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Editorial

As readers are aware, in just four and a half years, the **John Curtin Research Centre** has established a reputation as the premier labourite thinktank in Australia. In 2021, with a global pandemic still raging, ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns and social restrictions, worsening economic uncertainty, and a federal government which has failed to adequately vaccinate the nation's population, establish dedicated quarantine facilities or maintain an adequate safety net for affected workers, Australians **are feeling the pinch as the nation experiences what is likely to be a double-dip recession.** This makes our centre's mission **– waging the battle of ideas on behalf of the labour movement** – as critical as ever.

Thanks to JCRC supporters we have enjoyed another year full of **impactful research work, events and publications.** We released landmark policy reports, including 'Rental Nation: A Plan for Secure Housing in Australia (http://curtinrc.org/s/rental-nation)' and 'Powerstate: Building the Victorian Hydrogen Industry (https://static1.squarespace.com/static/587e1296579fb39e3199b6e9/t/5f9008e3e072020fa77e5274/1603275071232/power+state)', each leading the national and/or state debate and influencing policymakers.

In addition, we have released quality discussion papers: 'Battlegrounds (https://www.curtinrc.org/battlegrounds-us-2020?fbclid=IwAR0QeYT7lC7FVh2dTb47EtACsqKEg0Orv4qi76K4uSigoDcVwI062RMkz_8)', a prophetic late 2020 US Election discussion paper by former DNC CEO Amy Dacey (https://www.curtinrc.org/battlegrounds-us-2020?

fbclid=IwAR0QeYT7IC7FVh2dTb47EtACsqKEg0Orv4qi76K4uSigoDcVwI062RMkz_8), while Peter Khalil MP wrote the pathbreaking 'Taxing Times: It's time for Multinationals to Pay Up' (https://www.curtinrc.org/taxing-times) on the subject of big-tech companies avoiding paying local taxes, garnering attention in newspapers (https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/labor-government-should-have-the-guts-to-crack-down-on-tax-shirking-digital-giants-labor-mp-20210426-p57mdi.html), radio (https://www.3aw.com.au/labor-mp-says-josh-frydenberg-has-squibbed-it-on-multinational-tax-avoidance/) and television (https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/push-for-crackdown-on-taxshirking-tech-giants-under-proposal-to-repair-budget/video/bc572b639cbb20291b66fbd794e21fce). Most recently we published 'Just what the doctor ordered: Dental care for COVID jabs' (https://www.curtinrc.org/just-what-the-doctor-ordered), our plan to incentivise Australians to get vaccinated by offering working and middle-class Australians vitally needed dental care vouchers.

The three most recent editions of *The Tocsin* (https://www.curtinrc.org/the-tocsin-issue-9), have continued to act as a leading forum for policy debate. The 11th *Tocsin* , 'Young Guns' was an anthology of the ten leading entries to the 2020 Young Writers' Prize' (https://www.curtinrc.org/the-tocsin-issue-11?fbclid=IwAR1VZpa954yq-RPwewAp55Bi_rScJ4o8EV4G2-LzaBzs--ywFokMRc1_TL8), while the 12th was a dedicated all-women's edition (https://www.curtinrc.org/s/The-Tocsin-No-12) and the 13th 'Disrupted World' (https://www.curtinrc.org/s/Tocsin-E13-Digital-No-PW.pdf) looked at how COVID-19, the new Biden administration and other long-term trends are reshaping geo-politics, foreign policy and the scope for a new centre-left internationalism, the role of the state and markets, and the world of work. Each edition generated significant national media attention. Our popular online 'In Conversation' events have continued apace with guests Nina Schick (UK), Lord Glasman (UK), Jim Chalmers MP, Senator Deborah O'Neill and Misha Zelinsky, Arnie Graf (US) and Kosmos Samaras, Toby Davidson, Jon Cruddas MP (UK) and Bill Shorten, Chris Bowen MP, as well as a session with the international umbrella organisation for social democratic thinktanks, Global Progress, unpacking a G7 nations plus Australia YouGov Survey.

On the book front, in late January we launched *The Write Stuff: Voices of Unity on Labor's Future* (edited by yours truly and Misha Zelinsky, with contributions by 30 leading Labor MPs, activists and unionists). The book was a major success, featuring on the front-pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age* newspapers. The book was extensively covered in other papers, as well as on radio and television, and represents the most substantial intellectual effort by national Labor Unity in some three decades. I also wrote a book chapter for the Global Progress book, *In the Pandemic's Wake* (December 2020). (https://www.curtinrc.org/s/Labor-in-Vain)

As always, we have been active in the media, including coverage of our reports, papers and news stories on *The Tocsin*, opinion and feature pieces in newspapers and online.

We are hard at work on forthcoming reports on the potential for building a local green steel industry and another on the consequences of privatisation and contracting out of essential public services. I am co-writing a book chapter for Global Progress on Australian attitudes to politics during COVID-19, out in October. Subject to COVID restrictions we plan to hold our sold-out 2021 Gala Dinner with guest speaker, Labor's Shadow Treasurer, Dr Jim Chalmers, in November this year and our 5th Annual John Curtin Lecture delivered by Australian footballing legend and human rights activist Craig Foster. And here we present the 14th edition of *The Tocsin*, Young Guns 2.0, an anthology of the leading entries to our 2021 Young Writers' Prize held in conjunction with Victorian Trades Hall.

We are delighted to announce the winner is Nick O'Neill – warmest congratulations! We also acknowledge shortlisted entries and indeed all the entrants to the competition.

Nick's winning essay was especially well-suited to the troubling times of this pandemic. His essay argues that of the three pillars of policy positioning – the state, market mechanisms, and community – the labour movement urgently needs to refocus its attention on the latter and away from prioritising markets and the state. In particular, he rightly insists that Australian Labor should reconnect with the cooperative movement. The labour movement being genuinely rooted in our various communities is fundamental to its task of winning elections and changing Australia for the better, a case which Nick makes admirably.

