



**SOCIALIST ALLIANCE
SPECIAL POLICY
CONFERENCE**

SUNDAY MAY 19, 2013

CONFERENCE DOSSIER

CONTENTS:

Amendment to the National Disability Policy: National Disability Insurance Scheme. Page 2.

Amendments to the Agriculture policy. Page 3.

Amendments to the Transport policy. Page 13.

Amendments to the Sex Worker policy. Page 23.

Amendments to the Women's Charter. Page 24.

Amendments to the Marriage and Civil Unions policy. Page 24.

Appendices

1. Adopted Disability Policy (from the Socialist Alliance website)

2. Section of the original Disability Policy Amendment on the NDIS, which was debated at the 9th National Conference

Proposed amendment to the Disability Policy: National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Please refer to the Appendix at the back for a copy of the adopted Disability Policy (Appendix 1) and for the original NDIS amendment that was debated at the 9th national conference, but deferred for further development (Appendix 2).

Existing Disability Policy can also be found at:

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=1261>

Moved by Sue Bolton, Melbourne.

In August 2011, the Council of Australian Governments agreed on the need for major reform of disability services through a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Such reform was an outcome of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into disability care and support.

NDIS is a voucher scheme for disability and welfare services where the government will fund private services based on which service and individual decides to use. A similar system has been used in Victoria to undermine and then slash the public TAFE system.

It is likely that the NDIS will have a similar impact on free and cheap public and community services.

In order to access NDIS funds, people will be required to prove "significant and ongoing disability". This is likely to exclude people whose chronic disease means they have fluctuating levels of need. Such processes have been used to exclude many people with disability from the disability pension.

It is unlikely that creating a market for disability services will lead to the provision of adequate services in regional areas or services which cater to the specific cultural needs of indigenous people or migrants.

Instead of NDIS, Socialist Alliance advocates that disability services be adequately funded through a universal health system which guarantees free access to disability services for all who need it. Such a universal health system needs to involve people with disability from a range of backgrounds to ensure that the system caters for the needs of all.

I would recommend that members also read:

- [People with disabilities need free universal health care, not the NDIS \(by Sandra Bloodworth, Socialist Alternative\)](#)
- [Is Disability A Private Matter? \(Eleanor Gibbs, New Matilda\)](#)
- [Concerns over disability draft law](#)

Proposed amendment to the Agriculture Policy II (April 2013)

Existing Agriculture policy can be found at:

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=893>

Moved: Elena Garcia - At Large, Qld

1. The problem

Farmers and agricultural businesses, according to the latest ABS figures (2009-2010), manage 52% of the Australian environment.[1] There are approximately 134,000 farm businesses in Australia, 99 percent of which are family owned and operated, and as of 2010-11 they employ only 307,000 people to manage 417.3 million hectares of land[2], including the 46.3% of Australia that is marginal land[3].

Since the introduction of European land management and European plants and animals in Australia, compounded by a shift to industrial agriculture in the 1950s with its less diversity, monocrops, and heavy use of oil, pesticides and herbicides, the quality of Australia's soils has dropped dramatically. Europeans ploughed the soil, removed the groundcover and logged the forests, and the topsoil blew away in the droughts and washed away in the floods. They burned off every year. They allowed hooved animals to graze the reed-filled waterways and remove the vegetation that used to choke creeks and spill floods across the floodplains to refresh the water catchments, and the waterways then eroded into gullies that drained the floods away before they could soak into the ground. European hooved animals compacted the soil and filled the cracks that previously allowed rain to flow straight down into the subsoils. Inappropriate agricultural practices and methods and massive feral plant (garden plants like cats claw creeper that kill all the trees along the waterways, prickly pear infestations that choked millions of hectares, and poisonous weeds like Mother of Millions, toxic or inedible to animals and choking out the edible grasses) and feral animal infestations have led to ongoing creek bank and water's edge erosion, soil loss, salinity and soil structure collapse across the country, threatening the viability of many rural communities, and endangering Australia's future food security. Although 70 percent of arable farmers have now adopted both direct drilling and minimum tillage practices[4], 12 percent of businesses use animal manure as fertiliser, and 19 million hectares of farmland nationally was prepared using zero-till methods in 2009-10, [1] past mismanagement has left huge damage to our environment.

In many areas, irrigation water is dangerously over-allocated, frequently wasteful and used on inappropriate crops, and is becoming more and more scarce, threatening the viability of agriculture in many parts of Australia. Access to water has been turned into a tradeable commodity, allowing speculative trading in "water rights" that has led to over-allocation, severe financial pressure on family farms, and serious damage to ecosystems as vital ground water and river systems are depleted.

The rise of the coal seam gas industry and its massive water use and toxic threat to groundwater and water catchments now threatens the future of our entire agricultural industry. The overflow of toxic water from 50,000 abandoned mines is also poisoning our drinking and farming water. The mining industry is now pushing to pump out toxic water from flooded operational mines into our rivers and drinking water catchments.

At the same time, agricultural profits have increasingly gone to non-productive commercial sectors. In 1900, 40% of the food dollar went to farmers; now it is less than 15%, as farmers are forced to receive lower and lower prices under threat of cheap imports **and supermarket price-fixing**. Farm workers, many of them casual labourers, are amongst the worst paid and suffer some of the worst working conditions of Australian workers, and unemployment and poverty in rural Australia continue to rise. As a result, the average farming age **has risen to 55[1] and continues to rise**, because young people are put off by the economic and environmental challenges of farming, **and because land speculation by developers and the pressure to increase production has made the price to buy a farm skyrocket while returns drop.**

Australian agriculture is also threatened in the most fundamental way by climate change. The present global trend of greenhouse emissions will, if continued, make most agricultural production in this country impossible by the final decades of the century. **Although agricultural emissions dropped by 40% between 1990 and 2006[5], emissions from the rural sector are still the second-largest element in Australia's greenhouse accounting. Pressure to increase production levels is pushing farmers down America's unsustainable path of industrial agriculture and factory farming. Industrial agriculture increases monoculture farming and the nitrous oxide emissions from synthetic nitrogen fertilisers. Factory farming of livestock involves toxic pollution of air, soil and water, increased net enteric methane emissions from cattle and sheep, and not only wasting grain on but poisoning and torturing an increasing proportion of our livestock meat supply.**

The Socialist Alliance believes that the long-term sustainability of agriculture is an essential component of the well-being of Australia's economy, society and environment, and **major reform must be subsidised** in order to save it, and the environment, from the catastrophic effects of current **and past mismanagement**.

2. Sustainable Agriculture

The term "sustainable agriculture" is profoundly misused by governments and corporate agribusiness, while current agricultural research and education is overwhelmingly geared, not to developing truly sustainable agriculture, but to increasing farm outputs and corporate profits at the expense of the environment and farming communities.

The drive to increase farm outputs is pushing Australian agriculture towards the US industrial agriculture system and its catastrophic impact on the environment and small farmers. The 20th-century industrialisation of agriculture and factory farming of livestock is totally unsustainable and a direct threat to our environment. It "has increased the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by the food system by an order of magnitude; chemical

fertilizers (made from natural gas), pesticides (made from petroleum), farm machinery, modern food processing and packaging and transportation have together transformed a system that in 1940 produced 2.3 calories of food energy for every calorie of fossil-fuel energy it used into one that now takes 10 calories of fossil-fuel energy to produce a single calorie of modern supermarket food. When we eat from the industrial-food system, we are eating oil and spewing greenhouse gases."[6]

"To take animals off farms and put them on feedlots is to take an elegant solution -- animals replenishing the fertility that crops deplete -- and neatly divide it into two problems: a fertility problem on the farm and a pollution problem on the feedlot. The former problem is remedied with greenhouse-intense fossil-fuel fertilizer; the latter is remedied not at all"[7] and is a toxic source of air, water and soil pollution. "And while animals living on farms will still emit their share of greenhouse gases, grazing them on grass and returning their waste to the soil will substantially offset their carbon hoof prints, as will getting ruminant animals off grain. A bushel of grain takes approximately a half gallon of oil to produce; grass can be grown with little more than sunshine. [6]"

The sustainable agriculture that the Socialist Alliance stands for means farming based on natural processes, requiring the development of well functioning agro-ecosystems both above and below ground, providing **cheap nutritious food** for people's needs while causing no degradation to the natural environment, and adequate income and working conditions for farmers and farm workers.

