependable public transport," she said. "Many Tasmanians want to see their footy team at the national league, but they also want to get to a job interview, or home safely after a night shift."

"So long as buses remain patchy, infrequent and inaccessible to so many, the full benefit of everything else government spends money on cannot be fully realised."

The report found that areas of socio-economic disadvantage such as Glenorchy were hampered with "sparse and unreliable" bus services, which limited access to employment, education and healthcare.

The report also said that bus drivers were faced with rising costs of abuse and assault while on the job.

According to the report, Metro Tasmania should not be privatised, with the McKell Institute warning that this could lead to job losses and higher fares.

It recommended the government legislate a 10-year public transport investment strategy with a funding plan prioritising service expansion, growth corridors, as well as the integration of buses with ferries and future rail options.

Fixing rentals will keep workers here

Paul Starick

Rewarding renters with portable, interest-bearing bonds and incentives to encourage multi-year leases is being urged in a policy challenge to Peter Malinauskas.

The McKell Institute think tank, whose work has been considered influential by the Prime Minister, the low key recommendations in a report on strategies to attract more innovative, skilled workers to the state.

McKell says director Hannah MacLeod said SA must move from being a "talent sink" to a "talent source" by offering people looking to relocate a "clear market signal" we're looking for them.

The report also said that the state's growing proportion of its workforce aged 65 and over is a "major challenge" for the modern middle-class workforce.



McKell's research institute is a progressive research institute and is considered Labor-leaning, with its Malinauskas-led government in 2022 state election, Mr Malinauskas has repeatedly stated the state faced a huge challenge to attract skilled workers.

But before and after winning government in the 2022 state election, Mr Malinauskas has repeatedly stated the state faced a huge challenge to attract skilled workers.

These practical, low-cost reforms would make South Australia the most attractive state for the modern middle-class workforce.

When SME leaders and skilled professionals can live here comfortably and securely, they're more likely to start businesses, create jobs, and contribute to our economic growth.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

"The reason why the government is being pretty interventionist in these markets is not just because the jobs are very important, though they are, it's because the output of these plants is very critical for national security and resilience," said McKell Institute chief executive Ed Cavanough.

Worker 'productivity share' call

WIN HANNAH
DISRUPTANCE EDITOR

Message to Labor: 'wipe your table clean of tax hikes'

Continued from Page 1

After fears the summit would green light big taxing measures, an alliance of almost 30 industry groups will on Monday release four priority roundtable outcomes.

The alliance, representing big and small business, miners, builders, universities, tourism operators, energy companies, telcos, tech giants, banks.

McManus said the union movement's priority at the roundtable was to address intergenerational inequality by tackling housing affordability, ensuring the future of work "in an AI world is a positive one", and workers share in productivity improvements.

Ahead of the roundtable, the ACTU has promoted a wishlist of proposals including \$250-a-year in new or higher taxes and a four-day working week.

"Unfortunately, workers have not seen the benefits of productivity growth in the last 30 years and this needs to be better than what we found it, but it will require ongoing attention and ongoing work."

And I suspect, and I hope, and I welcome the fact that these sorts of issues will come up in the course of the next week as well," he said.

At the heart of Mr Wood's address will be a warning that a carbon price - introduced by Julia Gillard more than 15 years ago on the back of a broken election promise and then stripped away by Tony Abbott - is still what the PC considers the best way to cut emissions.

"A single national carbon

artificial intelligence; expand the Safeguard Mechanism for carbon emissions; consider Victoria-like preventative health policies on a national scale, and develop a single national platform for AI lesson plans for school teachers.

The commission chair will also hit back at claims that the boom in care economy jobs is dragging down private sector employment growth.

Mr Wood's first paper on tax prompted corporate leaders to implore Dr Chalmers to rule out her "experimental" blueprint to raise the effective corporate tax

2025 HIGHLIGHT

Kickstarting a conversation on housing tax

In July, McKell released *Harnessing Aspiration: A supply positive, revenue neutral capital gains tax reform designed to deliver fairness to the housing market.*

The report proposed a new way forward on Australia’s stubborn housing tax debate, proposing a novel capital gains tax discount reform designed to both stimulate new supply where it is needed, while winding back incentives where they’re not.

