

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

BUDGET BLACK AND BLUES

EDITORIAL

Last year's budget was a typical Liberal Party package: protect the wealthy and punish the poor. The response was so immense, so targeted, that despite their claim that our economy was a basket case, they have tried to repackage that budget as a fair and share one this year and all talk about 'our economic demise' has weakened.

The leopard doesn't change its spots so the most thinking people didn't buy the new caring, sharing argument. Indeed, economics writer after writer have clearly indicated that the poor are still being targeted – the game hasn't changed, only the name. The lesson learned by government was to re-package, re-name.

Unemployed youth will now only wait 4 weeks instead of 6 months to claim unemployment benefits. The unemployment rate of 15 to 24-year-olds, at a staggering 13.9%, is more than double the overall national rate of 6.3%. It hasn't been higher since the late 1990s. Do the maths: 657,407 young people plus another 1,197,057 underemployed and unemployed adults 24 years and older looking for work minus 149,900 job vacancies equals not enough jobs. Assuming one job per person, this means 92 in every 100 of these people won't get a job. How do you live for one month without work or without support?

This is a massive missed opportunity. Instead of smarter taxing the government is being lazy. We could have wound back negative gearing and abolished the capital gains tax discount. This could raise \$7.4 billion a year, help reduce speculation in the property market and make it more affordable to buy or rent a home.

The government could tackle rapidly growing superannuation tax concessions. It could repurpose super tax concessions so that they do what they were designed to do: reduce pressure on the age pension. This could raise \$10 billion or more.

This money could then be used to offset bracket creep. This budget has completely ignored tax reform: \$30 billion+ of savings ignored.

Homelessness and entry to the housing market was not addressed. There isn't even a housing minister in Canberra. Housing obviously isn't that important to this government. Foreign absentee homebuyers have remained untouched but there were no policies to provide the most basic need for any society: a secure roof over your head.

There was plenty of money for war and new toys for the warmongers. This financial year, taxpayers are forking out for savage increases in the military budget – one of the few areas not hit by the same kind of cuts applied to community need. What kind of society are we promoting? This government prizes the military well ahead of people policies, such as higher education or family tax benefits.

Amanda Vanstone in *The Age* (11/5/2015) said, 'You can't make the poor rich by making the rich poor'. We say neither can you make the poor rich by making the rich richer – the old trickle down effect that this government still supports even though it has been proven so wrong. In (16/5/2015) ATO Deputy Commissioner at the Australian Tax Office said, 'We want to make sure the rich and very wealthy people also pay their fair share of tax, we are trying to engage with them more!' Engage? Is that different from enforcement?

Wealthy people use various devices and tax breaks to reduce their marginal tax rate from 46.5% to 30%, 15% or even a negative tax. This costs \$22 billion per year.

Many small businesses fail to declare income, fail to pass on GST collections or claim false tax deductions. This costs the government more than \$10 billion each year.

Most contractors fail to declare their income properly, or at all, avoiding almost \$20,000 in tax on average. This costs the government up to \$17 billion per annum.

Whilst wealthy people can avoid paying tax at their ordinary marginal tax rate, the same advantages are not available to low and middle income earners.

How hard is it to 'engage'? ■



FRASER'S FINAL POLITICAL LEGACY LOOKED FORWARD AND BACK

By **BERNARD KEANE** Crikey politics editor

Former prime minister Malcolm Fraser's final political project was a left-of-centre political party aimed at giving those disenchanted with modern politics a new home, one that advocated a price signal driven shift to a post-carbon economy, a more welcoming stance towards asylum seekers, greater economic intervention by government and, most controversially, an independent foreign policy.

The idea for a new party, provisionally called Renew Australia, was first proposed by Fraser to a small circle of supporters in 2011, but its core principles were still being finalised by Fraser at the time of his death. He circulated a 10-page draft *Statement of Values and Purpose* in January after extensive revisions.