Last year in Young Guns 1.0 we made the case for reforming Young Labor, noting that despite the fine contributions to our anthology, there was a problem with the youth wing of the labour movement, especially Young Labor – Australian Labor Party members aged between 15 and 26. The problem was the narrowness of its membership, training, education, and culture – all of which contributes to the cultural problems and electoral weakness of federal Labor.

We noted that Labor is too often culturally disconnected from the suburban and regional people it purports to represent and their lived experiences. Too many Labor MPs and especially our young activists look and sound the same as ostensibly rival Greens: university-educated, socially liberal and likely non-religious or atheist, and destined for white-collar, higher-income secure work, living in the inner-cities. Labor does not properly reflect the full diversity of working people in its ranks: tradies, small business owners, hairdressers, electricians, nurses, aged care workers, and paramedics and other essential service workers, assembly-line workers, teachers, miners, cleaners, retail employees or plumbers, many heroes on the frontline of the war against COVID or people who have been left jobless, unable to pay their rent or mortgage, or bills. Admittedly, a number of the preselections federal Labor has determined upon do seek to remedy this problem. One thinks especially of the case of the party's candidate for Herbert.

Yet twelve months on there has been no attempt to reform Young Labor which draws upwards of 95 per cent of its members from our university campuses, mainly G8 unis; in other words, not from the 72 per cent of non-tertiary degree holding Australians. Our proposal for reforming Young Labor

aimed to diversify, to recruit and retain non-university students into its ranks, by 2022 aiming for membership ratio on the following lines: one-third university students; one-third TAFE/vocational students; and one-third young workers not studying/employed/looking for jobs.

Our proposal created much debate, but no reforms eventuated. Some of the criticism lacked substance or contradicted itself. No one was seeking to denigrate university education or tell students they were "worthless". I am university educated – my parents were the first in their families to attend universities via teacher scholarships. Another objection belled the cat: quotas for gender balance, a success-story overall, were fine, but not for the people who founded and were the ballast of Labor historically – that was 'coercion'. Compare these protests against 'putting the labour back into Labor' with other efforts. For, around this time, the party's national executive launched an intervention into the Victorian branch, it's most successful state party in electoral terms in the last two decades, suspending internal democracy. Interventions have similarly been made been into a number of federal preselections. For many, it is bewildering that similar action cannot be taken with respect to the long-term future of the party – it's youth wing.

This is all the more troubling given the recent debate, a healthy one, about the ethnic diversity in Labor's parliamentary ranks. If only the same energy was expended on creating a more diverse Young Labor – not fetishising diversity and engaging in what former Unions NSW Secretary Michael Easson aptly terms 'exclusionary diversity' – in terms of having more Labor people speaking the lingo of the suburbs and regions from an economic, material standpoint. Such an approach would connect Labor with front line workers, precariously employed and underemployed, tradies, apprentices, and technically trained workers in our care economy. We reiterate: Australians will listen more carefully to Labor people and MPs – and recognise themselves – when we talk politics in ways in which large sections of our population 'get'.

The next federal election will be one fought over the twin economic and health crises of COVID-19. In the background will be the issue of economic management – almost always the key to winning national elections – and the looming issue of paying back the gargantuan debt accumulated in aid of the noble cause of responding to the pandemic. Labor, in no uncertain terms, argues that the Coalition government has failed to manage COVID-19 effectively: not securing fit-for-purpose quarantine facilities; not vaccinating the population before the devastating Delta 3rd wave (one might quibble about the argument over securing adequate supplies given the wastage associated with Astra Zeneca; the government wearing much of the blame); and, finally, it argues, persuasively, that it is the party most capable of leading our COVID-19 recovery. Yet vaccination rates will almost certainly hit 80% 'double vaxxed' by year's end. The economy will be in recovery mode with renewed international travel on the agenda. The well-worn 'Scott Morrison had two jobs' (vaccinations and quarantine) line will likely have passed its political use-by-date. Labor will need to formulate a Plan B electoral strategy. Focussing on Christian Porter or Barnaby Joyce's misdeeds will not cut the mustard.

That leaves post-pandemic – or more accurately endemic – economic management as the defining issue for voting for or against a relatively mediocre government seeking a 4th term in office. If Labor, which is extremely competitive in published polling at the time of writing, loses it cannot blame the pandemic or pandemic incumbency because its central argument is that the government has failed. Nor is Morrison especially popular these days. Losing another election and consigning itself to being in opposition for 22 out of 28 years (assuming a Coalition victory and the government serving out a full-term) will leave the party with only one reason for failure: the party itself. Not enough Australians will have been able to trust it with federal government. Not enough will see themselves reflected in the party: its structures, cultural norms, leadership, and personnel. These problems begin, as argued before, with Young (or really University) Labor. Should Labor triumph, however, in the face of a powerful Liberal Party machine and generally hostile media, it will be regarded as one of its most illustrious election wins in its 130-year history. This should not obviate the need for reforming young Labor, and the party more broadly, to reflect the full diversity of working life and ethnic character of Australia.

In 1964, future parliamentarian Barry Jones circulated a private memo entitled 'The Two Labor Parties'. Jones singled out the hard-left controlled, poorly performing Victorian branch of the ALP as a "toothless tiger". "I find little hatred or fear of the ALP nowadays – it seems to be a very old toothless tiger – but the party does excite much good humoured derision. Many voters feel sorry for the party and would like to see it restored – even if only as an effective opposition, but do not trust it enough to give it a vote." There were three reasons, he continued, for "Labor's persistent failure": "Lack of public confidence in evasive or contradictory policies"; "A feeling that the party lacks sufficient competence to govern"' and "The narrowing basis of party support". Jones was threatened with expulsion for disloyal conduct: he was guilty of sympathising with "Santamaria", "McCarthyism" and "generally being an undesirable reactionary." Jones was not expelled and his 'Participants' grouping, along with key unionists such as future prime minister Bob Hawke, and soon-to-be federal leader and later prime minister Gough Whitlam (1972-75) would successfully intervene in the Victorian branch in 1970. This intervention transformed Labor, opening up the blue-collar working class dominated party to middle class progressive activists and white-collar professionals, laying the groundwork for the federal party's return to government in 1972 after 23 years in the wilderness and electoral success of the 1980s and 90s. Jones's tripartite diagnosis of Labor's ills remains valid, if for different reasons.