The report helped kick-start a nationwide conversation on the purpose and orientation of the capital gains tax discount on housing.

Calls to review capital gains tax

EXCLUSIVE
Shane Wright
Senior economics correspondent

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is under pressure to overhaul capital gains tax, delivering bigger tax incentives to investors who build units amid warnings that without change, the government will fail to hit its 1.2 million new home target.

Research for the Labor-aligned McKell Institute argues that an increase in the 50 per cent discount on CGT for new units but a reduction for investors who purchase an existing detached house would encourage the construction of an extra 130,000 homes before 2030.

NSW could get 40,000 more homes while Victoria stands to gain up to 33,600 extra properties in a move that would be a departure from Labor’s 2019 election policy to curtail CGT concessions.

Albanese and Treasurer Jim Chalmers are heading a three-day economic roundtable next month, when tax reform will be one of the key discussion points.

Labor went to the 2019 election

with a policy to halve the capital gains tax concession, which had been introduced by the Howard government in the late 1990s in a move that economists say contributed to a surge in house prices, as part of a proposal to also restrict negative gearing to new properties.

But the McKell research shows a larger concession on new builds combined with reduced incentives for investors to buy existing detached homes would both lift the number of new properties while putting downward pressure on rents.

Economist and report co-author Richard Holden said the 1.2 million target would not be met under current tax settings.

“A key problem with our existing tax settings on property is they orient too much investment towards established dwellings at the cost of new supply,” he said.

“There is nothing wrong with the commonly held desire of everyday investors to secure their future by investing in the housing market. But this desire should be harnessed to achieve our national objectives on housing supply.”

Under the McKell proposal, the current concession would remain for investors who already own a property or those who construct a new detached house.

The concession would increase to 70 per cent for people who invested in a new unit or apartment, but it would fall to 35 per cent for those who bought an existing detached property.

The current 50 per cent concession costs the budget about \$19.5 billion. Much of that is tied up in the appreciation of detached houses.

The paper found that by reducing the incentive on existing homes, the savings on the cost of the concession could be channelled into encouraging new builds.

McKell Institute chief executive Edward Cavanough said the government could not afford to do nothing.

“Labor has resisted change to CGT for too long. It needs to creatively reform this poorly targeted tax concession so that it works both in the interests of aspirational Australians and society more broadly,” he said.

“We have to stop seeing capital gains tax as some kind of grand moral question. That approach has caused a stalemate in this country that has stalled the progress we need on fixing the housing crisis.”

Modelling of the policy shows it would deliver more homes in inner Melbourne (up to 1510), inner Sydney (up to 1414), inner Brisbane (up to 1119) and inner Perth (up to 1111).

It would also encourage units and apartments in regional areas such as the NSW South Coast seat of Gilmore (up to 1066) and the south-east Melbourne electorate of Flinders (up to 1038).

Data this week released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics suggest home construction was improving but is still due to fall short of the 1.2 million target.

In the first three months of the year, construction started on 47,645 new dwellings – a lift of 11.7

