



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

ADDRESS TO THE VICTORIAN STATE CONFERENCE

MOONEY VALLEY RACE COURSE, MELBOURNE

SATURDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2019

****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY****

I'd like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

So long as Indigenous Australians continue to experience worse educational outcomes, less prosperity and a persistently stubborn gap in life expectancy then we cannot say that we have truly achieved reconciliation in this country.

And the road to that achievement must involve a listening heart.

A heart which listens for example to the Uluru declaration from Indigenous Australians and that listening and the action which must accompany it, will continue to be a core part of the mission of our movement, until we reach that day when Australia truly can say that its great benefits are equally shared between indigenous and immigrant Australians alike.

I'd like to acknowledge Hutch Hussein, the President of the Victorian Branch of the ALP and Clare Burns, the Secretary and through them every member of the Australian Labor Party in this state who in the last 12 months have worked and campaigned in two elections.

And as a Member of Parliament, I'm sure I speak on behalf of all of us, as people who have directly benefited from that work in saying thank you for every hour, every moment that you have devoted to our cause.

I'd like to acknowledge the great trade union movement of this state.

A movement which devotes every worker today to one simple objective; and that is to improve the lives of working Australians.

That's a movement in which I'm very proud to say I've spent most of my working life.

I would like to acknowledge and remember Mehmet Tillem, a dear friend of mine, a former Labor Senator from Victoria who tragically and far too early passed away on this day, last week.

I know that there are many in this room today who would say that their decision to devote their energies and their lives to our movement was because of Mehmet Tillem and their contribution will be Mehmet's enduring legacy to our party and I know they, and indeed all of us in our grief give our condolences to Ferda, Mehmet's wife and Mikail, Mehmet's son.

I'd like to acknowledge all of those who today became life members of the ALP.

After a lifetime effort which has rightly seen them rewarded with our party's greatest honour.

I'd like to acknowledge one other member of the party and that is, Bill Shorten.

Over a lifetime, Bill has been a very close friend of mine and in the last six years he has led our party wonderfully.

He assumed the reins in the aftermath of the 2013 election defeat at a very difficult time, when we so badly needed unity and he provided that.

And after that, he worked tirelessly each and every day in a way which saw off two Prime Ministers and characterised the devotion and a dedication to the party that I know he loves. We owe Bill an enormous debt of gratitude.

I'm mindful that this is the first occasion on which we have met since the Federal Election.

The 18 of May was a very difficult day for all of us.

For those of us who hoped we might be doing a different job today than the one that we are.

For the many thousands of party members and party supporters who worked so hard to try and realise a Federal Labor Government, but actually it was a difficult day mostly, not for those in the movement but for the millions of Australians who so badly hoped and were relying on us forming that Federal Labor Government, so that we could once again have in this country fair and decent government after six long years.

And so in the aftermath of the 18 of May there's been a lot of grief and there's been a lot of soul searching and that's completely understandable, in fact it's really important.

But nine days ago Craig Emerson and Jay Weatherill handed down the Party's review of the election.

It's a really important document. It's thoughtful and thorough.

It gives us the answers to the questions of what went wrong and it contains within it the lessons that we must learn and take forward so that we do what we must do in two years' time and that is to win.

But it's also an important document because it represents a turning point, a moment where we shift from thinking about the; what ifs, to doing about the; what now. Because for all the pain that we have felt since the 18 of May, perhaps the greatest is in looking at this very ordinary, hopeless, Coalition Government continue to govern.

Because for all the surprise that was filled around the country in the aftermath of May 18, the group of people who were most surprised to find themselves sitting where they are in the Parliament right now is the Government themselves.

And so this is a Government with no agenda, with no plan, with no idea, it has no idea how to deal with a stagnant economy that is experiencing anaemic growth, where two million Australians are now looking for more work and where life is characterised for so many by

going to the supermarket each and every week, faced with making the most difficult decisions about what they do not buy for their family with the money that they do not have.

It's a government which has no idea how to deal with a drought which is one of the worst that our nation has experienced.

And so despite endless announcements which essentially amount to nothing more than reheating and repackaging existing loan schemes, the only substandard act of this Government has been to kick desperate farmers, hundreds off the Farm Household Allowance.

And all the while, Armidale is facing running out of water within the next few months.