Whatever the election's outcome, Labor must change ourselves before we can change Australia – this cannot just be a matter of rolling up into a small electoral target. Jones concluded his memo with a damming indictment. "Arthur Calwell expressed a common Labor attitude when he said in December 1963, 'We were not defeated in the recent election. The Labor Party doesn't know the meaning of the word 'defeat'. It is not in our vocabularies.' Unless the party can reform from within we shall have to look the word up." It took two further defeats in 1966 and 1969 for Labor to act. In 2021 and beyond, Labor does not have that luxury. Change must come. The task of change begins with reforming the youth-wing of the nation's oldest political party.

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In unity,

Dr Nick Dyrenfurth
Editor, The Tocsin magazine
Executive Director, John Curtin Research Centre

Revitalising the community to achieve the good life

NICK O'NEILL

The key to advancing the good life for working Australians must come from a revitalisation of the community and in particular, communities of workers. 'The good life' is best understood in terms of living standards and striving to improve those standards. Socio-economic and political development must be looked at through the lens of the community, with a particular focus on communities of workers to best achieve the good life. The community can be expressed as one of the core pillars of society, along with the state and the marketplace. Each provides a particular good for society and serves as a counterbalance for the other pillars, for example the state limiting market failures. We are assured security by the state whether that be economic security or security against violence, and we can access goods and services via the market. However, when we seek critical components of the good life such as protection from the excesses of the market, insulation from state encroachments on our lives, companionship and mutual support from one another, and purpose in life, these things are often provided by our communities. We need to revitalise the community to balance the state and market,. For the community of working Australians, the broad majority of the nation, the union movement served as a core pillar to deliver better conditions, pay and dignity for working people -

but we all recognise that it is in strong need of revitalisation. Ultimately, the focus of this essay will be drawn towards solutions to revitalising the community in novel ways to demonstrate a credible path towards achieving the good life.

The value of community

COVID-19 has demonstrated the necessity of the community to solve certain issues. In the context of the pandemic, many of us have felt and shared the collective responsibilities of social distancing and mask-wearing. Sacrificing individual convenience and freedoms, in exchange for community protection (particularly of the most vulnerable) has been both effective and broadly accepted by all. Without the commitment of the community, Australia's wider response to the pandemic would have been in serious jeopardy. Beyond COVID, the community has been a source of economic justice. Whether those be the works of charitable organisations or the union movement, communities of workers have helped the disenfranchised, achieved better pay and conditions, and pioneered collective solidarity. That purpose has an even stronger need to exist today in the face of novel and emerging challenges.

Raghuram Rajan, former governor of the Indian reserve bank authored a book addressing this matter. Despite the typical economist's approach, you might expect to be a market-based solution, Rajan emphasized the community as the solution to balance the oppressive leanings of the state and market. This would have the consequence of avoiding political and social crises' which can be exploited by populist nativists who seek to exploit fears of local communities losing power to international bodies. A strand of his argument is particularly applicable to working people as a sense of communal solidarity has waned in many countries across the world as globalisation and the tyranny of the market has come to dominate. Rajan's premise covers all sorts of communities, but for our purposes special focus will be placed on the current weakness experienced by and within the communities of workers.

Communities of workers must be revitalised on a grassroots level, with policy assistance from multiple levels of government and follow through on the ground. Revitalisation efforts are best addressed in three ways: Firstly revitalising the union movement – something that has already been addressed by many thinkers in Labor politics. Secondly, building new communities of worker cooperatives as a different, people-focused business model. Finally, rethinking the current social democratic paradigm to be more inclusive of institutions outside of healthcare and education.

New solutions for re-establishing the community of workers.

The weakness of the community is particularly evident through the waning of collectivist politics in Australia. Our unions, which we have relied upon to deliver better outcomes for working people and deliver balance to the interests of capital, have diminished in power. Moreover, a common cause that united working people and called for a better life has been superseded by new interests.

Though we may mourn the loss of strength that the union movement once had, there are steps to be taken to revitalise communities of workers. One direction has been proposed in the 'Blue Labour Movement', a movement that seeks to return to a 'mutualist', working-class centric politics. This movement, originating in the UK, addresses the symptoms through a largely introspective look into Labour Party politics. Rightfully so, Blue Labour seeks a resolution for Labour's misplaced focus in catering exclusively to the well-educated middle class to solve the political troubles of the Labour party. However, part of the reason why Labour parties have and continue to migrate towards the well-educated middle class is because the composition of labour communities has radically changed. Indeed, it is now the education and healthcare sectors that have some of the highest union density rates in Australia. Labour communities must be re-established in other sectors to give working people a better voice in policy outcomes. Though Blue Labour addresses the issue quite well, it is not merely enough for party insiders to reapproach working people as a top-down fix, the Labor party came from the union movement – not the other way around.