The Socialist Alliance will:

- **Prioritise protecting our fresh water. Clean fresh water is our greatest natural resource. Industries that pollute our water catchments and groundwater must be stopped immediately and liable for all costs of cleaning up all past pollution by the industry. Rather than the public, the mining industry will be financially accountable for the bill of cleaning up the toxic water pollution from 50,000 abandoned mines nationally, and stopped from using our catchments as their toxic overflow drains. [A federally organized, mine owner paid for, national survey of all 50,000 abandoned mines will be conducted. A commission will assess and develop plans to destroy and seal up all these mines to protect the water table from toxic waste.](#)**
- **Stop the Coal Seam Gas Industry. By polluting groundwater and catchments, the Coal Seam Gas industry will destroy the agricultural industry, along with the rural communities that depend on agriculture. Socialist Alliance actively supports the Lock The Gate campaign, which is uniting city and rural workers against CSG to protect Australia's food industries and the water resources that they depend on.**
- **Ban all unconventional gas extraction, fill the existing bores, and set up a maintenance and inspection program to continue to check their integrity into the future.**

- **Stop the uranium mining industry and close all mines to prevent radioactive pollution of our groundwater.**
- Phase out corporate agribusiness farming, particularly in the Murray-Darling basin, and regulate for sustainable water use in irrigation, including changing land-use practices and water efficiency practices in line with long-term water sustainability.
- Review the allocation of free irrigation water licences to wool, lamb and beef farming enterprises, and review irrigated rice and cotton growing licences
- Reverse the process of water privatisation and put all water allocations under public control.
- Reduce reliance on synthetic pesticides and fertilisers by harnessing biological capture of carbon and nitrogen, **by re-integrating livestock into crop rotation**, and **by** reprocessing urban waste and water, including sewage, into organic fertilisers.
- Encourage pest and disease minimisation by reliance on factors such as enhanced natural immune systems of plants, integrated management and related ecological principles, **and by ending monoculture and factory farming. Eliminate the use of antibiotics as a standard part of stock feed to prevent livestock sickening in inhumane and overcrowded factory-farming conditions.**
- **Stop the World Trade Organisation overriding the right of individual countries to keep their agriculture free of pests. Enforce the right of Australian Quarantine to deny Australian entry to anything breaching Australian quarantine standards against pests and disease.**
- Encourage mulching, composting, **carbon sequestration in pasture, animal manure fertiliser, crop rotation, rotational grazing, direct-drilling crops into pasture**, and no-till and reduced-tillage farming through development grants and incentives.
- Ensure effective management and removal of invasive feral **plant and animal** species **by subsidising equipment, infrastructure and labour to control them, and by subsidising the establishment of a national feral animal meat harvest. Such harvests can go to supply school lunch, food bank and other nutritional programs.**
- Prevent use of genetically modified organisms until exhaustive, independent testing can definitively prove they do not have potential to cause harm to people, livestock or the environment, and introduce strict laws and fines against contamination. **Label all GM product content.**
- **Set up a comprehensive labelling of all types of food to show if it is a product of intensive or organic farming, or contains any components that are genetically modified (including the feed fed to the meat contents of the food sold). Take definitions and standards for organic products**

away from distributors and commercial interests and place them entirely in the hands of organic farmers, consumer and scientific groups

- Increase and maintain crop diversity **and ban the patenting of seeds.**
- Extend public funding of agricultural research and education to ensure the further development of sustainable agriculture, **particularly the development of perennial grain, legume and oilseed crops.**

3. Sustainable Farming Communities

Unsustainable farming practices, environmental degradation, economic pressures **from the artificially-low farm-gate price of food and the labour drain to the mining industry**, and the effects of drought and climate change are seriously threatening the viability of our rural and agricultural communities.

Agriculture is a knowledge intensive sector, with a strong demand for skilled professionals. Estimates indicate a potential demand for 6000 tertiary qualified graduates per year. However, the sector faces a significant undersupply of graduates, with Australian universities graduating fewer than 800 graduates per year in agriculture[8]. The mining boom has also drained away rural workers, leaving farms struggling to continue and forced to get deeper in debt to mechanise to get the work done. ABS statistics show the average farmer is a grazier aged 55 working an average of 49 hours a week[9].

The Socialist Alliance believes that most existing farming communities can be made economically and socially viable again, but only through a drastic overhaul of the agricultural sector and its practices. We will consult and work alongside communities in finding solutions to the problems they face, encouraging public participation in both creating and implementing specific measures needed.

The Socialist Alliance will:

- Provide funding, resources and training to farming communities, in combination with sustainable agriculture organisations, to make the transition to sustainable agriculture.
- Rewrite farm employees' industrial awards **and subsidise farm labour costs** to ensure that **both farmers and** farm employees, including casuals, receive comparable pay and conditions to other workers.
- **Establish a “Land Army” of farm labourers hired and paid award wages by the federal government, to meet the increased labour needs of switching from industrial agriculture to organic farming.**
- Prevent the forced sale of indebted farms and provide alternative funding on the basis of ongoing agricultural viability. **Guarantee a fair land price for farmers leaving the industry, and subsidise the entry of young farmers into the industry, setting up a national farm land bank if necessary to hold rural land in trust for farming purposes.**
- Encourage national agricultural self-sufficiency, minimising the need for food

imports and strengthening the Australian farming sector.

- Encourage farming cooperatives, local farmers markets, and state or cooperative marketing authorities, to ensure all farmers receive a fair price from processors and retailers. **Subsidise the establishment of cooperative-owned processing, and nationalise closed processing facilities and abattoirs under local cooperative control.**
- Increase Landcare funding assistance for farmers to **cover the costs of environmental stewardship to keep our water catchments healthy and** to increase the sustainability of local farms and farming communities.
- **Encourage** food processing and trading practices that reduce transport, packaging and waste, including processing in productive regions **and establishing mobile processing units for remote areas to minimise transportation costs.** Encourage and subsidise the production of alternative stock feeds to grain, such as antibiotic-free ethanol wastes and high-protein maggot meal from abattoir waste-blood-and-guts. Maggot meal can replace the unsustainable one third of the global fish catch presently turned into dehydrated high-protein fish meal for pigs, poultry and fish farms[10].
- **Re-open regional abattoirs and get livestock off trucks and back onto railways. Re-open and extend rail services and fund the eventual full national electrification of freight rail lines,** to transport agricultural products and supply rural towns. **Re-nationalise privatised railway and port facilities and prioritise agricultural not mining shipments. Protect the stock corridors for droving against creeping privatisation.**
- Support the research, development and production of farm machinery, chemicals, biological products **and selectively bred plant varieties** that support better, safer and more affordable farming practices.
- Increase research and development of more efficient agricultural water use practices. **Subsidise water conservation measures such as covering open water channels and replacing overhead irrigation with underground irrigation to reduce evaporation.**
- Increase and redirect agricultural research into improving the sustainability of agricultural ecosystems and regions.
- **Stop** the use of prime agricultural land for urban development or mining.
- Encourage the creation of urban and peri-urban “city farms”, community and “permaculture” gardens to maximise the proportion of food produced in cities and large towns, **integrating livestock like poultry, pigs, goats and guinea pigs into recycling appropriate city wastes into meat, eggs and fertiliser,** and improving food quality and reducing emissions from unnecessary transport.
- Increase the scope of agricultural education, including at a primary and

secondary school level, and **establish comprehensive fully-funded scholarships in agricultural professions.**

