

# A Statement on Liberal Philosophy

Individual freedom is the central animating theme of liberalism.

Governments exist and hold their legitimacy insofar as they protect the economic, social, and political freedoms of all Australians.

Economic freedom is given life through the free enterprise system, which is a combination of free markets, free trade, the rule of law, and private property.

The free enterprise system is the only economic system which can generate material prosperity, provide opportunity, and respect the principle of reward for effort.

Liberalism provides social and cultural freedom through the cornerstone freedoms of speech, association, and religion.

These freedoms provide all Australians with a private sphere within which they can develop their own lives, families, and communities free from government coercion.

Liberalism delivers political freedom through the rule of law, equality before the law, and Parliamentary Democracy which protect individuals from the arbitrary use of government power.

Liberalism holds that individuals are accountable for their own actions, assumes the existence of free will and human autonomy, and recognises the inherent dignity and necessity of work over welfare.

A successful liberal order relies upon a robust civil society of private charity, philanthropy, and community and religious organisations which inculcate a spirit of freedom in society.

The future of Australia as a free and prosperous nation depends on today's generation passing down these liberal institutions uncorrupted to the next generation of Australians.

# 20 POLICIES TO FIX AUSTRALIA

15 policies the Coalition should implement but will not and 5 policies they should not implement but will

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## 15 policies the Coalition should implement but will not

### 1. Remove all references to race in the Constitution

Martin Luther King, Jr stated “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.” But Australia’s Constitution currently divides Australians by race. Section 25 of the Australian Constitution, titled “Provision as to races disqualified from voting”, while today redundant remains an affront to Australians’ sense of egalitarianism. Similarly, Section 51(xxvi) of the Australian Constitution gives the Commonwealth government the power to make laws on the basis of race.<sup>1</sup>

All Australians are equal and should be treated as equal before the law. Therefore, both provisions should be discarded and references to race in the Constitution must be erased.

### 2. Repeal Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)*

Free speech is inextricably linked to the Australian way of life. Australians should be able to enjoy and participate in open and unfettered discussion about issues of import to the future of our democracy and our nation. Section 18C stops this from happening. It is an unconscionable and egregious limitation on the free speech rights of all Australians and must be abolished.

### 3. Withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement

The Paris Climate Agreement will increase the cost of electricity production by at least \$52 billion by 2030 without making any noticeable difference to the environment.<sup>2</sup> The four largest greenhouse gas emitters in absolute terms are not in the Paris Agreement (the United States) or their emissions are not constrained by the Paris Agreement (China and India) or are not on target to meet their obligations under the Paris Agreement (the European Union).<sup>3</sup> It is not in Australia’s national interest to remain party to the Agreement.

### 4. Implement a flat income tax

Australia’s income tax system punishes success and discourages upward economic mobility. Its interaction with the welfare system also creates welfare traps through high effective marginal tax rates which keeps too many Australians poor and trapped in a poverty cycle. To reduce poverty, expand economic opportunity, promote equality, all Australians should face the same income tax rate.

### 5. Reduce the corporate tax rate to below 20 per cent, in line with competitor nations

The top marginal company tax rate in Australia of 30 per cent is the third highest in the developed world, and well above the OECD average of 24 per cent and competitor nations such as the United States (21 per cent), the United Kingdom (17 per cent from 2020), and Singapore (17 per cent).<sup>4</sup> Australia’s high corporate tax rate is a key reason why business investment is just 11.5 per cent of GDP, which is lower than the rate that prevailed during the Whitlam years.<sup>5</sup>

## **6. Appointment of High Court Justices to be rotated between the six states and the Commonwealth**

The Commonwealth Government is too big, powerful, and interventionist, and state governments have too small of a role in the operation of Australia's federation. A key reason for this is that the Commonwealth alone is responsible for appointing Justices to the High Court of Australia. This has unsurprisingly led to the appointment of Judges who favour an expansion of Commonwealth power at the expense of state governments. To correct this imbalance, state governments should play a central role in appointing High Court Justices.

## **7. Double the size of the House of Representatives, and halve the size of the Ministry**

Canberra is too detached and removed from the concerns of mainstream Australia. This is partly a reflection of the size of individual electorates. Almost every Federal electorate contains more than 100,000 voters. This is too many. To get government closer to the people there should be a larger number of electorates with fewer voters, resulting in each voter having a louder voice.