One revelation of COVID-19 has been the ability for workplaces to rapidly change for the sake of profit. When a firm needs to adapt to enhance profit and returns for investors, business demonstrate a willingness to innovate quickly and forthrightly. IT solutions that were previously derided as 'unaffordable' and 'unworkable' to accommodate people with disabilities have suddenly been made rapidly available when it suits the needs of business (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-29/travel-with-a-disability-is-no-mean-feat-in-australia/100157320). If workplaces served the interests of workers rather than capital, it might be possible to see further positive changes in work culture. Worker cooperatives (or co-opts for short) where labourers are the owners of business demonstrate promise as a different kind of worker community that could deliver transformative changes to the workplace by primarily focusing on benefitting workers rather than investors. Analysis by Fabio Sabatini, Francesca Modena and Ermanno Tortia (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254445736_Do_cooperative_enterprises_create_social_trust) found among a group of Italian worker co-opts, that they have the "unique ability" to produce 'social trust' amongst workers. The work that co-opts provide also appears to be more secure than traditional firms as another report (https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/files/ccednet/pdfs/2008-Quebec_Co-op_Survival_Report_Summary.pdf) by the Ministry of Economic Development, Innovation and Export in Québec found. They discovered that co-opts tend to have much more secure work, with about double the survival rates of traditional businesses (e.g. 44% compared to 20% after 10 years). This is not to say that this model doesn't have limitations. For example, co-opts don't have access to certain financial streams without the ability to sell part of the business to private buyers, making the independent creation of co-opts challenging. But if co-opts promote the social

good and can create a sense of community within the workplace, the labour movement could look towards co-opts as a source of revitalisation. Focus should be given towards the enfranchisement of co-opts into the labour movement with policies to incentivise their emergence and growth.

The final approach is to rethink the social democratic policy paradigm. When we think of the pillars of social democratic party policy, we tend to think of healthcare and education policy, i.e. public funding for the social good. This approach certainly has its limits in revitalising the community given the inherent top-down nature of directing resources for these institutions to be successful. But it is also true that schools and hospitals are some of the most effective community institutions we have. As noted above, the education and healthcare sectors also possess some of the highest union membership densities. We should be expansive in our outlook towards institutions that are publicly funded for the social good to build better community institutions. Rather than just schools and hospitals, greater public funding should be allocated to the not-for-profit sector. This would encourage the growth of community-oriented support, expand the public good, and be a means for those who are unemployed to find gainful opportunities to improve themselves and connect to the wider community. Australia should consider publicly financing the employment of people in the not-for-profit sector, similar to Labor's previous policy to subsidise childcare workers' wages (https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/alp-open-to-subsidising-pay-for-other-workers-after-childcare-pledge-20190429-p51i4f). Possibly even as part of a jobs guarantee which has gained popularity in several Labor policy groups.

Conclusion

There is obviously much more to discuss. However, in a concise manner, the value of the community should be understood as a vital component of a balanced society and achieving the good life. For both socio-economic and political development, the labour movement must consider an expansive outlook towards community and be willing to adopt new strategies both in policy and in grassroot action to nurture the development of a good life for all.

Nick is a student studying a Master of Health Economics degree at Deakin University. After earning an honours degree in politics and policy studies, he wanted to solve practical policy issues in the healthcare sector. Nick has been involved in Labor politics after joining the party at 18 and has been contributing ever since. He is currently the International Secretary of Australian Young Labor and has been proud to work towards connecting youth with the labour movement

This is the story about...

SANTINO RAFTELLIS

This is a story about a young woman called Rosie. Rosie is a nursing student in her late twenties. Alongside her studies at university, she works multiple jobs, including as a frontline health professional – one of the Government's so called 'essential workers'. She has an accumulated HECS debt, a huge mortgage on an outer suburban unit, and the unfortunate predicament of being the authors older sister. As a reward for her hard work and stress during the pandemic she's endured flatlining wages juxtaposed with ever increasing costs of living.

She's overworked and overstressed. She's essential, but not valued. She's given it a go, but she won't get a go from the Government. She wants a good life, but the deck is stacked against her.

Unfortunately, this is not a story confined to a young woman called Rosie. This is actually a story about a generation of young people growing up in an economy fixed against them. A generation seeking a life in which their hard work and aspiration is rewarded and not taken for granted. This is the story of a ticking time bomb the Government's own Intergenerational Report accepts is inevitable on our current political trajectory.

This is the unspoken truth that Australia does not have a plan to achieve decent wages and access to housing for young people. Without these two fundamentals any plan for the next generation to enjoy a good life becomes rapidly unattainable.

On Housing Accessibility

Rosie would say she's been fortunate to purchase a home. Supportive parents and an ability to live at home, combined with years of working, either during studies or without studying, meant that she could cobble together the requisite money to gain a foothold in the property market.

But many young people don't have that opportunity – and it's getting worse. The reality is that young people may have to accept the new norm of limited homeownership and expensive rent.

Young people under the age of 24 are the most underemployed in the country (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-26/underemployment-on-the-rise-and-may-get-worse/12003092) and are often engaged in highly insecure work. With the significant increase in

the cost of rent over the last two decades (https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/consumer-price-index-australia/dec-2020) they struggle to save the necessary capital to make a foray into the property market. Meanwhile the Morrison Government's proposed solution is to ask young people to make a choice between saving for their retirement, OR accessing their superannuation prematurely to purchase a home. It's no wonder that youth homelessness rose 26% (https://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/1.-Youth-homelessness-fact-sheet.pdf) between 2006 and 2016 while between 1986 and 2016, homeownership rates declined by over 10% (https://www.ahuri.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/61239/AHURI-Final-Report-328-Australian-home-ownership-past-reflections-future-directions.pdf) for Australians aged between 25 and 44.

While young people dream of a good life free from the crippling financial insecurity that may come as a by-product of a lifetime of costly rent or impossible to service mortgages (particularly if interest rates rise), tabloid media suggests that young people struggle to make ends meet because they waste so much money on avocado toast brunches and frequent holidays to the Greek Islands.

Meanwhile recent research (https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-12/apo-nid303672.pdf) suggests that those who were able to access the housing market a generation ago, are physically and mentally healthier than those who didn't, alongside enjoying greater life satisfaction. Faced with such significant housing stress, it's no wonder that poor mental health is so startlingly common for young people in Australia.