Many of the core principles outlined in the document reflect continuity in Fraser's thinking between his years in office and now – it calls for an 'urgent and fundamental' change in our approach to asylum seekers, and advocates greater industrial relations regulation to support a 'living wage', for example. But, in other areas, the draft proposes policies that would have been rejected out of hand by Fraser the prime minister – it reiterates support for universal access to primary healthcare in a system 'much admired by other countries in the developed world'. In particular, its proposal for a fully independent foreign policy represents Fraser's own shift away from the hardline Cold Warrior of his political years to Australia's most prominent critic of our alliance with the United States. The document stops short of calling for a withdrawal from ANZUS, but instead emphasises it is a 'commitment to consult, not a guarantee to defend'. It says:

'... the strategic context in which Australia operates is quite different from that of earlier times, and our nation must develop its own sense of independence and identity. Our foreign policy and diplomacy must convey that independence. Above all, we should not cede to any foreign country the capacity to decide whether Australia is at peace or goes to war; nor will we participate in war just because our traditional allies go to war. Alliances are important, but they must serve mutual interests.'

As a statement of values, the draft is more focused on goals than specific policies, but it emphasises issues such as:

- '[W]e believe undue concentrations of media ownership should be constrained to ensure the free flow of information and a plurality of views and opinions'
- What appears to be backing for a bill of rights, in its advocacy for 'an entrenched freedom from discrimination and exploitation ... based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, colour or sexuality ...'

and, elsewhere, 'entrenching our international human rights obligations into Australian domestic law'

- '[S]trengthened safeguards' over the expanded powers of government intelligence services created by the 'so-called war on terror', 'in the form of high level judicial oversight'
- '[W]ell-resourced and appropriately empowered, broad-based anti-corruption bodies at the federal and state level'
- A republic with an Australian head of state that is 'fully secular'
- Reversing what the document terms 'the cultural shift forced upon our universities ... to become more like trading corporations'
- A process (undefined) to resolve the tension between Public Service advice and the growing army of political advisers to ministers
- A treaty with Indigenous Australians and greater Indigenous ownership of policy processes.

Economically the document in many ways reflects Fraser's own approach as prime minister. 'Private enterprise has to be at the centre of the country's economic activity,' it says, but 'we believe that standards of integrity in our corporate sector must greatly improve'. It slams 'ever more aggressively contrived and complex arrangements for tax avoidance by large corporate entities' and calls for 'more balanced contributions from corporates and individual taxpayers to government revenue raising', while urging 'visionary and sustainable infrastructure projects that go beyond the short-term interests of mining company equity holders'.

The draft visibly struggles to settle on a position on immigration, taking the trouble to reject outright the belief of 'some in this country' (often on the Left) that Australia is already fully populated. 'Our country must be prepared to do more to increase its population and build the economic and social infrastructure to support it, while ensuring full employment, social harmony and preserving community amenity' – quite an achievement. It calls for an end to urban sprawl in favour of the very Whitlamite solution of 'geographically dispersed small urban centres'.

Most significantly, the draft devotes much space to calling for a transition to a post-carbon economy – 'the urgency of government intervention to achieve it is compelling'. The transition would be driven by 'appropriate price signals and investment clarity and certainty for industry', starting with 'meaningful' renewable energy targets and 'emissions reductions in line with international leaders' using 'government initiated, market mechanisms'. The draft almost explicitly rebukes the Abbott government, saying:

'Australia once led the world in confronting the threats posed by climate change. We can and should do so again.'

The document accepts that the transition will not be cost-free – 'such an intervention may still involve significant dislocation and change for the country; it will inevitably involve some level of sacrifice and hardship ... it must minimise the burden of remediation on ordinary Australians'.

While the broad policies in the draft would fit comfortably somewhere between Labor and the Greens (which says more about the shift in Australian politics since Fraser's time than Fraser's own shift), much of the document is aimed at people (especially young people) disenchanted with 'politics as usual in Australia' – and particularly disenchanted, it seems, with the major parties on asylum seekers and the quality of political debate:

'Our party has been created in the belief that the major political parties – as if in a corrosive grand alliance –

have repeatedly failed Australians on the big issues and the country is looking once more for intelligent and enlightened leadership, inspired by a belief in justice, integrity and a sense of a fair go. These are values that need to be better enshrined in a modern, independent and progressive political party of national purpose ...'

The draft shows a man prepared to address the future, in decarbonisation, a republic and an independent foreign policy, but prime minister Fraser is still present in the document, in its economic interventionism, its emphasis on social justice and even, perhaps, its belief in 'Parliament as the fullest expression of the will of the people choosing, and exercising authority over, Executive government'. The Fraser of the Dismissal would have agreed entirely. ■

<http://media.crikey.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Statement-of-Values-Purpose-20Jan15v1.pdf>

THE DEAFENING SILENCE of the six flags prime minister

By **BILAL CLELAND**

The anti-Muslim Reclaim Australia rallies on April 4 addressed by such friends of democracy as Pauline Hanson and Danny Nalliah and attended by the bemused, the bigoted and those with swastika tattoos, was met with deafening silence from our national government. That silence loudly includes the PM, who has had much to say formerly about preventing 'hate speech'. This is not particularly surprising given the composition and history of the Tea Party Liberals.