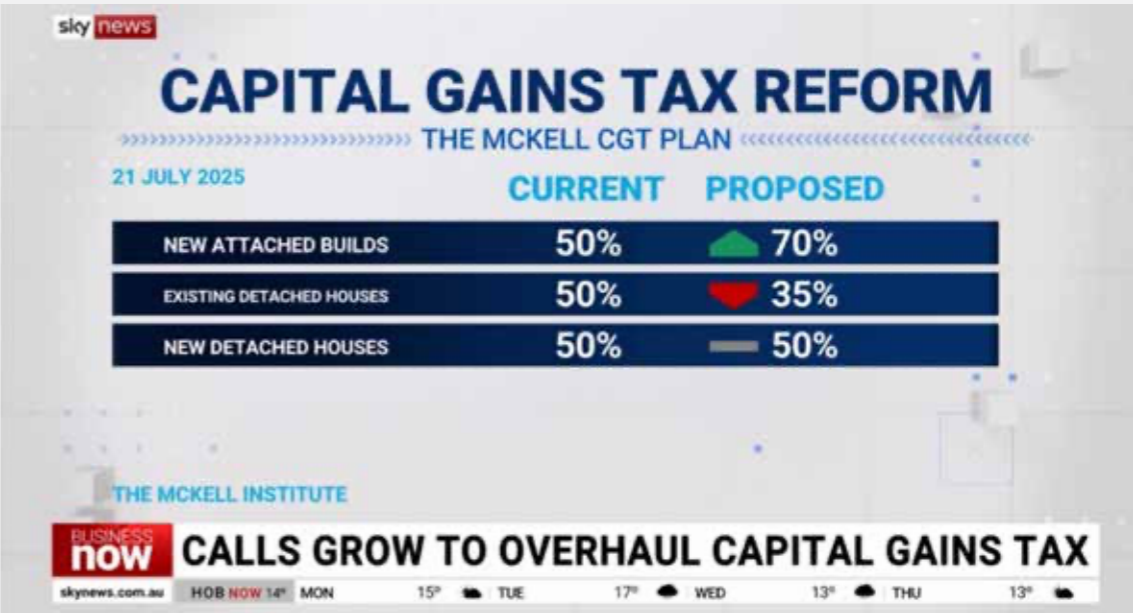
per cent on the December 4 and 17.3 per cent up on the period in 2024.

Despite the improvements, completions continued to lag. There were 43,517 homes completed in the March quarter per cent up over the year 1 well short of the 52,420 final the March quarter of 2019.

Last week, former Treasury secretary Ken Henry said the government would not meet its target if it could not fix the broken nature laws.

Henry, who headed a review of the tax system for the Rudd government, is one of 22 people to the government’s economic roundtable, which will be between August 19 and 21.

Commonwealth Bank chief executive officer Matt Comyn, Treasurer Daniel Mookherjee, state Labor treasurer Wyatt and Andrew Fraser, independent MP Allegra Spence have also been asked to attend discussion, which is expected to focus on taxation, technology and tape.



2025 HIGHLIGHT

Launching McKell Institute Western Australia

“The addition of McKell in Western Australia is the addition of more minds on West Australian policy. It’s more brain power going towards unlocking opportunities and overcoming challenges. The McKell Institute is working towards a better Australia.”

WA PREMIER **ROGER COOK.**



In August, McKell Institute Western Australia was formally launched by WA Premier **Roger Cook**, to a crowd of more than 100 in Perth.

The formal establishment of McKell WA has been a long time coming. It was 2017 when we first went beyond NSW to establish a branch in Victoria. Eight years later, McKell now has a footprint spanning the entirety of the Australian mainland.

McKell WA will be led by inaugural WA Executive Director, Jess Bukowski, who is bringing incredible energy and ambition to the branch.

McKell WA has hit the ground running. Its **Inclusive Prosperity** series has convened members, and key stakeholders in government, business and civil society to examine the best way forward for WA’s economy. It is a window into the big plans McKell has for WA in the coming years.



2025 HIGHLIGHT

A Prime Ministerial endorsement

During the election campaign, **Prime Minister Anthony Albanese** launched our *Same Job, Same Pay* analysis.



“A new report from the McKell Institute today confirms two things:

One — the scale of the labour hire loophole was bigger than anyone imagined, and two — the benefits of the solution have exceeded all expectations.

This year alone, the McKell Institute is estimating a fair-go dividend of nearly \$1 billion.”

- PRIME MINISTER
ANTHONY ALBANESE

2025 HIGHLIGHT

An audience at 10 Downing Street

McKell's 2025 International Program visited the United Kingdom, taking delegates to the heart of UK politics.

A particular highlight was a roundtable discussion in the UK Prime Minister's residence, 10 Downing Street, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer's senior political advisors.

The meeting was preceded with an extensive tour of 10 Downing Street, with McKell Institute delegates enjoying a behind-the-scenes look at the cabinet room.



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