On Stagnant Wages

Whilst Rosie would say she's been fortunate to tentatively access the housing market, her ability to dispense her large mortgage is contingent on having either a sufficient salary or one with propensity to grow. Fortunately, as a union member, she can rely on the high density of union membership within at least the public hospital sector and the hard work of the ANMF in securing decent pay rises and conditions for nurses through enterprise negotiations. However, having grown its membership over the last few decades the ANMF is an outlier from the broader story of union membership in Australia.

Across the nation union density has dropped (https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6272064/upload_binary/6272064.pdf) from over 50% in 1976 to under 15% today. Unfortunately the consequences of this drop are a significant decline of employee-employer bargaining for enterprise agreements, and the evaporation of industrial action – in part due to the growing legal restrictions on taking such action. Many labour economists agree (https://theconversation.com/theres-an-obvious-reason-wages-arent-growing-but-you-wont-hear-it-from-treasury-or-the-reserve-bank-122041) that these factors serve to do one thing – undermine wage growth and dissociate productivity gains from remuneration.

In fact, workers are more and more reliant on the modern award system which sets minimum wages and conditions - doubling to over 25% of the national workforce since 2013 (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-28/why-workers-are-getting-the-smallest-pay-rises-since-wwii/10942530). All the while, cleaners, security guards, hospital staff and other celebrated in-name-only 'essential workers' are increasingly (https://www.actu.org.au/media/1385243/d88-a4_the-rise-of-insecure-work_fa.pdf) subject to insecure work and independent contractor agreements.

It's no wonder that real wage growth is stagnant across the country. Regrettably, its young workers suffering the most.

The Commonwealth's own Productivity Commission (https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/youth-income-decline/youth-income-decline.pdf) determined that workers aged 25-34 suffered a real wage **decrease** of 0.01% between 2008 and 2018 whilst workers aged 20-24 experienced real wage growth over the same time period of only 0.08%. This is likely because older workers typically enjoy employment with larger businesses who are able to provide secure wages and conditions (probably secured by a generation of union agitation preceding them). Young workers simply don't have the capacity to rely on such industrial gains and can't even legally withdraw their labour in protest.

It is these low wages (combined with job insecurity, record low interest rates and investor competition) that is contributing to young people taking out significant loans (https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/02/young-people-drowning-in-debt-dont-borrow-your-way-out-of-a-recession) to gain access to the housing market, pay rent, and/or cover essential bills. The consequence being the creation of one of the largest personal debt time bombs in the world.

What is to be done?

There are some interesting policy proposals to ensure that young people can enjoy the good life so celebrated and central to the notion of 'the Lucky Country'.

One that may be difficult for some progressives to digest is that Australia's population growth may be having a harmful impact on housing accessibility and wages. The 2021 Intergenerational Report suggests that Australia's population will grow around 50% by 2060, with a majority of that growth due to overseas migration. However, with COVID-19 travel restrictions limiting migration to Australia, the labour market has begun to tighten providing employees with greater bargaining power something the Reserve Bank believes is promising for wage growth. Decreased international student populations have seen rent in major cities like Melbourne actually decrease (https://www.domain.com.au/news/melbourne-now-one-of-the-two-cheapest-cities-to-rent-a-

house-domain-rent-report-1070486/). Meanwhile ratings Agency Fitch (https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/16/australian-house-prices-to-soar-by-up-to-16-in-2021-ratings-agency-says) suggests that lower population growth, combined with strong supply policies (likely led by Government), will see property prices level off.

However, population is only one side of the story. Without significant industrial relations, productivity and tax reform, Australia will be ill-equipped to deliver greater housing accessibility and wages growth long term.

The draconian restrictions on industrial action urgently need to be abolished, coupled with the reintroduction of at least some form of sectoral bargaining to drag increase wages across the board and provide workers with more rights in their workplaces. Progressives should also address the hypocrisy of the political right by attacking the red tape they have facilitated through Fair Work bureaucracy that serves to deter and even prevent working people and unions from engaging in industrial activities.

Reconsidering the volume of tax concessions granted to real estate barons would free up Commonwealth expenditure for potential reinvestment in a national social housing scheme, developed in partnership with State Governments. This could provide Government with additional revenue through the sale or leasing of such properties. The Commonwealth could also work with industry superfunds into developing social and affordable housing property portfolios which would deliver greater housing supply with capped rent increases, alongside delivering financial returns for their members (some of which may be the beneficiary of such housing over the course of their lives before retiring).

These are just a handful of ways to respond to the challenges before us. Together with enough creativity and innovation, we can start to change this narrative.

This all started with the story of a young woman called Rosie, which swiftly snowballed into the story of a generation. This story can have a happy ending, but it requires progressives to adopt the herculean task of renewing Australia's social contract with its young citizens.

To do otherwise would be to abandon the great promise of a good life for the next generation of Australians.

Santino is a penultimate year Law and Arts student at Monash University. He currently works as an industrial officer for the Transport Workers Union, serves as the President of the Monash University Labor Unity Club, and is a member of the Fabians Victorian Executive.