Scott Morrison, in 2011 party discussions, urged the shadow cabinet to use the electorate's growing concerns about 'Muslim immigration', 'Muslims in Australia' and the 'inability' of Muslim migrants to integrate as part of its election strategy. He carried his attitudes onto the front bench with the rest of the Abbott ministry.

The website *Inside Story* carried a report on 'Scott Morrison's *Unfinished Business*' 4 February 2015. The legislative blitzkrieg is now assigned to Dutton. The Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, if passed by the Senate, will allow the minister to revoke Australian citizenship if '... the minister "is satisfied" that it was obtained "as a result of fraud or misrepresentation", even if the person has not been convicted of any offence ... The minister can exercise this power for up to ten years after citizenship is granted.'

The Refugee Council of Australia argued that this 'would permit revocation of citizenship on the basis of the Minister's personal opinion alone.' 'The Law Council also argued that the proposed changes ... appear to

undermine the rule of law principle that all people are entitled to the presumption of innocence and to a fair and public trial' [<http://insidestory.org.au/scott-morrisons-unfinished-business>].

These legislative changes, occurring in the year in which we celebrate the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, are being accompanied by the militarisation of the Immigration Department, now the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, since its amalgamation with Customs.

The entrenchment of the xenophobic right wing is illustrated by the continued presence of Senator Cory Bernardi in the Liberal Party. He was the shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition and is an example of a core Liberal in his ideology. Senator Bernardi invited Geert Wilders, the extreme right wing Dutch Islamophobe to visit Australia.

We all remember the terrorism of the Norwegian Islamophobe, Anders Breivik, who murdered Labour Party youth for their support of multiculturalism. He wrote a 1500-page manifesto, 2083 *The European Declaration of Independence*, in which he paid homage to Geert Wilders 30 times.

Abbott's six flag national security statement, in which he chose to insult the Muslim community, contributed to the alienation and marginalisation that that very community is trying to combat. He stated: 'I've often heard Western leaders describe Islam as a religion of peace. I wish more Muslim leaders would say that more often and mean

it.' This suggests Muslim leaders do not mean it when they assert the peaceful nature of Islam. He went on: 'Everybody, including Muslim community leaders, needs to speak up clearly, because no matter what the grievance, violence against innocents must surely be a blasphemy against all religion.' It is and they do speak up, but he obviously is not listening, nor is Murdoch.

Unfortunately, support by Australian conservatives for right extremism is not a modern phenomenon. In the 1970s, in a campaign to unmask the operations of fascist organisations in Australia, it was discovered that the NSW Liberal Party Migrant Advisory Council included Dr L Megay, former Mayor of Ungvar in Nazi-occupied Hungary, responsible for organising the Jews in that ghetto for deportation to Auchwitz; Dr Untaru, former Treasurer of the Nazi-established Rumanian National Government after the king had surrendered to the Allies; and Fabian Lovokovic, a local leader of the Croatian Liberation Movement (HOP) which had been founded post-war by Pavelic – the mass murdering dictator of Ustasha Croatia.

This love affair did not end in the 1970s, despite the publicity it received. Independent Australia asked on 23 April 2014: **'Why did Liberal MP Craig Kelly give a speech at a function celebrating the creation of a Croatian fascist state on behalf of PM Tony Abbott?'** Dr Binoy Kampmark looks at the uncomfortably close links between the NSW Liberal right and European neo-Nazi extremists.

The occasion was a speech given by Craig Kelly MHR, a representative of Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Being in Japan, Abbott had delegated the task of congratulating members of the Australian Croatian community in Sydney on Croatian independence attained in 10 April. This was more than a bit awkward, given that April 10 was the date of the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) after the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ceased to exist under Axis rule in 1941. If ever you wanted to back some unsavoury company, you couldn't do much

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The Germans may be pulling down the Churches, but they have erected the State, with Hitler as its head, in a sort of religion which produces spiritual exaltation that one cannot but admire....

better than officials and sympathisers of the NDH. It has led to an international incident, with Croatia summoning the Australian ambassador yesterday for an explanation '[independentaustralia.net]. It is hard to believe the PM was unaware of the significance of April 10. Has he heard of Jasenovac?

