

## **Broken promises, help for the rich — Libs fail the fairness test**

Bill Shorten, The Australian, 12:00AM May 12, 2017

This is the budget of a government that wants to bury its past and rewrite its history. The Liberals want Australians to forget four wasted years in which wages growth has hit record lows, unemployment is up, underemployment has hit record highs and living standards have stagnated.

This budget is an admission of guilt. A signed confession. It's proof the Liberals have frozen this nation and hurt our economy. And now they have the nerve to talk about "fairness" and "opportunity". There's nothing fair about making middle-class and working-class Australians pay more, while millionaires and multinationals pay less. There's nothing fair about a \$65 billion giveaway for big business, while you're cutting \$22bn from schools. This budget fails the fairness test — and it fails the generational test. It does nothing for families' cost of living.

And the great irony of this budget is that while it doesn't measure up to our values, it doesn't keep faith with Coalition values either: it's a budget of big government, higher tax and more debt. In fact, it's devoid of values. Make no mistake, this is not a Labor budget.

A Labor budget would protect penalty rates — not cut them. A Labor budget would fund schools properly — not rip money away. A Labor budget would invest in universities — not jack up fees to discourage working-class kids. A Labor budget would respect pensioners — not tell brickies and nurses to work till they're 70. A Labor budget would level the playing field for affordable housing — not protect tax breaks for property investors. A Labor budget would protect workers in labour hire firms from exploitation — not give their companies a tax cut. A Labor budget would Close the Gap — not cut \$500 million from indigenous services. A Labor budget would invest in renewables, deliver an emissions intensity scheme and take real action on climate change — not pass the problem on to the next generation. And a Labor budget will always protect Medicare. Which means reversing the unfair Medicare freeze immediately.

Labor won't stop the Liberals' new tax on the banks. But we are deeply sceptical of a banking culture that takes every opportunity to hit customers with higher fees and charges. The big banks know they can run right over the top of this weak Prime Minister. He's giving them a levy with one hand, a tax cut with the other and a free pass for bad behaviour. I'll give them a royal commission.

This Prime Minister is so determined to deliver a tax cut for millionaires, he's declaring "mission accomplished" on budget repair. He's cancelling the deficit levy, to deliver a tax cut for high-income earners. Labor will not support spending \$19.4bn on the wealthiest 2 per cent of Australians.

The Liberals' new income tax increase will affect every Australian right down to an income of \$21,000. Labor cannot support making people on modest incomes give up even more of their pay packet.

And let me be clear about the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Labor didn't just create the NDIS — we fully funded it, we budgeted for it — and Treasury confirmed it. And we will not have our commitment challenged by those opposite. I will never forget the promise we made to the elderly parents of disabled children — worried who will love and care for their child when they're gone. For our party, the National Disability Insurance Scheme is an article of faith.

Too many multi-billion-dollar, multinational companies that do business in Australia avoid paying tax in Australia. That's why Labor will close the loopholes that let big companies shuffle money around the world to hide the true state of their books. Our plan will deliver an additional \$5.4bn to the budget bottom line over the decade. That's what we mean by budget repair that's fair. Labor will introduce a new set of laws to target those who aggressively minimise their tax — and leave the heavy lifting to middle-class and working-class people, who can't pick and choose their tax jurisdiction. There's only one reason people hide their money in tax havens — to avoid paying their fair share. Labor will get tough on people who earn — and owe — big dollars.

Three years ago, having promised no cuts to schools, the Liberals ripped away \$30bn. And last week they told the parents and students of Australia to be grateful they're now only cutting \$22bn. I don't want Australian schools in the middle of the pack. Labor wants Australia to have the best public education system in the world. Our kids deserve nothing less. That's why, tonight I can promise a Labor government will restore every single dollar of the \$22bn the Liberals have cut from schools, down to the last cent.

In their past three budgets, the Liberals cut \$2.8bn out of training and Australia has lost over 130,000 apprentices on their watch. On Tuesday night, they cut another \$600m. A Labor government will reverse the government's new cuts to TAFE and training.

Rebuilding TAFE goes hand in hand with backing apprentices. That's why a Labor government will make a new rule. For major infrastructure projects funded by the commonwealth, one out of every 10 people employed must be an Australian apprentice.

This Prime Minister of many words has learned a new one — fairness — and he's saying it as often as he can. But repetition is no substitute for conviction. Fairness is not some slogan you can borrow, it's not a domain name you can register. It's not a shell company where you strip out the assets and keep the brand.

This isn't a Labor budget — and it's not a fair budget.

Because we are not you — and you will never be us.

This is an edited text of the Opposition Leader's written budget reply speech. For the full text [click here](#)