It's a government which has no idea how to deal with a broken Aged Care system; one in which 16,000 Australians each and every year, die while they're on a waiting list for an aged care package and one which was described by the Royal Commission as being a sad and desperate system which diminishes Australia as a nation.

It's a government which has no idea what to do with the most difficult set of strategic circumstances that our nation has faced since the Second World War.

And so as a result, our key relationships are drifting with our most important partners, relationships which will take us into the future.

This government is idle, this government is doing nothing other than rewriting the textbook on smugness and if it has any focus at all, its focus actually is on us and through us, attacking working Australians.

And if you needed any greater proof of that just look at the Ensuring Integrity Bill which has been in the Senate this week. A Bill which is going to make it so much harder for unions in this room to struggle and campaign for safer conditions at work.

A Bill which will make it harder for health unions for example to campaign and struggle for better services in our hospitals.

And so we stand resolutely opposed to this Bill in the Parliament and we will do everything

within our power to ensure that this Bill does not become a law of the land and what all of this must mean is that our primary job, as a Labor Opposition is to become a Labor Government at the first available opportunity because we cannot let Scott Morrison spend one extra single day as the Prime Minister of this country beyond this term.

And so eight days ago, Anthony Albanese made a critical speech which sought to rule a line under the last election and all that we must take from it.

And which set out a journey with a forward looking agenda which fixes our gaze unalterably on the next election and winning it.

Knowing that in that journey there will be days and weeks and months that we will not win and that's okay because while it's nice to win games in April, we all know that the only game that really matters is winning that grand final on the last day in September.

And our grand final is winning the next election and if there is anything we've learned in the past few months that's the only day that really matters that we win.

And so we're going to build an agenda which enables us to tell a story to make sure that we win on that day.

An agenda which has within it a credible economic policy that has as its heart real wage growth because it's important we have a strong economy.

But we need a fair economy as well; indeed we won't get a strong economy unless it is fair. We're going to develop an agenda which sees a comprehensive skills plan which equips working Australians and their kids for the jobs of the present but the jobs of the future as well, so that we change Australia's cultural relationship to science because it is so important that Australia is at the very forefront of human progress.

That's where prosperity lies, but it's also important that that prosperity is shared with every Australian.

We will develop an agenda which deals with questions of drought in a way which does allow farmers to receive assistance when they need it, but an agenda which sees drought as part of a bigger agenda of accepting the science of climate change and doing something about it.

Acknowledging that there are carbon based industries in this country which have been so important for our economic development and which will be fundamental to our economy for decades to come and that we as a movement will and must celebrate people who work in those industries and the contribution they make such as coal miners.

Yet at the same time it's important that we position our economy through renewables, to take advantage of the incredible opportunities that exist with a global economy which is moving by the day towards a lower carbon future.

We will focus on the elderly who are suffering in our aged care system.

We will focus on the unemployed who are suffering the indignity which is the current rate of Newstart.

We will focus on the NDIS and ensuring that it achieves the promise that it always had and in the process unlocks the economic potential of Australians with a disability.

And in all of this we will tell a story about bringing Australians together in a new consensus of hope for our nation.

And that hope for our nation and indeed for our movement was embodied by the work that you all did at the last federal election.

Work which saw 21 of the 38 Federal seats in this state returned to Labor 55 per cent of Victoria, a fantastic result.

A result which has seen a wonderful new crop of people come to the Federal Caucus; Josh Burns, Kate Thwaites, Daniel Mulino, Jess Walsh, Raff Ciccone and Libby Coker and the indomitable Peta Murphy both of whom won seats of the Liberals.

Their collective talents and their collective skills are the embodiment of a hope which is so inspiring to all of us to walk that journey to victory in two years' time because delegates I never want to feel the way I felt on the 18 of May ever again.

I want you to know that the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party are utterly determined, as I know you all are, to make sure that we win the next election.

That we make Anthony Albanese the next Prime Minister of this country and that we do achieve a Federal Labor Government once again because for all the pain of the 18 of May; we are still on 68 seats.

We're within striking distance closer proportionately than we were in the lead up to the 1972, '83 and 2007 elections.

This is an election that we can win.

And under the fantastic leadership of Anthony Albanese, there is a strategic plan which has been laid out which takes us from this day to Election Day.

And I know that with your help, with your enthusiasm and with your support that is an election we absolutely will win.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.