The government, with its sensitivity to terrorism of the Muslim variety, surely could not be ignorant of the Christian Nazi variety. Justice Hope's 1978 report on ASIO, released in 2008 under the thirty-year rule is worth reading:

'Hope's inquiry was partly prompted by ASIO's relationship with the Croatian fascist group, the Ustasha. In the late sixties and early seventies, the Ustasha conducted the most serious terrorist campaign in Australian history, with bombings in Sydney in 1967, 1969 and 1972, Canberra in 1969, Melbourne in 1970 and 1972. Ustasha activities were discussed openly in the Croatian press but ASIO, while monitoring even the most mild-mannered activists of the Left, took no action whatsoever against these fully-fledged terrorists' [Crikey 28 May 2008].

Further into history we find the long-serving Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies showing his admiration for Adolf Hitler. He wrote to his family after his 1938 visit to the Third Reich: 'Nevertheless it must be said that this modern abandonment by the Germans of individual liberty and of the easy and pleasant things of life has something rather magnificent about it. The Germans may be pulling down the Churches, but they have erected the State, with Hitler as its head, in a sort of religion which produces spiritual exaltation that one cannot but admire and some small portion of which would do no harm among our somewhat irresponsible populations' [David S Bird, *Nazi Dreamtime. Australian Enthusiasts for Hitler's Germany*]. It is a book well worth reading for an insight into Australian racism and bigotry. Sadly, it is an era that has not yet passed.

The vigilance of those who support democracy and the rule of law is becoming more and more important as this government's agenda and ideological bent become apparent. ■

GUNS IN AMERICA

- Five per cent of the world's population lives in the US, where 50% of the world's guns are owned.
- One hundred and ninety-two million guns were in circulation in the US in 1994; in 2009 the number was 310 million, up by 62%.
- Thirty-one per cent of Americans owned a gun in 1985; in 2014 the figure was 22%.
- Fifty per cent of Americans supported more gun control; in 2014, 47% were opposed.
- Ninety-two per cent of Americans support background checks for all gun buyers, 7% oppose.

Sources: 2007 UN Office on Drugs and Crime Survey, National Institute of Justice Survey, Congressional Research Service Report, General Social Survey, June 2014 Quinnipiac Poll.

Source: *The Age* April 2015

DID YOU KNOW...

PUBLIC, PRIVATE SCHOOLS GIVE SAME RESULTS, 30 STUDIES SHOW

By **TREVOR COBBOLD**

Nearly 30 academic studies of public and private school outcomes in Australia have been published in the past 15 years. The first comprehensive review of these studies, published by Save Our Schools, shows public schools achieve similar outcomes to private schools.

While raw comparisons of student outcomes in public and private schools generally show higher achievement in private schools, such comparisons are misleading because public schools enrol a greater proportion of disadvantaged students. On average, these students have much lower results than students from higher socio-economic status (SES) families. Fair comparisons of school performance use various statistical techniques to adjust for differences in family and school SES and other background factors.

Studies that have adjusted for a range of student and school characteristics show no significant differences between the results of students from public, Catholic and independent schools in national and international tests and in university completion rates.

Public school students appear to achieve higher university grades than private school students despite the latter achieving higher university entrance scores. There is mixed evidence for year 12 completion and workforce earnings.

Seven studies of public and private school results on national and international tests in Australia have been published in the past five years. Six of them show no statistically significant differences between the results of public, Catholic and independent schools.

The one exception used a flawed measure of school SES to adjust the raw test scores that has since been jettisoned by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as unreliable. It failed to take account of differences in family SES.

Three studies of year 12 completion show mixed results. One found students in Catholic and independent schools are more likely to complete year 12 than public school students. Another found an advantage for independent schools over public schools, but no difference between public and Catholic schools. The third study estimated the Catholic school effect ranged from slightly negative

to slightly positive over public schools, depending on different assumptions.

Six other studies have estimated the effect of attendance at public and private schools on university entrance scores in the past 15 years. Four found a small advantage for Catholic and independent schools. Two other studies found a small advantage for independent schools over public schools, but not for Catholic schools. The differences in adjusted scores are very small and may be overstated because a measure of school SES was not included in the analyses.