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Reducing the full-time workweek to pursue the good life

TYLER BRUSAMARELLO

Since the dawn of the industrial revolution and capitalism, there has been a rapid development in the perception of jobs. Employment has enabled people and society to not only merely survive but thrive through rapid industrialisation and technological advancement. This change has given rise to the establishment of the most advanced economies and societies in human history, allowing us to eradicate extreme poverty and most infectious diseases in many parts of the world. (*A quick side note, vaccines now save more lives per year than would have been spared if we had world peace throughout the entire 20th century (Bregman 2021). Keep that in mind if you were on the fence*

about getting a COVID 19 vaccine). Yet despite these advancements, our economic miracle has contributed to a new mental health crisis. In the 'developed world', World Health Organisation figures show that we are more anxious, depressed, less connected, and more likely to die by suicide than ever before. In Australia, a recent National Health Survey (2017-2018) showed that 4.8 million people or roughly one in five Australians reported a mental or behavioural condition. The pandemic has exasperated these problems and brought them to the forefront of discourse as the prolonged lockdowns (while necessary) have left many people feeling even more stressed, less connected, and isolated.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how an increased focus on our jobs/careers has led to a mental health crisis in our society. The primary difference between a job and a career is that there is generally less personal investment in a job whereas it generally takes more time and effort to establish a career for oneself. Regardless of which one you have, or are currently seeking ,most of our time and stress revolves around thinking about them.
As people invest a lot of time and energy into their career/job such that they establish an identity and social status based upon their job title, their mental health can suffer (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2017). This leads to people neglecting their relationships with loved ones and manifesting a sense of emptiness or lack of motivation in other areas of their lives. It is especially true when people retire or are made redundant from their positions that they have worked so hard on for many years and are unsure of what to do with their extra time. Thus, leading to further mental health issues such as anxiety or depression.

A way to overt this crisis is to put the focus back on what makes the good life. Most of us are spending too much time at jobs/careers as it is required for us to do so regardless of our personal investment in it. A good life doesn't come from finding a job/career you like, it primarily comes from our connections with the things that are truly important to what makes us human - such as our families, friends, community, and natural environment. However, it also comes from pursuing our passions, which for many people can be difficult to turn into a profitable career or to make time for when working a 40+ hour a week job. But is it really that simple for all of us to stop working as much?

Unions have been instrumental in helping achieve rights for workers. Gone are the days of the industrial revolution when the working class were subjugated to punishingly long workdays, petty wages, and inhumane working conditions. Australia, some European states and the Nordic nations have possessed some of the strongest national union movements which in turn have helped workers achieve wages and rights that are the envy of most of the world. However, one area that has been lacking in change for the past few decades has been the full-time work week. Economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that by the year 2030 the economy would be so productive and prosperous that we would only need to be working 15 hours a week and that one of the biggest challenges would be figuring out how we spend all that extra leisure time. However, according to

Bregman, since the 1980's workweek reductions in countries such as Australia have "come to a grinding halt. Economic growth was translating not into more leisure, but into more stuff." How did this happen?

One of the biggest reason's jobs are at the forefront of political discussions and often the first question we ask someone when we meet them for the first time ("what do you do for work?") is due to our cultural obsession with work and consumption. Placing work at the forefront of our lives and spending our income on products that we want (not necessarily need) are perceived as desirable traits in our society. Yet this is only a recent change in cultural norms as many other civilizations had a different perception of work and consumption. For example, the ancient Greeks regarded work (primarily referring to manual labour) as an unfortunate necessity. Most of the physical work was carried out by the lowest order of society, such as slaves and foreigners. While the wealthiest of Greeks would rarely perform these duties and instead would focus on other pursuits such as art, politics, and philosophy (Humphry, 2016). This is what the Greeks referred to as the good life and this was also true of our oldest cultures, the hunter-gatherers. "Anthropologists discovered that hunter-gatherers led a fairly cushy life, with work weeks averaging 20-30 hours tops" (Bregman 2021, p.104). This was because nature already provided most of what was needed so most of their time was devoted to relaxing and socializing. There was a big change when we adopted agriculture as it required much more labour and time to farm the fields. Unfortunately for many farmers today this is still the reality as the average full time work week for farmers in Australia is 57 hours (https://joboutlook.gov.au/occupations/occupation?occupationCode=1213).

To be clear, this paper is not devaluing work. Working hard can assist in character development, vital and useful life skill acquisition, and producing an excess of goods and services that are crucial to our survival (though we are guilty of also producing frivolous products and services). Rather this paper is questioning the allocation of precious time on this planet that we have decided to dedicate to jobs/careers when worldwide only 13% of employees feel engaged at (Crabtree, 2013). This is particularly relevant to interrogate considering that human labour is going to be completely reformed in the coming decades.

Automation is accelerating to a point where it will soon threaten our social fabric and way of life. As we have discussed, much of our life revolves around performing a job to contribute to society and earn an income to survive on. Furthermore, being unemployed is seen as one's personal fault with former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher even going so far as to say poverty is a 'Personality Defect (https://www.ted.com/talks/rutger_bregman_poverty_isn_t_a_lack_of_character_it_s_a_lack_of_cash/transcript)'. Yet as we have seen with the pandemic, many people were forced out of their jobs through no fault of their own. We will see a similar situation with automation if no action is taken soon. Obama's administration published a report in 2016 that in the next 10-15 years "83 percent of jobs (in the U.S) where people make less than $20 per hour will be subject to automation or replacement" (Yang, 2019, p. xii). Many industries will be impacted by this change, even industries that are creative or require a university degree. This will give rise to the development of precarious

employment for most in the workforce, causing mass insecure work and diminished incomes. A positive that has arisen from this reality is that many countries around the world have foreseen the impact this will have and are discussing potential solutions, including revising the required full time work week. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of serious political action (even before COVID-19) and it is uncertain if there will be any time soon. As shown by our global response to the pandemic, we generally only take serious action when the problem has already festered and started impacting our way of life.

The time has come for unions to once again push for a lower hour workweek so that we can be closer Keynes vision of a 15 hour workweek by the year 2030. This will help tackle the issue of precarious employment, that we have seen explode in growth before and during the pandemic, which will only grow further amidst the rise of an automated workforce. Furthermore, a person should not be defined by the job they perform unless it truly is their passion. Instead, we should come to value the new workweek as a form of responsibility necessary for society to advance. Workers deserve to use their extra time to reconnect or establish new connections with family, friends, community, the environment and to pursue their passions. That is what it means to live the good life, and how we should combat the crisis in mental health. We already have the technology and economic potential to do this. All we lack is the political will to do so.