- **Amend and simplify health regulations to allow food wastes to be hygienically recycled by omnivorous livestock, and surplus home-garden food products to be sold or bartered legally.**

4. Food Security--at home and abroad

There are few things more important than maintaining a secure and reliable supply of healthy food. In a world where over a billion people are starving, the deliberate destruction of food crops is criminal. Food should be produced and distributed to satisfy need, not to make profits. **Farmers should receive a living wage, whether by regulated prices or direct subsidies, to supply healthy nutritious food, rather than be pushed to unsustainable shortcuts in order to make ends meet. If necessary, farmers should receive price subsidies to keep nutritious food cheap for people to buy. Farmers also need to be buffered from going broke from supermarket price-wars that drive prices below the costs of production.**

Australian farmers produce almost 93 per cent of Australia's daily domestic food supply and export 60 per cent (in volume) of total agricultural production[11]. But their markets and continued viability are threatened by imported food produced unsustainably at artificially cheap prices by highly exploited workers. Australia should assist our neighbours in the region - especially in the developing world - by sharing our sustainable agricultural practices and surplus food in order to improve the well-being of humanity as a whole.

The Socialist Alliance will:

- Expand on projects like Food Bank, redistributing “excess” food to meet social needs, preventing food wastage and ensuring public access to nutritional food sources.
- Increase foreign aid aimed at developing self-sufficient sustainable food production practices in developing countries and seek to prevent “food dumping” **both domestically and internationally.**
- Develop “fair trade” policies with like-minded countries and increase foreign food aid programs in order to help prevent starvation and malnutrition.
- **Guarantee a living wage and covered costs for Australian farmers who produce sustainably, to protect them from unsustainable supermarket “price-wars”.**

5. Agriculture and Climate Change

The current lack of climate policies of global capitalism can be expected to bring about a holocaust in the Australian countryside by mid-century, let alone by 2100. There are serious predictions of a 4C rise in global average temperatures, over historical levels, as soon as 2060. Anywhere north or west of the divide, this figure would be 5-6C.

These impacts would include reduced average rainfall, and much less predictable rainfall, along with dramatically increased evaporation rates. Together, these effects would make most rain-fed agriculture in inland Australia impossible, along with a lot of pastoralism. Average runoff into streams would decline by as much as 15% per degree increase, turning the Murray-Darling rivers into strings of waterholes most of the time - except during occasional periods of catastrophic flood. The new Murray-Darling legislation takes no account of this prospect.

Agriculture accounts for around 16% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions [footnote?] and current industrial agricultural practices - from fertilisers to food transport - consume huge quantities of fossil fuels. Land clearing and outdated forestry practices account for a further 6% of our greenhouse emissions. **The higher temperatures and drier conditions from global warming are producing more intense bushfires and their carbon emissions, and land management becomes a careful balance between minimising fuel build-up and preventing overgrazing, particularly in forests and marginal country.**

Preventing climate disaster will require that net emissions from the rural sector be **minimised. To do this, farmers will be subsidised to remove** carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through **carbon sequestration in pastures**, reforestation, including farm forestry, and improved farming practices. **Methane recycling for power generation in dairies and piggeries etc will be subsidised.**

Soil carbon levels need to be enhanced through encouragement of no-till and organic farming methods, **including moving livestock out of factory farming into pasture and crop waste consumption. Switching from chemical fertilisers to animal manures will be encouraged.**

46.3% of Australia is marginal country, much of it semi-deserts with natural vegetation. This land is used for cattle grazing and is too dry and infertile for conventional agricultural use[3]. Farmers must be subsidised to continue to sustainably manage this land to prevent its destruction by devastating, carbon-emitting bushfires and feral animal and plant infestations. Infrastructure to prevent overgrazing and to assist in feral animal harvest will be established and subsidised in the national interest to assist farmers to protect our soils and water catchments. Land which climate change renders too dry for cropping, must be returned to native vegetation or managed in an environmentally sustainable way for native pasture or tree farming.

The Socialist Alliance will:

- **End the unsustainable, inhumane and environmentally destructive system of factory farming, and re-integrate livestock into rotational cropping and pasture rotation. This will improve stock management to minimise net methane emissions per head.**
- **Encourage a shift from fossil-fuel based chemical pesticides and fertilisers to animal manures.**
- **Encourage "Carbon farming": increasing the amount of carbon locked in the**

soil and the ecosystem through methods such as **carbon sequestration in pastures, holistic grazing**, permanent reforestation and the use of sustainable farming practices such as composting.

- Expand research on the production and use of biochar in order to increase crop yields, water retention, and plant nutrient availability, to enrich soil biota and to reduce reliance on synthetic fertilisers.
- Prevent industrial biofuel or biochar production or broadscale carbon “offsetting” through unsustainable plantations that lock up prime farming land.
- **Stop the urbanisation of prime rural land around cities.** Permit land clearing of **previously uncleared land** only in exceptional circumstances and only when offset by the reforestation of equal areas of similar native vegetation.
- Promote the restoration and remediation of native vegetation and ecosystems, reducing the release of greenhouse gases and limiting serious soil degradation. **Subsidise catchment management infrastructure to keep livestock and feral animals out of riparian zones.**
- Develop sustainable grazing practices and **subsidise cell-grazing infrastructure**, in order to improve soil stability and water availability and **reverse desertification.**
- **Drastically cut the numbers of feral ruminants, especially camels, and subsidise the re-opening of regional abattoirs and the establishment of mobile abattoirs, refrigerated trucks and mobile blood-and-bone grinding equipment to enable the humane and hygienic harvest of feral animals for meat, hides, felt and fertiliser. Establish regional feral animal management plans run by regional councils and National Parks staff.**
- **While supplementing and eventually replacing live animal exports for meat production with Australian frozen processed meat exports, subsidising the creation of a market for feral animal products within Australian and internationally, including non-meat production live camel etc exports.**
- **Encourage the establishment of rural industries to produce feral animal products and recycle wastes into organic fertiliser and maggot meal for fish, pig and poultry food, and promote the consumption of feral animal meat by educating consumers and subsidising its production costs to keep it cheap.**
- **Set up a national farmer insurance scheme to provide affordable insurance to keep sustainable farms going after climate disasters.**

Footnotes.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics: Land Management and Farming in Australia, 2009-

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, cat. no. 6291.0, Canberra.
3. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_clearing_in_Australia
4. OECD (2008), *Environmental Performance of Agriculture in OECD Countries Since 1990: Australia Country Section*
5. Australian Government Department of Climate Change, National Inventory by Economic Sector 2006
6. Source: <http://www.cornucopia.org/2008/10/farmer-in-chief/>
7. Wendell Berry, source: <http://www.cornucopia.org/2008/10/farmer-in-chief/>
8. Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture, Pratley and Hay 2010, *The job market in agriculture in Australia*
9. Source: <http://www.nff.org.au/read/3769/farmer-numbers-fall-productivity-grows.html>
10. Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201212/s3646656.htm>
11. PMSEIC (2010). *Australia and Food Security in a Changing World*. The Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, Canberra, Australia

Proposed amendment to the Public Transport Policy

Existing Public Transport Policy can be found at:

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=216>

Note to delegates: this is an Amended version incorporating some of Helen Said's amendments. Helen has indicated that she supports this version.