Six studies have analysed the effect of school sector attendance on first-year university marks in the past 10 years, and all found students from public schools achieved higher marks than students from Catholic and independent schools.

Three studies have suggested that the contrast between the advantage of private school attendance on university entrance scores, and their disadvantage in first-year university, is due to private schools artificially boosting university entrance scores by intensive coaching to improve access to university. These students do not appear to do as well at university because they have to work more independently.

Three studies have compared university completion rates for students from different sectors. One estimated that the Catholic school effect ranged from slightly negative to slightly positive compared with public schools, depending on assumptions made, while the other two found no significant differences in completion rates between students from public, Catholic and independent schools.

In summary, the evidence from academic studies overwhelmingly indicates there is no advantage in attendance at private schools for a range of education outcomes. Students from the same social background do as well in public schools as in Catholic and independent schools.

These findings suggest parents are paying for something else other than education results by choosing a private school. ■

Trevor Cobbold is national convener of Save Our Schools.

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'GROW 40' – MOVING MELBOURNE IN THE 21st CENTURY

A TALK GIVEN AT THE CHURCH BY
ANTHONY MORTON, PRESIDENT
PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS
ASSOCIATION

I don't know that many of you would have come to this place by tram. But I couldn't help registering while on the Victoria Parade tram just how much things have changed since just 10 years ago – let alone 20 years ago when I first joined the movement for better public transport in Melbourne and Victoria. Though it was early on a Sunday morning, my tram was filled to standing room only. Until a decade ago the same tram would have been lucky to have three people on it.

This is just one example of how public transport in Victoria has been embraced by the public in a way not seen for decades. Yet many public transport services are still catching up. Many Sunday morning and evening services still run at the half-hourly or worse frequencies that were the norm in the 1990s. Back then it was said there was insufficient demand to justify running services more frequently. We can see now this is just another excuse for inaction.

This brings us to the public debate about where we are

going with transport policy in Victoria and what kind of city Melbourne will be in the future. Transport policy ought to be led by the people – a community conversation where politicians keep their promises and act as the instruments of the popular will. In survey after survey, poll after poll – not just in Victoria but in Australia as a whole – it is public transport to which a majority of people give priority over road expansion. But we have waited far too long for political leaders to act on this.

Melbourne is a growing city that faces big transport challenges. Some forecasts suggest that there will be 1.2 million more people in Melbourne by 2050 – equivalent to adding another city the size of Adelaide. Of course there is much we can debate about an appropriate and sustainable population policy for Victoria and I don't intend to broach that subject here. The one point I'd like to make is that urban population growth is not something we should fear. Our transport system can be improved to handle a larger or more dense population – as Paris or New York manage to do every day – if there is the political will to make it happen.

The kind of transport solutions required for a large, growing, liveable city also happen to be those with strong support in the community: namely public and active transport. Our rail network must be brought up to scratch and extended to serve as the backbone for more of our

travel. But most importantly we need to direct attention to the suburban bus networks that are the only public transport within walking distance for most people who live in Melbourne. They need to run more frequently, connect better with trains and knit together into a network allowing travel from any point to any other in reasonable time.

It is regrettable that the previous government, despite promising in 2010 to build rail extensions, boost public transport services and give planning priority to public transport over roads, suddenly turned around and did the precise opposite. Much effort had to be expended fighting off a road megaproject that would have, in the words of the late Dr Paul Mees, soaked up all funds available for public transport for a generation. We have hope that with the recent change of government, the opportunity will be taken for a genuine change in direction.

Of course the main alternative to the East West Link in the public eye lately has been the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel. This is an important project and will be of particular benefit for the western part of Melbourne that has been historically disadvantaged with public transport services. We all know about the huge problem of traffic on the West Gate Bridge. So it's worth considering that every morning in peak hour, some 30,000 people per hour travel on trains through Footscray station on the way to the city. This is around four times as much as the 8,000 per hour who travel in on cars over the West Gate. The Regional Rail Link opening later this year will provide capacity for about another 12,000 per hour on trains. But if we get the Metro tunnel, that provides capacity for between 20,000 and 30,000 extra people to travel from the west of Melbourne toward the city and eastern suburbs – around three alternative West Gate Bridges' worth.