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It's Maslow's hierarchy of needs, stupid!

MATTHEW BAKER

As a young child I recall being fixated on what it meant to win life. I dreamed of being the world's oldest living man concluding that, if there was a point to living, surely it was to live the longest. As I got older, my dream shifted to becoming the richest person in the world. It seemed that to live the best life was to have the most. While I've abandoned such a binary and competitive mentality about life, I haven't stopped pondering the best way to live. Among all the philosophical frameworks that consider the essence of life, Abraham Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' appeared to make the most sense.

Maslow's hierarchy suggests different factors need to be met and sustained in order to live life to its most complete. It suggests that the pinnacle of existence is to 'self actualise', in other words, to fulfill one's potential. Though we can have serviceable careers, raise families and have close knit friend groups, we may always feel an emptiness until we know that whatever is beyond this life, at least we did all we could in this one. Maslow would implore those that have a melancholic feeling towards life to dare to do as much as they can.

Before that can be achieved, the hierarchy states that esteem must be cultivated before we self-actualise. Before esteem we must find belongingness, develop our intimate relationships,. Before those things we need security and, before anything else, we require basic physiological needs. If we were to seek a loving relationship or to fulfil our potential while we were dying of dehydration, nothing worthwhile would be done. Though we in the Western world may have been better placed than any others to self-actualise and live the good life for the longest time, our ability to live the good life is declining. It is not from any lack of ambition to fulfil our potential or from an incapacity to have intimate relationships. Our ability to live the good life is declining in step with our security. While crime rates have declined massively in the past few decades and humanity is experiencing a relative golden age of peace, the decline in security we face in Australia is actually a decline in job security. The neoliberal reforms of the last forty years may have brought greater material wealth to our shores but it destroyed particular industries and undermined the assurance that we would have our jobs for life. In place of the stability that our manufacturing and associated jobs gave us, we now have the expectation that we will work five to six jobs in our lives. Though these jobs may provide us greater incomes, they do not ensure that we will live where we want to or that our paychecks will arrive consistently. Some of us may not be able to re-skill quickly enough or share in the spoils of neoliberalism. The unemployed are provided with guarantee of 'full employment' that once inspired the labour movement. Though these reforms were not inherently bad and in many respects, especially for the consumer, good, we struggle to live the good life without the sense of stability jobs used to provide. The way to return this sense and, by extension, the ability to live the good life, is through two key medium-to-long term reforms.

For the time we still have, while automation and technological development does not dominate every industry, we need a Federal Jobs Guarantee. Such a policy would see the commonwealth government provide a job and a good wage for every out of work person and also fill key skills and labour shortages in the economy . For those that currently find themselves out of work it would give them sufficient experience which may allow them to return to the private sector. For those that enjoy employment currently, it would allay fears of going out of work. Similar programs were instituted in Depression era America and Argentina at the turn of the Century, both to great effect, but never in a permanent program. In return for their wages, workers would be given jobs that suited their abilities and contributed to their communities, adding to the life and experience of all Australians. Beyond that though, a jobs guarantee would provide both the security and assurance of wages that welfare and the social safety net currently can't. It would provide at least a minimum floor to enable us to live the good life again.

The long term and inevitable solution is a Universal Basic Income. A guaranteed payment by the government to every adult citizen that would allow for them to sustain their lives even in the absence of labour on their part. For all the benefit to the unemployed and the community that a jobs guarantee may provide in the meantime, there will come a point where even the most ardent luddites will have to accept that AI doesn't just provide cheaper labour, it provides better and more efficient labour. Rather than shying away from AI we should pivot to reduced working hours alongside a basic income to enable us to have all the security needed to live the good life again. AI, if properly utilised, may be humanity's liberator.

That is not to say that our issues would be over, far from it. We'll have to figure out what to do with our free time. Keynes predicted that the greatest dilemma of the 21st Century would be leisure in light of the 15 hour work weeks. But, in comparison to the current circumstance of many who struggle to live paycheck to paycheck, not to mention those that are longing to get a job at all, the barrier of leisure to the good life is one relatively more welcome. Some that disagree with Maslow might even see an excess of leisure as the good life. It is an issue that humanity will have to deal with when we reach it but, in the meantime, we can change enough to make the good life that much more in reach.

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Catching the Next Crisis: Beyond building back better

ANONYMOUS

One word describes Australians in 2021: waiting. Waiting for an end to month-long lockdowns; waiting for the next viral outbreak. Waiting to see loved ones overseas; waiting to travel again and be visited. Waiting to be personally vaccinated; waiting for everyone else to be vaccinated. The COVID- 19 pandemic has seen the vast majority of Australians band together, waiting in patience

until we hit the vaccination rate of something-percent required to return to normal. But waiting is not something to be proud of: it is a symptom of a pandemic response caught on the back-foot by a clunky and uninformed consideration of present-future trade-offs.

One of the most repeated clichés of the last year is that COVID-19 provides us with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: to Build Back Better. This sentiment has swept through public policy circles, from the halls of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to Australian policy platforms such as The Conversation and the Grattan Institute1,2,3. It is perhaps best known as the de facto title for the Biden administration's recovery plan4. The problem with building back better is that it implies our current situation is a black swan event: a truly once-in a lifetime opportunity for social and democratic upheaval. If we take this attitude, of seeking once-off social democratic wins on the way back to business as usual, we risk missing the greatest lesson from the pandemic of all. We need to stop pretending that the pandemic was unpredictable5. We need to do a better job of hedging our bets against uncertainty, and accounting for future risks and opportunities in the decisions of today.

Tail-risk events and the next crisis

Before COVID-19, the science pointed us to two clear conclusions. First, that a global-scale pandemic like COVID-19 was increasingly likely, and second that the result would be devastating because of our lack of preparedness. A characteristic of a Black Swan event is that it is easy to find the evidence-base in hindsight, but difficult to determine its legitimacy beforehand. COVID-19 was not a black swan, because there was always a clear scientific consensus.