In addition, the number of Members of Parliament who are a part of the Ministry at any point in time has grown rapidly over the past two decades. Appointing members to the Ministry, the Outer Ministry, and as Assistant Ministers is a deliberate strategy to silence debate and reduce the influence of backbenchers. For Australia's democracy to become more robust as in the United Kingdom and the United States, the number of Members of Parliament in the Ministry, Outer Ministry, and as Assistant Ministers should be reduced from 41 to 20.

## **8. Privatise the ABC**

In a free society the government should not own and operate its own media company. The media market in Australia is highly competitive. Online platforms have transformed and disrupted traditional approaches to media. Consumers have never had more choice about where to source their news and opinions on current affairs. Moreover, the ABC is unremittingly bias. Its staff are five times more likely to vote for the Greens compared to the general population.<sup>6</sup> The ABC is beyond reform. New leaders will not fix the problem, regardless of their experience or intention. The ABC must be privatised.

## **9. Re-introduce the debt ceiling**

Gross government debt is currently \$546 billion, all of which must be paid back by today's young Australians via higher future taxes.<sup>7</sup> One approach policy-makers can take to reduce government debt, or at least reduce its growth, is to re-introduce the debt ceiling. A debt-ceiling places a limit on how much the Australian government can borrow. Raising the debt ceiling requires an Act of Parliament, which ensures the issue will be debated and receive the public attention it deserves. A debt ceiling was implemented by the Rudd government in 2007 and it was set at \$75 billion. With the support of the Greens, the Abbott government with Joe Hockey as Treasurer abolished the debt ceiling in 2013 as debt approached \$300 billion.

## **10. Hold a Royal Commission into the Bureau of Meteorology's tampering with temperature and climate data**

The Bureau of Meteorology appears to have tampered with temperature and climate data and to have re-written history to make it appear as if the temperature is higher than it actually is, and that it has risen faster than it actually has.<sup>8</sup> Australians deserve to know the truth about their public institutions. The only way to find the truth about potential temperature data manipulation is to hold a Royal Commission into the Bureau of Meteorology's activities.

## **11. Abolish compulsory superannuation**

Compulsory superannuation is a tax on workers' wages which is coercively redistributed to the Unions. Australian workers should be free to decide how much of their own income they are willing to defer until retirement, and how much they need in the present to spend on items such as housing, education, and health care.

## **12. Abolish the Renewable Energy Target and end all subsidies to wind, solar, and hydro-electricity generators**

Subsidies to renewable energy generation in Australia are expected to reach \$60 billion by 2030.<sup>9</sup> The Renewable Energy Target at the Commonwealth level, as well as state-based targets, have been the main contributors to this subsidy blow-out. Because renewables are uncompetitive, expensive, and unreliable, Australia's electricity prices have increased by 120 per cent over the past decade – around double the rate of inflation.<sup>10</sup> This has a disproportionate effect on the lowest income earners who spend a higher portion of their income on energy than others.

Moreover, this cost comes at no noticeable benefit to the environment. For example, over the period of 2001 (when the RET was first implemented by the Howard government) to 2014, the RET resulted in 0.005 per cent fewer carbon emissions globally from human sources which in turn account for just three per cent of total emissions.<sup>11</sup>

## **13. Introduce a one-in-two-out approach to reduce red tape**

Red tape is the single biggest impediment to business investment, job creation, and economic opportunity in Australia. Each year red tape reduces economic output by \$176 billion, which is equivalent to 10 per cent of GDP.<sup>12</sup> This cost represents all of the jobs which are never created, the wages which never rise, the businesses never started, and the dreams which go unfulfilled because of red tape. Governments should cut red tape by repealing two laws for every new law introduced.

## **14. Repeal the *Fair Work Act***

The *Fair Work Act* denies hundreds and thousands of Australians the dignity of work. There are currently 1.7 million Australians who are either unemployed or unable to work the number of hours they want. This is largely due to the *Fair Work Act* which prevents employers and employees from reaching mutually beneficial employment agreements. The *Fair Work Act* is too complicated and broken to reform. It must be repealed in full.