But we are wary of the Metro tunnel being seen as a panacea. It is a megaproject, and all megaprojects bear serious question marks due to their sheer cost. It requires an unusually large benefit to justify such spending. But we do have the assurance of Infrastructure Australia that the benefit from the Metro tunnel is well above its cost, and we expect a new Infrastructure Victoria agency will confirm this as well. In any event, we can't let this be the only public transport improvement that goes ahead in Melbourne in the next few years.

That brings me back to buses. For decades our bus services in particular were in a death spiral. Planners saw declining patronage on these services, so responded with service cuts and fare hikes. This caused more people to desert the buses for their own cars, and patronage dropped further. This vicious spiral led to a situation

where patronage collapsed and buses ran to almost useless standards. If you want to avoid losing money on public transport, you don't do it by running a bus once an hour so that only two or three people are willing to use it!

Yet too many of our buses not only run at atrocious frequencies but also stop running before 9.00 pm, when a lot of people are still out and about. There has been a huge failure of imagination, which has caused many of us to resort exclusively to car travel even if we'd be inclined to use a half-decent public transport service. More people in Melbourne and Victoria need a genuine alternative so that they can leave their car at home and go about their daily business using public and active transport without adding to traffic congestion.

There have been some improvements to bus services recently, but this can't be done on a zero-sum approach where more buses in one suburb come at the expense of fewer buses elsewhere. Until recently there was a proposal to improve bus frequencies in the eastern suburbs – something we, of course, support – but also to remove services in the northern and western suburbs that, as I mentioned before, have long been the most disadvantaged for public transport. Again it seemed that good working-class and disadvantaged communities were going to miss out.

We are pleased that the government has agreed to have a second look at this proposal. We hope that this won't stop the necessary frequency increases going ahead. The failure of imagination here is the failure to recognise that when you improve service and attract more passengers, this also provides more revenue to the system. Particularly when the passengers you attract are full-fare paying passengers as well as concession holders, you have extra revenue to support more improvements in service. You actually put the vicious spiral into reverse. To date there has been too little political courage to turn the death spiral around, to actually put public transport on the path to growth.

Our 'Grow 40' message is about attaining that growth because that's what Melbourne will need into the future. We call on the government to adopt a patronage target of 40 million additional trips by public transport each year. This is an appropriate target to keep Melbourne as a liveable city: this is what will get us 20% of trips by public transport in 2020, and 25% of trips by 2025. It obliges the government to take public transport seriously, to give people an alternative that competes with car travel. It is only what the community has asked for decade after decade. ■

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The surprisingly simple way Utah solved chronic homelessness and saved millions

By **TERRENCE McCOY** 18 April 2015

One American social researcher came up with a radical way to help street people. Give homes to the homeless.



The story of how Utah solved chronic homelessness begins in 2003, inside a cavernous Las Vegas banquet hall populated by droves of suits. The problem at hand was seemingly intractable.

The number of chronic homeless had surged since the early 1970s. And related costs were soaring. A University of Pennsylvania study had just showed New York City was dropping a staggering \$US40,500 (\$52,000) in annual costs on every homeless person with mental problems, who account for many of the chronically homeless. So that day, as officials spitballed ideas, a social researcher named Sam Tsemberis stood to deliver what he framed as a surprisingly simple, cost-effective method of ending chronic homelessness.

Give homes to the homeless.

Mr Tsemberis' research showed this wouldn't just dramatically cut the number of chronically homeless on the streets. It would also slash spending in the long run. In the audience sat a Utah businessman named Lloyd Pendleton. He had just taken over the Utah Housing Taskforce after a successful run in business. He was intrigued. 'He came over to me and he said, "I finally just heard something that makes sense to me";' Mr Tsemberis recalled in an interview. "Would you be willing to come to

Utah and work with us?"

That conversation spawned what has been perhaps the United States' most successful – and radical – program to end chronic homelessness.

Now, more than a decade later, chronic homelessness in one of the nation's most conservative states may soon end. And all of it is thanks to a program that at first seems stripped from the left-wing socialist manual. In 2005 Utah had nearly 1932 chronically homeless. By 2014 that number had dropped 72 per cent to 539. Today, explained Gordon Walker, the director of the state Housing and Community Development Division, the state is 'approaching a functional zero'.

For years, the thought of simply giving the homeless homes seemed absurd, constituting the height of government waste. Many chronically homeless, after all, are victims of severe trauma and significant mental health and addiction issues. Many more have spent thousands of nights on the streets and are no longer familiar with living in a home. Who, in their right mind, would willingly give such folk brand-new houses without any proof of marked improvement?