Moved: Jonathan Strauss - Cairns/At Large

Seconded: Helen Said - Melbourne

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT POLICY –

1. Sustainable transport: an opportunity to change to world

Transport is a key feature of our society. How people move around and goods are transported shapes our urban environments and affects our impact on the globe. It also conditions who we can know, what we can do and how we experience the world.

Given the wealth we can produce, people's mobility to meet others, engage in suitable work and learn about the world, and their access to a reasonable variety of goods and services, are now rights. Providing transport without creating greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, or other pollutants, is a necessity.

An extensive and efficient transport system can be created. If powered by renewable energy, it will also be sustainable. Moreover, comprehensive city-wide and national networks achieve the best economies of scope and scale. In particular, rail beats road because, although its construction costs are high, it moves people and freight much more cheaply if well-utilised: therefore, it is less expensive over the transport system's life-cycle. This potential is not being realised. Transport today is environmentally destructive and often inefficient. The road network is extensive, but its use is fragmented because this is dominated by privately-owned and driven cars. The production of our transport networks, its vehicles, and their power or fuel is also parcelled out among a number of corporations. These benefit from a continuing commitment to fossil fuel powered transport, which maintains the value of their existing investments, and from the higher expenditure on transport, which gives them greater scope for making profits. Capital also benefits from working people not seeing the success of a collective and cooperative, compared with the individual and atomised, solution to a social issue.

Socialist Alliance believes immediate action must be taken to reverse the heavy reliance on private transport in Australia. We call for a 'supply-based' buildout of comprehensive public transport networks. The 'demand-based' approach to determining public transport provision, where individuals are supposed to express

their demand to consume it before it exists. As well, since this decision will have been made by the public, the public should be the beneficiaries, to the exclusion of corporate ownership and profit.

Our community should create sustainable transport systems which meets the needs of our planet and its people. Social mobilisation to change national, state and local government transport policy will be central to achieving this.

2. Private transport produces corporate riches, not a sustainable solution

Under capitalism, transport systems have sometimes represented an opportunity for individual capitalists and corporations to gain profits through providing infrastructure, vehicles, or services, as well as opportunities for the wealthy to reside away from urban squalor and to visit exotic locations. But the systems have also provided more general benefits for capital, through access to raw materials, to workers to be employed in business districts and industrial zones, and to markets for goods and for services such as mass entertainment and tourism, as well as being a means to conduct military operations.

Satisfaction of these more general interests of capital required transport provision beyond the higher volume, and thus more profitable, routes in which individual capitals would be willing to invest. There is also a tendency towards 'natural monopoly' in many transport routes (at least according to the type of system, such as road or rail, one or another of which has had lower production costs at different times): the capitalist who controlled each transport route would seek to exploit that monopoly against all the other capitalists.

Thus, while much of the early development of transport systems under capitalism (on land, through canals and interurban rail) was in private hands, the capitalist state came to play the major part in transport provision, in particular, by running railways and other urban mass transit systems, funding road networks and licensing, if not owning, airlines and airports. By the middle of last century, only road freight and manufacturing passenger vehicles remained as major arenas of private capitalist production in land transport.

Capitalism, however, is capitalism. In it, the goal of companies to make profits rules. In the latter half of the 20th century, corporations, which in land transport were principally the automobile manufacturers and trucking and road construction companies, either directly bought up and limited or closed down competing transport networks (as in the case of the Los Angeles streetcars), or were the main influence on government transport policies (as in the case of the closure of tram networks in many Australian capital cities). Cars built for mass consumption in urban transport, and intercity highways, squeezed out other transport systems in advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, with the rise of neo-liberalism from the 1970s, the residual state-owned networks became subject to corporatisation and fire-sale privatisations, backed by state subsidies and lax safety and planning regulation to provide

profitability to the corporations that took them over.

The power of capital means we now have transport systems that are profitable for corporations but inefficient for our community. This problem is not expressed in capitalist markets because many of the costs of privately-owned systems, including those incurred by its consumers, are not imposed on the companies which control our transport networks.

This is not limited to the cost-shifting involved in government subsidies for fossil fuel use and road construction and maintenance. 'External' costs to transport operations include, in road transport, for example: much of the land used; the unpaid time spent driving cars, which impacts more heavily on outer suburban and regional dwellers; the inequities and social isolation facing those without cars; the health services required because of traffic accidents and sedentary lifestyles, and pollution (air, noise and water, including greenhouse gas emissions which are increasing by a third every fifteen years, in particular from road freight haulage). The costs of road congestion and traffic accidents have each been estimated to run into the tens of billions of dollars each year. One estimate of the environmental costs of private car transport is more than \$2 billion a year. The overall cost of car travel per passenger-km is nearly twice as high as rail travel. Meanwhile, rail freight uses two-thirds less fuel than road freight per tonne of goods carried and has more than three times the environmental efficiency of road haulage.

3. Car dependence — a recipe for workers' poverty and social stagnation

The burden of the inadequate provision of public transport is not spread evenly. Regional centres, especially those further away from the metropolitan cities, are invariably poorly serviced. As well, where workers and the poor reside are the areas which are especially disadvantaged. Lack of access to public transport especially impacts on people with disability and older people who are unable to drive, as well as those too young to drive. As car ownership is lower amongst women, newly arrived migrants and poorer people, lack of suitable public transport plays a major role in reinforcing all forms of social inequality.

In the major cities, outer-suburban and other locations that contain low socio-economic status populations tend to have higher levels of car dependence and relatively poor provision of public transport. Public transport particularly fails in terms of: routes that link suburbs with each other, rather than the city centre, the numbers of services, which are far below system capacities; little integration between modes, particularly between rail and bus networks; and the use of local buses as feeders to the higher capacity rail systems. The residents are more reliant on private cars than more affluent, inner-city residents. Therefore, they are more vulnerable to petrol price increases, including from greenhouse gas emission tax or trading schemes. The lack of public transport in areas such as western Sydney has also been found to be a serious impediment to finding a job.

The poor provision of public transport in Australia is not the failure of any particular government. All governments, for many years, have failed to maintain and develop our public transport systems.

In the first decades of last century, many people walked or cycled to work, trains and trams provided a radial network in the larger cities and railways reached even smaller country towns, providing freight services in particular. A long-haul rail network was largely completed by rail lines between Perth and the eastern seaboard, and as far north Cairns and Alice Springs.

Subsequently, however, freeways have been built in all the bigger cities and highways have been continuously upgraded. Public transport infrastructure and services have languished.

The faster inter-city train services developed elsewhere have not been introduced here. Many country lines and freight depots have been closed. Little effort has been made to add to the capacity for rail freight within the growing cities.

The growth of our cities has also not been matched by expansions in their mass transit systems. These systems have been reduced to a residual status, principally providing commuter services to city centres, which serves only to prevent even more severe traffic congestion. This process has taken two forms.

Beyond the inner suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, the population has increased dramatically, but rail network coverage has not. Many specific expansion proposals have been delayed again and again. General plans to increase the spread, capacity and reliability of the rail networks, such as the 2001 Christie report to the NSW government, have been shelved. Queensland governments have not even bothered, planning busways oriented to meeting city centre commuter needs instead. Meanwhile, the frequency of services has typically fallen, and journey times have often increased, in the last two decades.

Less frequently, but particularly where there has been strong campaigning for public transport and especially rail services, there has been or are proposals for significant expansions of public transport networks. In Perth, after one of the three existing rail lines was closed at the end of 1970s, the closed line was reopened, the rail network was electrified, two lines and other extensions were built, and bus routes and timetables were more closely synchronised with the train services. The number of trips by train has increased fifteenfold; even so, trips by public transport are still less than 10 per cent of all travel. The bus transit system proposed for Cairns is anticipated to lift the proportion of passenger trips that are by public transport fourfold, but again still only to 10 per cent, primarily in travel to and from the city centre. In such examples, the character of the city's transport is not transformed: cars still rule.