## **15. Legalise nuclear power in Australia**

Australia has 30 per cent of the world's uranium deposits, some of which we export to the rest of the world for power generation.<sup>13</sup> Yet we forbid ourselves from using nuclear power for domestic energy generation. Meanwhile, Australia has the fourth highest electricity prices in the world. Section 140A(1) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)* states there is to be "no approval for certain nuclear installations" including "a nuclear power plant".<sup>14</sup> These four words – "a nuclear power plant" – should be removed from the Section to legalise the development of a nuclear power plant in Australia.

## 5 policies the Coalition should not implement but will

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### 1. Do not hold a Referendum to divide Australians by race

The proposal to establish the Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples would irrevocably undermine national unity and is a regressive throwback to the days when race played a central role in Australia's Constitution. Similarly, the proposal to establish a separate entity in the Constitution to be 'The Voice' of Indigenous Australians is divisive and false - all Australians are represented by the Commonwealth parliament and are equal before the law. Race has no place in Australia's Constitution.

### 2. Do not raise taxes

Australia is a high tax nation and workers and families pay too much tax. Over the past decade real taxes per capita have risen by 11 per cent. According to the Reserve Bank of Australia, over the past year taxes paid by households increased by around 8 per cent, more than double the rate of growth in household income.<sup>15</sup> This means more money is going to the government and less money can be spent on household essentials such as housing, child care, and education. The Coalition should not raise taxes, and ideally should reduce taxes.

### 3. Do not raise spending

The true cause of high and rising taxes is high and rising spending. Every dollar of spending must be paid back with higher taxes, either today or in the future via the accumulation of debt which is a tax on the next generation of Australians. Government spending has increased from 23.1 per cent of GDP at the end of the Howard-era to 24.6 per cent today (not including off-Budget expenses and liabilities such as the NBN).<sup>16</sup> In absolute terms spending has increased by approximately 80 per cent, which is the equivalent to 6 per cent per year.<sup>17</sup> This is well above the average rate of inflation of around 2 per cent per year.

### 4. Do not proceed with Snowy 2.0

The Snowy Hydro 2.0 project will be remembered alongside the NBN as a costly, ineffective, outdated, and inefficient bureaucratic program which won't solve the underlying public policy problem of high and rising electricity prices and unreliable supply. The project will cost at least \$4.5 billion, it won't become operational until at least 2024-25, and it will be a net energy user, meaning it will be a drain on the energy grid.<sup>18</sup> Instead, governments should provide policy settings which allow for the development of reliable and cost-effective coal-fired power generation.

### 5. Do not introduce new anti-discrimination laws

In the context of the *Religious Freedom Review*, it has been suggested that new anti-discrimination laws be introduced to protect freedom of religion. However, adding new restrictions through religious anti-discrimination laws would constitute a significant threat to the freedom of conscience of all Australians. Freedom, whether exercised for a religious purpose or not, should only be limited where the exercise of that freedom impacts another person's freedom or peaceful use and enjoyment of their own property. The only way to sufficiently protect religious freedom is to remove laws that currently place restrictions on religious thought and practice.

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#### Endnotes

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4 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Corporate Tax Statistics", Paris, France, (2019)

5 Australian Bureau of Statistics, "National Account Statistics", Canberra, Australia, (March 2019)

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7 Commonwealth of Australia, "Commonwealth Budget 2019-20", Canberra, Australia, (April 2019)

8 Jennifer Marohasy, "Bureau Rewrites History – Again, at Albany", [www.jennifermarohasy.com](http://www.jennifermarohasy.com) (17 February 2019)

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10 Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Consumer Price Index", Canberra, Australia, (January 2019)

11 Daniel Wild, "Five Reasons to Abolish the RET", Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, Australia, (2017)

12 Mikayla Novak "The \$176 Billion tax on our Prosperity", the Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, Australia (2016)

13 Minerals Council of Australia, "Uranium", Canberra, Australia

14 Commonwealth of Australia, "Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)", Canberra, Australia, (2001)

15 Ellis, Luci, "What's up (and down) with Households", Reserve Bank of Australia, Sydney, Australia, (2019)

16 Commonwealth Government, "Commonwealth Budget 2019-20", Canberra, Australia, (April 2019)

17 Ibid

18 Judith Sloan, "PM's Snowy 2.0 is a complete snow job", *The Australian*, (26 February 2019)