But that's exactly what Utah did.

First the state identified the homeless that experts would

consider chronically homeless. That designation means they have a disabling condition and have been homeless for longer than a year, or four different times in the last three years. Among the many subgroups of the homeless community – such as homeless families or homeless children – the chronically homeless are both the most difficult to reabsorb into society and use the most public resources.

So in 2004, as part of a trial, the state housed 17 people throughout Salt Lake City. Then they checked back a year later. Fourteen were still in their homes. Three were

dead. The success rate had topped 80 per cent, which to Mr Walker ‘sounded pretty good’.

It’s now years later. And these days, Mr Walker says, the state saves \$US8000 (\$10,271) per homeless person in annual expenses.

And now, the chronic homeless are no longer tallied in numbers. They’re tallied by name. The last few are awaiting their houses. ■

The Washington Post

An address given at the Melbourne Unitarian Church on 3 May 2015
by **KURANDA SEYIT**, Secretary, Islamic Council of Victoria

I’m a Muslim – get me out of here!

The last I looked there was something called a multicultural policy in Australia.

But where are our politicians? Have they abandoned the policy? It certainly appears to be the case, and if so, has multiculturalism failed?

The problem is that the government says it believes in multiculturalism but ‘doesn’t really mean it’. When bigots were protesting against Muslims around the country during the so-called Reclaim Australia rallies, there was silence from Mr Abbott.

Two weeks ago in south-east Melbourne where I reside, police raids were conducted on five households. One of the teenagers arrested was allegedly planning an attack on Anzac Day. Three of the teenagers were released without charge and one was detained under a terrorism detention order. The raids were heavy-handed and ostensibly took away the families’ dignity and made them feared and despised by their fellow Australians.

After these raids there was widespread discord amongst the Muslim communities. An emergency meeting was held in Dandenong Council with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Assistant Police Commissioner in attendance. There is fear, suspicion and anger. A young man speaks at the meeting; he says he is afraid to go online to check out any Islamic sites. He says that his friends are also afraid that they are being monitored, their phones tapped and their emails filtered.

Around the same time an Islamophobic rant against a Muslim couple on a train in Sydney is caught on camera and it goes viral. The Q Society distributes leaflets around Melbourne. The leaflets read, ‘Say no



to halal, no to shariah, no to Islamic studies in schools.' On the back it describes a mosque as 'the seat of divine government, the court of sharia, a training centre where the faithful gather before battle.'

A mosque is fire bombed beyond recognition in Toowoomba. Online hate is rampant. The Facebook page 'Toowoomba mosque burnt to ground' has 155 Likes. One post says, 'Oh dear, how sad, sad, it's only one'. Another post reads, 'Still quite a few more mosques to go'. Another says, 'Burn them all I say!' A female writer posts, 'Let's hope the next one is full of Muzrats.' A group calling themselves 'Australians speak out' says, 'The more the merrier.'

We know that this is fear mongering at its worst and their claims about Islam are preposterous and unfounded. But tell that to many Muslim women who wear the hijab. They are the ones who take the brunt of this Islamophobia. They cop the abuse, the verbal assaults and the intimidation, the stares and the fear of physical attacks. Muslims are feeling unsettled, unsure and unwanted.

'And I'm a Muslim, so get me out of here!' Let me add, I am an educated, intelligent, hardworking, honest, generous and considerate Muslim. But I still want to get out of here. But where can I go? Shall I go back to 'where I came from', as Jackie Lambie says, 'back to Islam'? Well, actually, Islam is not a country ... it's a world religion.

I grew up in Australia. I know no other country. This is my homeland. Forty per cent of Muslims are like me. This is where they were born and bred and they love this country. The other 60% were born overseas and

most of them have been here for a long time. They may have an accent, but they love this country too.

But this is not a reality TV show and it's not a popularity contest. There are no cockroach, wilder-beast intestines and snake-bile cocktails to consume. These are real people, with real lives, with real concerns, just like you and every other Australian. We are being conditioned to fear Muslims and to hold concerns of a terrorist attack occurring in Australia. One in two believe that Islam is a problem.

Are we becoming Islamophobic and intolerant of different races and religions, particularly Islam? I know that it's only a minority who think this way but our leaders are not willing to speak out against them. This is a major issue.