The full environmental and economic benefits of public transport and rail freight can't be achieved while these remain secondary systems. Instead, these benefits will come when publicly owned and controlled transport systems form the heart of urban

transit, intercity travel and freight haulage. At the same time, workers and the poor, in particular people with disability, young people and elderly people, will be the immediate and the greatest beneficiaries of this change.

4. Strategic planning

Socialist Alliance proposes a sustainable transport strategic plan which will:

- Be prepared through extensive community consultation. Residents, workers and people with disability of a given area will be presented with the relevant elements of the plan for their amendment and approval before implementation. The plan's implementation will then be subject to ongoing community scrutiny and approval.
- Have as its primary aim the provision and continual improvement of public transport options. Provision of private road transport generally will be only a secondary consideration. No more motorways will be built.
- Provide comprehensive public transport networks.
- Upgrade rail freight depots and loading systems
- Provide railway stations, light rail and bus stops, ferry wharfs and interchanges with adequate seating, shelter, bicycle storage and facilities and modifications that ensure people with disability can independently access all forms of public transport.
- Improve service provision to passengers and users of freight services and administration of the public transport system generally.
- Integrate taxis and taxi cooperatives into the public transport system and enhance response times and service levels of accessible maxi taxis.
- Orient development plans to existing rail services or require they incorporate extensions to the rail network. Industrial zones and mines will have rail spurs and freight depots. New rail lines will be built to service population growth areas as the basis for requiring all new urban development to provide adequate public transport, and cycleways and walking paths.
- Create local townships for mines workforces. Mines must not rely on fly-in-fly-out staffing. Mining companies will have the responsibility to build these townships, including initially providing them with a high quality of infrastructure and equipment for services, but will not be allowed to control residence in them or the provision of services to them.

5. Freight transport

Socialist Alliance will develop the rail freight network by:

- Improving rail line quality to increase speeds.

- Electrifying freight rail, using renewable energy.
- Building freight rail links, and spur lines to larger industrial sites and to mines.
- Re-opening closed rural rail lines and freight depots.
- Rather than have trucks driven long distances, using roll-on/roll-off rail to carry trucks loaded from dispersed or smaller producers (farms and manufacturers) to the delivery area for distribution to factories and shops. Truck driver cooperatives or publicly-owned trucking operations to provide driving to loading and from unloading points on the rail network.

Road haulage will be discouraged:

- Unauthorised heavy vehicle access to local roads will be stopped.
- Business will pay the full cost for road transport by introducing electronic tolling for heavy freight vehicles on all major roads.
- Long-distance truck-drivers will be retrained at full-pay, for ecologically sustainable work, as demand for road-haulage declines. The cost of this to be paid by a special levy on freight companies.

As the coal industry closes down due to the turn to renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, coal train lines will become available for freight and/or passenger services.

Biofuel, produced from agricultural and food industry waste, will be used in shipping.

6. Rural, regional and interurban and interstate travel

Socialist Alliance will:

- Build a Very Fast Train network for the area from Adelaide to Cairns to the level where it will replace most domestic major city air travel, which is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and other air and noise pollution. Research into aviation biofuels will be encouraged
- Upgrade the interstate and country rail network and vehicles to allow trains to travel more quickly. More frequent services, including the use of 'dual-mode' (tram-train) rail vehicles to extend coverage. Bus services to complete the public transport network's coverage of all regional and rural communities.
- End the unfair transport costs for island and remote communities. Ferries for passengers and light vehicles, in particular to and from Tasmania, and air transport should be fully funded.

7. Solving the urban public transport crisis

Public transport in our cities has suffered from more than 50 years of neglect. As a result, the existing public transport fails to meet most passenger needs. It is not

available throughout each city, at all the times it's needed, or fast enough.

People buy cars and, having acquired such major household assets, use them. Road traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions from transport then grows exponentially, while public transport use has spiralled downwards. Although rail networks, especially, heavy rail, are the more popular and potentially most economically effective mode of public transport, the lower volume of public transport use then justifies government proposals for light rail instead of heavy rail, or bus services instead of rail services, or bus services being amalgamated, re-routed and eliminated.

Socialist Alliance proposes instead that public transport systems will be the principal passenger transport networks in our cities. Its commitment is to provide comprehensive services, all day, everywhere, that are fast, frequent, adequately staffed and independently accessible.

With that, households can reduce the number of cars they own: people might even abandon car ownership altogether.

With comprehensive public transport services, the proportion of trips by public transport should increase dramatically. For example, at least 60 per cent of powered passenger trips in the large capital cities and 40 per cent in other capitals and large regional cities should be by public transport. This proportion of public transport use will involve higher utilisation rates for all public transport modes. Heavy and light rail systems can be renewed, extended or built in all larger cities as the basis for comprehensive networks, while other regional centres should also have comprehensive public transport networks based on buses. The precise mix of modes used must take into account existing systems, including train lines in the large regional cities, which might make use of dual-mode rail in addition to existing heavy rail.

Thus, Socialist Alliance, as a crucial measure to reduce Australian greenhouse gas emissions and as an urgent priority to reverse the growth of social and economic inequality, will immediately implement a massive public sector program to provide the public transport infrastructure and services that are needed. Such spending must be socially accountable to residents and workers. To ensure that public transport guarantees equality and access, the input of elderly passengers and people with disability will also be sought. (see section 4. Strategic Planning, above).

Socialist Alliance will ensure that the government spending on public transport carries out:

- Within 10 years, a complete overhaul of existing suburban and intra-urban passenger rail networks, including track capacity (line amplification), rolling stock and stations, in order to meet current and expected demand.
- Within 15 years, the renewal, extension or creation of rail networks so that these become the basis for comprehensive public transport systems in all cities that over the next 30 years will reach a population of more than

150,000.

- The provision of 'metro' rail or light rail to replace buses on high-density suburban routes (such as in central Sydney) in the large capital cities, as an adjunct to heavy rail services.
- Bus services to complete the public transport networks by providing short trips, connecting, for example, transport hubs, residential areas and shopping centres. Bus and train timetables must be properly synchronised.
- A massive increase in service frequency, so that services arrive at a minimum every 10 minutes, and on major routes at peak times every 2-5 minutes throughout the day and evening. Services also to continue through the night on at least the major routes.
- Massive recruitment to fully staff the public transport network, in order to ensure safe, comfortable and efficient services: staff at every railway station, and a guard or conductor on every train and tram with two or more carriages. End government attacks on public transport workers jobs, wage and working conditions.

8. No user-pays for urban public transport

The provision of urban public transport without imposing payment for its use through fares has a number of advantages. For example, using the service is more convenient, the cost of collecting and policing the payment of fares is eliminated, and no time is wasted by drivers on buses collecting fares. Moreover, while the main driver for increased public transport use will be the provision of comprehensive public transport services, free public transport in the context of a commitment to expand public transport will encourage as many people as possible to use public transport. This has been shown by, for example, the introduction of free public transport in the Belgian city of Hasselt from 1996. After all, network planning means the decision has been made to provide the public transport services: there is no reason to ration and reduce public transport use by charging for it.

Of course, while households would save money through using increasingly comprehensive public transport systems free of charge, the public expenditure to provide the services (less the savings from reduced air pollution, road congestion and road construction, and the withdrawal of tax concessions for company cars and other fossil fuel subsidies) must be funded. Once comprehensive public transport systems are in place, funding the public transport system through progressive income taxation (with rebates for the residents of rural and remote locations not covered) would certainly be justified, because the service would be universally available and in general use. Throughout the period of expansion of public transport systems, funding from general revenue will be supplemented by levying developers who will be advantaged by new or improved opportunities around public transport hubs.