Most famously, Bill Gates—having worked on the Ebola response— published in the New England Journal of Medicine about the likelihood of a pandemic, and even gave a TED talk about the importance of preparation6. Aside from celebrities like Gates, the science was conclusive among literature published by epidemiologists suggesting that "Outbreaks are inevitable. Epidemics are optional"7. There was abundant evidence about the global insufficiencies, and the steps we should take to rectify them: particularly with respect to viable therapeutics and vaccine capacity8,9. The truth is that the likelihood of real and serious epidemics, and our unpreparedness for them, was a well-established and consensus view among scientists.

There is an important distinction however: COVID-19 was not unpredictable, but is what we call a tail risk event. It may have been an outlier, but we should never have doubted that it could happen. The future will always hold uncertainty, but we need to keep our eyes to the margin and insure ourselves against risk. How significant is a modest investment in basic scientific research and epidemic preparedness, compared to a chance of the hundreds of billions of dollars damage wrought by COVID-19?

We should take the lesson to think twice about the tail risk events which seem so distant. Climate Change, bioterrorism, Artificial Intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons, Great Power conflict: These are some of the many remaining catastrophic low-probability high-impact events, which variously have mounting evidence to support10. Instead of just building back better, and waiting as the overwhelming evidence piles-up, why not act now to get ahead of these future crises? The next big risk for Australia may not be in a crisis missed, however, but an opportunity left on the sidelines.

Tail opportunity and technological revolution

Alongside the risk of crises, there is also a tail risk for good, which we call tail opportunities. These are the relatively few but high-impact innovations which face our nation over the coming decades. How we take advantage of these opportunities, and how we hedge our bets to onshore the world's best innovation are up to us.

There are two strong moral arguments for taking advantage of tail opportunities. The first is that through history, while technology has persisted onwards under relaxed regulatory settings, it has coincided with obscene accrual of wealth and power, and unrealistic barriers to entry for potential competitors. Throughout the first and second industrial revolution, society was marked by staggering social and economic inequality between those with the power of change, and those subjected to the seismic developments. The utility companies and trusts of the 1800's roared, until the era of corrective trust busting. Global tech companies now hold much the same power, with similar murmurings of antitrust sentiment from the political margins. Time and again, events such as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal prove that innovation rarely self-regulates in humanity's best interest.

The second moral argument is about workers' livelihoods. We want the jobs of the future to be onshore, and we need the Australian labour force to be prepared for them. Public policy should not only be focused on what makes a good life now, but how we can reorient our future to provide a good life over the next century. Currently, Australia ranks last for manufacturing self-sufficiency among developed economies, and ranks 7th last in terms of investment into ICT with an investment rate half of the United States' [11, 12]. For the sake of decent jobs and international competitiveness, this is something we must turn around.

Australia's quantum opportunity

Quantum computing has the potential to be the tail opportunity of our generation. In 2016, there were only around 10 quantum computing start-ups founded. Two years later, by 2018 this number had skyrocketed to 50. Since 2018, total venture capital and private equity investment in this space increased seven-times from $100 million annually to $700 million (USD)13. A recent study references a potential value of over $1 trillion in just five industries by the mid 2030s14. For even a chance at bringing this to Australia's shores, we should be making it an investment priority. Much as

earlier intervention may have avoided COVID-19's economic devastation, Australia now has a narrow window to take the windfall of the technological revolution, and use smart regulation to keep the power and profit in the hands of the Australian public.

Quantum computing is founded on the idea that we can use quantum systems to conduct calculations. Quantum particles are able to exist in states of superposition; they are neither in one state or another, but in-between until they are observed, and these states can interact to produce complex systems. Quantum supremacy is the idea that we can use these characteristics of quantum systems to run computations

that could never be run in a reasonable amount of time on a traditional supercomputer. This has already been demonstrated, with a quantum computer performing a computation in just 200 seconds that would take 600 million years on the world's best traditional supercomputer15. In fact, you can use a real-world 5-qubit quantum computer right now, if you want, using online interfaces accessible to the public — and run by big tech companies16. These are currently expensive machines to run, but in time prices will fall and new uses will emerge.

Economists Ajay Agrawal, Joshua Gans, and Avi Goldfarb outline this process of innovation in their 2018 book Prediction Machines17. In the days of the abacus, arithmetic was good, but not useful for much beyond calculations. But when semiconductors came onto the scene, arithmetic became dirt cheap. It became cheaper to store music as ones and zeros than as a vinyl; photography was digitised; and, communication became cheaply encoded in bitstreams. This was the Third Industrial Revolution. As machine learning brings down the price of prediction, it will unlock the new sectors and jobs of the future. Quantum supremacy is the tail-opportunity which takes this even one step further.

There are other tail opportunities ahead of us in terms of technological innovation too. Artificial Intelligence, which in the broadest sense of the word is yet to exist, is among them. Currently, machines are getting better and better at specific tasks, but are yet to crack any sort of artificial general intelligence: though, some Natural Language Processing machine learning models such as the break-out contribution by Open AI, GPT-3, are good enough to trick you into thinking they do18.

The sheer volume of economic reward from these tail opportunities is staggering, and the potential damage of tail risk is sobering. Australia has incredible challenges and opportunities ahead of us. Too often, conversations in public policy defer to general "STEM funding" as being sufficient — properly funding the sciences, and the Universities where basic research is conducted, is only the first step. Policy makers need to be invested in factoring tail-risks and opportunities into the evidence base, and making informed trade-offs to secure our future. Only then, will we cease to wait for the shock and be left behind again.

The author of this piece has requested to be published anonymously.

'The nation looked to Labor, and it did not look in vain.'

- John Curtin, 26 July 1943