Not the few dozen men who decide to go and fight for IS but the thousands of decent Aussies who remain in this country, living in fear of persecution and feeling the enmity thrust upon them by the bigots and xenophobes who most likely have never met a Muslim or care to humanise them or understand their faith.

While at this stage our view of Australia as the best place to live on earth is still intact, I am afraid that it's gradually being eroded by our apathy. It's time our policymakers understood this and started acting like the elected leaders we expect them to be; shout down the haters and bring back common sense and balance to our treasured Aussie idea of a fair go before these fringe radicals turn Aussie against Aussie, mate against mate, before it's too late! ■

NEW Unitarian E-Newsletter

The Melbourne Unitarian Church has decided to move into the digital world by launching an **E-Newsletter** every two to three months that will bring you up-to-date information and comment from home and around the world. If you would like to be part of our exciting E-Newsletter, please send an email to us at admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au and we will add you to our growing database. If, on receipt or at any point you decide you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, you can easily unsubscribe.

Dear *Beacon* readers

We are currently working on our next E-Newsletter: the first one was very well received. If you would like to read our second one, please send your email details to Donna at admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au. The material in our E-Newsletters is designed to bring you current affairs issues between *Beacon*.

from our readers



Dear Editor

Thank you, Donna. You people are an inspiration to all those who seek the truth. Thank you.

John Wheeler, NZ

To whom it may concern

I have recently become a pensioner and so wish to claim the reduced rate. Also, please find enclosed a money order for another 2 years' subscription and a small donation.

Keep up the good work; thoroughly enjoy your articles.

P Dawson, Vic

Dear Editors

Please find enclosed \$20 cash being my concession contribution for 2 years' subscription. Would you be kind enough to bank it for me?

I really appreciate the break up of the unemployment figures in the April 2015 issue. It just shows what a dishonest, callous government we have.

Kind regards

J Jagerhofer, Vic

Dear Sir or Madam

Please find the enclosed cheque for \$50, being my subscription for the current year and next year as well.

My apologies for failing to note that my subscription for this year was overdue.

Yours faithfully

R Brummitt, SA

PS. I quite enjoy reading the *Beacon* and can usually understand where it is coming from even though I don't actually agree with much or most of what it says.

However, I also do not agree with much of what the Government has done – or failed to do – over the last decade or so.

Getting back to the *Beacon*, as I have said before, I do particularly disagree with its assertion, or at least implication, that we do not live in a democracy in Australia. This is not so. Anyone has the right to stand for Parliament and promulgate their views. We have compulsory attendance at polling booths on election days – 'one vote, one value' – and meticulous counting of votes. What could be more democratic than that?

Please find enclosed concession subscription and a gift subscription.

Dear Editor

Your publications are so informative and an alternative to mainstream media.

Thank you.

P & K Nihill, Vic

Dear Editor

Thank you for sending me this letter. It confirms many of my beliefs and informs me.

Judith McNaughtan

Dear Donna

Great to see your group being so active for social justice!

I've started a social justice singing group for 'Auckland Action Against Poverty' over here – and Auckland Unitarian Church has joined the 'Living Wage' movement to increase workers' wages – I love what I see in your newsletter. Please pass on my congratulations to those of you doing the work.

Warm regards

Sally Mabelle

Dear Editor

Very informative, nice clear work.

Thanks

Pam Baragwanath

Dear Editor

Indonesia's cruel punishments in executing Australian and other drug smugglers have been utterly disgraceful. Indonesia has learnt nothing from its appalling and shameful past in East Timor and continues its awful atrocities in West Papua and now these vile executions. Australia must respond hard, stand up for human rights and stop supporting this corrupt, oppressive and brutal army and government. Repressive regimes like Indonesia need to be treated like the international pariahs they are. Enough, Australia should give no more aid for the Indonesian army or government.

Indonesia's barbaric killings were for local political posturing. Common sense requests, reasoned arguments and even pleading for lives failed. The only alternative is the type of direct action all corrupt and oppressive governments like Indonesia understand – financial pressure. Most of the big business enterprises in Indonesia (legal and illegal) are owned by the army or former army officers and their cronies. We should boycott Bali, Garuda and all other Indonesian business interests.

Steven Katsineris, Vic

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I’m a Muslim – get me out of here!

Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart
Marion Harper
Donna Sensi
Julie Stafford

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