Socialist Alliance advocates:

- Free passenger rides and carriage of bicycles on urban public transport. All public transport staff whose job has been ticket selling will be redeployed to passenger assistance functions, with no loss in pay or conditions.
- Ending all tax concessions for company and company-purchased cars.
- Special levies on developers and business property owners who gain access to commercially profitable sites close to railway stations and bus interchanges.

9. Public transport – not for profit

Public transport is a public service. Whether it allows workers to get to and from work, people to travel to shops, hospitals, to see family/friends or for recreation, or the cheap and efficient movement of goods, its provision is a social obligation. Communities' access to adequate public transport will also tend to reduce the use of private cars, road freight and domestic air travel and, therefore, emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

The Socialist Alliance believes that the public sector, backed by governmental power, must seek to provide the most modern, low-carbon impacting and far-reaching public transport possible. Privately-run public transport has proven to be a dismal failure: private bus routes invariably operate at minimal service levels; in Melbourne the government subsidy to the privatised tram network has been greater than what it ever was to the network when it was part of the public sector; in Britain the decline in rail safety has cost lives. Private operation of public transport has created government-guaranteed corporate profiteering. Public transport must not be run for profit, but in the interest of commuters and residents, to minimise ecological impact and maximise service delivery and equality of access.

In the face of the neo-liberal capitalism, which privatises publicly-owned community assets and imposes market regulation in order to extend the arena for profit-making, major advances in public service provision such as Socialist Alliance has proposed here will only be achieved by large, sustained and determined public campaigns. To date in Australia, however, our experience of campaigns for sustainable transport is more limited:

- Opposition to new freeways and major roads or, at the level of neighbourhoods, campaigns for traffic calming;
- Bicycle advocacy;
- Opposition to the closure of rail lines (for example, the Upfield line in Melbourne, and in Newcastle) or their conversion to light rail or bus routes, including by people with disability;

- Successful campaigns by people with disability for accessible trams and buses, accessible tram stops and emergency ramps at railway stations.
- Opposition to the re-routing, amalgamation and closure of bus stops and bus routes by residents in Melbourne's northern suburbs.
- Research and lobbying for gradual improvements, the leading examples of which are by the Public Transport Users Association in Melbourne, and its recent combination with unions and social welfare groups in the Rapid and Affordable Transport Alliance.
- Official union involvement has been fairly intermittent, even from those with members in public transport, except in relation to job losses: in particular, the union movement has divided over privatisations carried out by ALP governments.
- More broadly conceived public transport campaigns, such as in Perth and in Cairns have been only partly successful and have proved difficult to sustain.

Socialist Alliance will help set up a national campaign for comprehensive public transport, which builds on the progressive elements of past campaigning and seeks to resource and support actions at the local level. Socialist Alliance proposes the campaign should advocate the following as the basis for a not-for-profit public sector comprehensive public transport system:

- Nationalise all privatised tollways and the abolition of their tolls.
- End public-private partnerships in transport services.
- Stop the privatisation of suburban and outer suburban bus routes. Public ownership of bus companies should be the norm.
- Re-nationalisation of all privatised public transport, including bus routes and airlines, and rail freight. The vested interests in making profits through providing transport services are inimical to achieving effective sustainable transport solutions for our communities: the corporations involved and their backers in government and elsewhere are a social power that working people must be overcome.
- Reverse the "corporatisation" of state-run public transport authorities.
- Public transport to be run by boards elected at a regional level from among public transport workers, commuters and residents including people with disability and elderly residents. The boards will have the power to approve or reject all management and planning decisions. Members of such boards to be accountable and recallable by their constituencies at any time.

Sources

The Socialist Alliance transport policy incorporates its members understanding, developed through their involvement in public transport activism in Melbourne, NSW and Cairns, in preparing articles in support of public transport for *Green Left Weekly*,

and other research.

References

Rapid and Affordable Transport Alliance (RATA)

Paul Mees, *Transport for Suburbia: Beyond the Automobile Age*, 2010 [summary by Jacob Curtis]

Chris Harris, *Roads, Railways and Regimes: Why some societies are able to organise suburban public transport — and why others can't*, October 2007

Garry Glazebrook, *Thirty Year Public Transport Plan for Sydney* [2006??]

Jago Dodson and Neil Sipe, *Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City*, 2005

Jago Dodson and Neil Sipe, *The New Landscape of Oil and Mortgage Vulnerability in Australian Cities*, 2008

Proposed amendment to Sex Worker Policy

Existing Sex Worker policy can be found at:

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=894>

Moved by Perth branch

Sex work is still on the criminal code in all states and territories except NSW. Having sex work on the criminal code means increased police harassment for marginalised groups such as Aboriginal street-based sex workers, Asian and migrant sex workers, HIV positive workers, and trans people sex workers.

Criminalising sex work means significantly lower health and safety standards. Decriminalisation in NSW combined with other health and sex worker “peer education” community support measures, has resulted in better sexual health outcomes for sex workers and improved access by community outreach and support agencies.

Criminalising the clients of sex workers (the "Swedish model") has an equivalent effect to criminalising sex work, regardless of arguments of its supporters that it promotes women's liberation or sex workers' rights. It is impossible for any industry to operate openly when its customers risk arrest. The practical outcome for sex workers - being forced underground, more vulnerable to violence, and harder for health and support services to reach - is the same whether it is sex workers or clients who are criminalised.

The Socialist Alliance stands for:

- Decriminalisation of sex work

- **Opposition to proposals that criminalise the clients but not sex workers (along the lines of the "Swedish model")**
- An end to discrimination on the basis of occupation

The Socialist Alliance supports the work of sex worker organisations in their campaigns for decriminalisation, and for health and safety on the job.

Proposed amendment to the Women's Charter

Existing Women's Charter can be found at:

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=330>

MOVED: Helen Said, Melbourne

MOTION 1: To replace the words "disabled women" with "women with disability" throughout the document.

MOTION 2: In the section "Independence and equality in family life" insert the following demand after the demand for improved childcare:

Introduce universally available, affordable house cleaning services to create jobs; reduce the burden of domestic chores currently borne by women; allow parents to spend more quality time with their children and improve the quality of life of all working people.

Proposed amendment to the Marriage and Civil Unions policy

Existing policy can be found at:

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=895>

Mover: Farida Iqbal, Perth

Motion:

To delete: " This is not the situation in Australia, even where..."

And replace with: "In Australia, even".

So it reads: "In Australia, even civil unions have been suppressed by the federal government because they 'mimic marriage'."

APPENDIX 1

Adopted Disability Policy (from the Socialist Alliance website)

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org/page.php?page=893>

Socialist Alliance policy

www.socialist-alliance.org



People with disability

The Socialist Alliance endorses the principle of self-determination and empowerment of people with disability as the central approach for the design, implementation and monitoring of a new structure to coordinate disability rights, including services and supports. That means people with disability and their organisations must control the decision making process.

The Socialist Alliance believes that doing so will provide for a structure and a way of coordination that is informed by experts, effective and efficient. It will deliver adequate financial resources channelled to services, support structures and directly to people with disability.

It is possible to achieve an inclusive society with major improvements in the economic, social and cultural participation, health and life experiences of people with disability and their families. Apart from the human rights of such an approach it is believed that inclusion of this nature would result in overall economic savings across expenditures for health, social security, education and employment.

A decision making approach to integrate disability as part of every day life, controlled by people with disability and their organisations will further contribute to speedy changes of structural and legislative barriers that currently prohibit the equitable participation of people with disability.

Rights and Principles that require immediate enacting and are supported by SA, include:

- universal accessible housing standards and regulation, to allow all people to access their homes across their life time
- universal accessible transport standards and regulation, to allow all people to move freely across their life time
- universal accessible building standards and regulation, to allow all people to fully participate and enjoy social, economic, political, recreational and cultural

activities;

- federal legislation mirroring rights as articulated in the UNCRPD
- Application of the Disability Discrimination Act to the Social Security Act and the Migration Act
- legislating the right to use AUSLAN

Socialist Alliance commits to the following benchmark positions:

Income

The Socialist Alliance supports an indexation of the Disability Support Pension payments to a level, which adequately covers the costs of living, including housing and transport. We will also support a discontinuation of the need for constant reassessment of a person's eligibility to the DSP once established to minimise stress, expenses and discomfort.

Employment participation should not be stifled as it is currently through loss of entitlement to the DSP. Entitlement to the DSP needs to stay in place once employment has been secured at least for a period of two years. This minimises pressures on the person for instance to stay in inappropriate or meaningless jobs and allows for savings to occur addressing long term poverty. The DSP needs to be reinstated without lengthy assessment once cut off to minimise income delays and to allow for episodic disability.

For people able to secure employment access to the healthcare card, access to services, equipment, aids and associated concessions must remain unchanged taking into account additional cost of living for people with disability.

Education

The Socialist Alliance believes that education is critical for people with disability and all children with learning and/or developmental delay. The quality education and associated positive experiences in education will have an enormous impact on their lives. This impact is not only in terms of qualifications but equally important in terms of self confidence, independence, decision making, social skills and peer support.

In order to make education a positive experience through all levels of education from kindergarten to tertiary education sufficient funds must be made available for:

- the choice of access to a mainstream, local school with guaranteed accessibility, adequate supported teaching staff (needs based not funds based)
- sufficient aids and equipment, and support workers/classroom integration aides in all school as required per individual circumstance (assessed on case by case basis, by school staff, families and the student, not a bureaucrat)
- support workers/classroom integration aides to enable children to access school tutoring, before and after school care and school holiday programs,

pre-school and recreational activities

- for those choosing education through special schools, a move towards decentralisation of special schools with low student-teacher ratios allowing for short travel time in dedicated school buses

All school children need to be educated about the human rights and equality of people with disability.

Employment

The Socialist Alliance believes that it is essential to set targets for access and participation of people with disability in employment to address the current inequity.

Targets for employment participation are not to be seen as stand alone. They must be part of a support structure for people with disability in employment based on the individual circumstances. This may relate to the type of work, aids and equipment, and level of assisted support required.

Initially a target of 10% of jobs within the public sector (federal, state, local) needs to be set; of those 50% must be allocated to women with disability, 30% to people from NESB or culturally diverse backgrounds, and 10% to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These figures are based on population data and weighted to address current inequities through affirmative action targets.

The initial target for the private sectors should be 5% with the same breakdown of targets for women, people from NESB and culturally diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Companies with 50 or more employees will be required to identify dedicated job positions for people with disability, increasing with size. Penalties for not meeting these targets must be high to avoid penalties seen as a cheaper option.

The Socialist Alliance pledges to support campaigns for the following:

- Removal of “Supported Wage System” clauses from all industrial awards, minimum wages must be guaranteed for all jobs. All workers are guaranteed unhindered protection of Equal Opportunities provisions in all aspects of their employment including their level of pay;
- Repeal of the draconian federal Welfare to Work legislation. These provisions force people with disability and other disadvantaged income support recipients to search for work, irrespective of personal circumstances. The Legislation fails to address barriers to gaining employment that offer meaningful jobs with liveable wages.
- Guarantee job security for people with disability including those of episodic nature, to take time out from work when required;
- Minimum wage for all workers in sheltered workshops and the right to organise through unions of their choice. Workshops that claim to be non-viable on minimum wages should either receive a top up for wages to ensure

workers are not financially disadvantaged. Alternatively, these workshops can be nationalised and management committees consisting of workers and their families, union representatives should be encouraged. All sheltered workshops must develop individualised support and career plans with their workers with the aim to move them into the open employment system.

Aids and equipment

The Socialist Alliance believes that aids and equipment are an entitlement, a right.

This is particularly important given the current lack of availability, high prices and built in obsolescence of wheelchairs and other products which compromise the comfort and safety of people with disability.

Individual circumstances differ greatly with respect to living, social and family environments; each person with disability knows best what it takes for them to live a life with least barriers and most enjoyment. This knowledge must be used as the basis to roll out aids and equipment as required.

24 hours support must be available in case aids and equipment fail to avoid any crisis situation to develop and to minimise any stress on people.

Measures to combat violence

Women with disability experience the same types of violence as other women in the community that is, physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse. Women with disability also experience forms of violence particular to their situation.

Women with disability tend to be less respected or valued for who they are; poorer than other women; and they experience more isolation and can be more dependent on partners, family members or carers. Because of this, women with disability can be vulnerable to forms of abuse that do not fit traditional definitions of domestic or family violence. These included withholding equipment, food and medication; limiting access to communication devices; and threats of institutionalisation.

Research has established that women with disability experience violence at a higher rate, for longer periods, and are less likely to report the abuse than women without disability. Women are sometimes coerced into accepting sterilisation and strongly discouraged from relationships, sex and bearing and rearing children, all contrary to human rights.

The experience of violence against short statured people is common and expresses itself in bullying including “dwarf throwing” competitions.

All people with disability are more likely to experience some form of verbal, physical or sexual violence as they may be in a lesser position to defend themselves and are thus more vulnerable to abuse.

The Socialist Alliance calls for and supports:

- widespread community education campaigns to counter stigma, stereotypes

about people with disability and aims to lift their status and value in society; targeted campaigns must be developed for specific cultural and language groups; campaigns must use various formats including written, audio, video, Braille;

- increased resources to the women's sector to guarantee accessibility; to allow women with disability being supported effectively after threat or incidence of violence and to empower women to pursue perpetrators;
- increased resources towards domestic/family violence prevention programs;
- setting up of a special taskforce within community policing to immediately respond to and investigate allegations of abuse, with far reaching powers and resources to address situations in a way that is effective in stopping the violence, removing the perpetrator where this is the best course of action, empowering the person violated against and is educative to others in the immediate environment.
- immediate funding for up-skilling of the community, legal, advocacy and disability service workforce in domestic and family violence and cultural security.

Children and young people with disability

Early intervention is critical for all children with developmental delay, diagnosed or undiagnosed and children with disability. SA calls for and supports:

- increased funding to eliminate all waiting lists for early intervention services;
- no caps on equipment and aids, services and support;
- increased funding for training to paediatricians to direct parents to appropriate services as soon as a assessment or diagnosis is sought;
- guaranteed early intervention playgroups that are local, free, and culturally secure and respectful; ensure a supportive environment for parents/caregivers to access quality information on specific issues of delay and disability and available services/programs;
- special programs need to be developed for young children who need speech therapy in languages other than English so that their therapy is being conducted in a language the children are learning to speak, as well as introducing them to English. Recruitment of child development and speech therapists from overseas who can help migrant families access relevant early intervention programs needs to be pursued.
- guaranteed local toy libraries with intellectually and physically stimulating toys, free of charge;
- guaranteed local support groups and activities for parents and siblings of children with disability or developmental delay;

- guaranteed free respite services to all families of people with disability of all ages, ranging from caring within the home, to occasional care to residential care.

For children in state care, respite services and residential care must be controlled by residents, families/caregivers and independent advocates. They must be adequately funded to ensure quality of life and individual choice for all residents.

Transition into adulthood

Young people with disability have the right to live an independent life and to be in control of their life choices. This may require varying levels of domestic and personal support, aids and equipment.

Programs need to be developed towards individualised employment pathways and housing alternatives.

The Socialist Alliances opposes the use of nursing homes as housing options for young people as they lack age specific stimulation and recreation programs and deny young people to socialise with peers.

Housing

The Socialist Alliance is committed to housing that is accessible, affordable and integrated. People with disability currently are too often forced into institutions, like nursing homes, due to the lack of housing that meets their needs.

Accessible

People with disability often cannot find housing that allows them to simply get in the front door. In addition they need housing that is permanent, not temporary or transitional accessible housing that is provided in some situations.

Accessible housing standards and requirements must be introduced that are monitored and enforced:

- all new ground floor housing must be accessible;
- all requests for accessibility modifications must be implemented if technically possible and not unreasonable; government funds must be made available for private landlords to meet such requests;

Affordable

People with disability frequently live in poverty, often relying on social security income alone.

Affordable housing demands:

- rent to be capped at 20% of income;

- gap between 20% of income and actual privately paid rent to be provided through government subsidy;
- doubling of the current public housing stock under accessibility standards.

Integrated

People with disability have been segregated for centuries due to stigma and negative stereotypes. Segregation has occurred in large state operated institutions and smaller institutions, such as group homes. The perception that people with disability need to be "treated" unfortunately continues in our society today under a medical model of disability.

Housing options for people with disability, therefore, have resembled medical centres rather than what most people would call a home.

The Socialist Alliance commits to support campaigns for:

Immediate closure of the remaining institutions in all states and territories and to replace them with a range of individualised supported housing options based on the choice of the person with disability:

- housing to be within and throughout the community;
- all housing developments must include 25% of housing to people with disability; this needs to be non-negotiable and at worst should risk developers losing their licence to operate.

Transport

Independently accessible transport options are critical for people with disability in terms of their right for free movement and self-determination.

The Socialist Alliance calls for and supports:

- independently accessible public transport for people with disability;
- free public transport for all people with disability;
- attendant carers/support workers accompanying people with disability equally travel for free;
- increased seating and shelter at all bus, train and tram stops for those with mobility limitations;
- an immediate audit and rectification of safety hazards of our rail system; particular attention needs to be paid to uneven surfaces on platforms and railway crossings which could constitute a tripping hazard or where the wheels of wheelchairs could get caught, unmarked and unsafe platforms for people with vision impairment or blindness, gaps between carriages and between platforms and train doors;

- all new public transport vehicles to be fully and independently accessible to all types of motorised scooters and wheelchairs and signed including emergency systems for vision impairment and deafness;
- retrofitting existing trains, trams and buses which are inaccessible to people in wheelchairs (unless replacement is more cost effective)
- community transport that is door to door, door to public transport services to be implemented through all local councils, adequately resourced to meet demand of local areas at a 24 hour booking minimum;
- bring maxi taxi service levels and response times into line with other taxi services and increase subsidy of the fare levels at a rate of 75%, up from the current 50%, for people with disability or health problems reliant upon these services. Free maxi taxi service for people with disability unable to access public transport.
- to improve safety for passengers with disability at stations, all railway stations which are accessible by lift should also have emergency ramp access where possible. This will enable people to access the station in case of lift breakdown or safely exit the station in case of fire. Where ramps are physically impossible alternatives have to be established e.g. additional lifts.
- to enhance independence for persons with limited mobility and parents with young children, everyone in every suburb and regional centre in Australia should be able to access public transport within 200 metres safe walking distance from their homes (down from the current 400 metre limit specified in the Victorian government's Guidelines for Land Use and Development).

Other transitional arrangements towards a PWD-controlled disability system

Until a new disability inclusive approach to daily life has been implemented critical issues need to be addressed immediately. Socialist Alliance calls for and supports:

- increased funding to disability advocacy organisations and their peak bodies, at a minimum funding will be supplied for 3 full time staff, Executive Officer, Policy Officer and Administration Officer;
- options of individualised funding to be made available to all people with disability, funding to be based on self-assessment of the person's need. This needs to be supported through qualified, independent and culturally secure advisors. Advisors must be free for those wishing to receive advice and training, and for those not in a position to self-determine;
- information on disability must be made available to people with disability in the language of their choice and in a way that suits them most, be it visually through DVD productions in various languages, orally via interpreters, or in translated material made available in Braille, audio and other formats as requested. This must be available free of charge;

- student positions in vocational and tertiary education should be expanded to overcome the shortage of disability support workers, attendant care workers, AUSLAN interpreters, particularly in regional and rural areas. Courses must be developed from a human rights and social model of disability approach;
- immigration of disability support workers and carers from other countries is encouraged to address shortages and to also address the issue of culturally secure support needs;
- building codes must ensure that all public buildings have high visibility Braille trails to main entrances, lifts, help desks and other important facilities, including audible information.

This policy was adopted by the Ninth National Conference of the Socialist Alliance, January 18-20, 2013.

APPENDIX 2

Section of the original Disability Policy Amendment on the NDIS.

Moved by Sybille Kaczorek and Helen Said.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

In August 2011 the Council of Australian Governments agreed on the need for major reform of disability services through a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Such reform was an outcome of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into disability care and support.

Since then a number of bureaucratic steps have been implemented to work towards the implementation of the roll out of the NDIS over so called trial sites from the middle of 2013 and a full implementation from 2014.

As such here has been the establishment of:

- a Select Council on Disability Reform - a council of treasurers and disability ministers
- the National Disability Insurance Scheme Advisory Group – a hand picked group of people with expertise in social insurance principles, disability policy, service provision, performance monitoring, training and curriculum development, academia and research, psychological and intellectual disability, indigenous disability services, young people and children with disability
- four hand picked expert groups including people with disability, their carers, advocates, service providers and other sector experts

In addition a decision was made by the Australian Government to fund the engagement of the disability sector in the design of the NDIS through the National Disability and Carer Alliance (NDCA). The NDCA comprises AFDO, Carers Australia and National Disability Services. This last decision has ensured that organisations of people with disability (DPOs) are kept involved in the process. The danger is that this will also silence these organisations.

The Socialist Alliance supports the implementation of the NDIS as a way of working towards full participation of people with disability and their families in society.

SA however believes that it requires people with disability and DPOs with decision making powers to work out the process of the design, implementation and monitoring of the NDIS. Right now, politicians, bureaucrats, service providers and individual experts far outweigh the decision making power balance.

- The development of a NDIS must be accompanied by a commitment to legislative and structural changes as they relate to making all infrastructures, housing, public and commercial buildings, transport, education, employment, recreation and culture fully accessible.
- Eligibility to a NDIS must not fall in the trap of applying a medical approach to disability. Eligibility must be inclusive, regardless of type, severity, episodic nature of disability, regardless of age, visa status and regardless of how disability was acquired; psycho-social disability must be included.
- Assessment of requirements for services, support, equipment and aids must be guided by a self-assessment of the person with disability as the expert of their personal and life situation. Where self-assessment is not possible, independent (of government and service providers) culturally secure advisers must be consulted in addition to family and carers.

The Socialist Alliance understands that people with disability are supportive of the concept of self directed and individualised funding as it provides a level of control not experienced with the system of block funding to service providers, where choice is limited to what is on offer.

It is envisaged that the roll out of individualised funding will create a marketplace for services and supports. However, Socialist Alliance believes that not all services and supports will be readily available for those in need, especially if they require a very specific and culturally secure service or are located in a remote or regional area; it is almost guaranteed that a marketplace will fail in such circumstances.

In these situations the Government must be responsible to ensure that the relevant services and supports are provided and, that these supports are valued and remunerated effectively. There must be a flexible, comprehensive service system guaranteed especially as it relates to smaller population and needs groups.

The Socialist Alliance offers its support to a campaign for an NDIS that will meet the human rights of people with disability.

END OF DOSSIER