

# Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP  
Premier



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## **DAD DIDN'T NEED A SUIT TO BE PROUD OF HIS WORK**

Premier's Speech at Victorian Labor State Conference

Delegates, members, friends – thank you.

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we meet on today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

Can I also thank my dad.

Not just for introducing me to a Labor conference, but for introducing me to the labour movement.

Today, Peter Allan and 70 others will become life members of the Labor Party.

Let's give them a round of applause.

Can I also thank and acknowledge a great friend of Victoria: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

Also, Deputy PM Richard Marles – and our Deputy Premier Ben Carroll.

Ben, you've earned our thanks.

Just like Victoria's hardworking teachers have earned the best pay in Australia.

The best teachers in our public schools provide the best start, and every child deserves it.

Here's three numbers for you.

121: that's the number of new schools our Labor Government has built.

570,000: that's how many Victorian children have gone to kinder for free since 2023.

And 1 billion dollars: that's how much the Liberals and Nationals cut from our public education system the last time they were in power.

Those cuts were made without warning.

But this time, they *are* warning us.

40 billion dollars in cuts to the public services we all rely on.

And we know where those cuts would come from: schools and hospitals.

Because that's where the bulk of Victoria's budget goes.

The fact is, you cannot cut \$40 billion out of the budget without cutting schools and hospitals.

And you certainly cannot cut \$40 billion out of the budget while claiming 'no one is going to lose their job'.

I want to be clear.

Whatever the challenges Victoria faces, austerity is not the answer.

My Labor Government has already put the budget back into surplus.

Now we are reducing Victoria's debt share and growing our economy.

40 billion dollars in cuts will shrink our economy and hurt people along the way.

That's the last thing Victoria needs right now.

When families are struggling with higher prices than ever.

And the world is in turmoil thanks to Donald Trump's war.

We in the Labor movement...we all know the golden rule.

That the number one cost-of-living help for any family is a secure job and public services they can rely on.

Liberals and Nationals don't understand that.

Because they haven't experienced what we have experienced.

What Ben's family experienced.

What my family experienced.

You heard from dad earlier.

You heard how his job at the SEC was a source of pride.

Dad – I hope you don't mind me sharing a story about what followed.

I grew up in Bendigo.

Working class family. Pretty simple values – you turned up, worked hard, looked out for each other.

Dad served the community as a linesman.

He'd go out in storms and bushfires.

We didn't see him for days during the Ash Wednesday fires when the sky was orange.

My brother and I knew he was finally home when his boots were at the door.

Dad didn't need a suit to be proud of his work – because it was skilled.

The SEC was a major employer with thousands of apprentices.

You joined young, got trained, got qualified, and built a career for life.

And you were part of a community that looked out for your family.

That bond that kept people together.

Every Christmas, SEC families would gather at the Bendigo showgrounds.

Santa had a present for every worker's child – every gift individually named.

It was an institution that felt unbreakable.

Until one day when I came home, and mum said to me quietly:

*I think your father's lost his job.*

He was sitting in the back room on the fold out couch.

Cordless phone in hand.

I'd only ever heard him cry once before.

The SEC was a skilled job for life.

Then the Liberals got elected.

Jeff Kennett became Premier.

The SEC was privatised, workers cut, and it was all smashed in a heartbeat.

Kennett didn't respect the lineys and sparkies.

He didn't rate them.

He saw them as expenses, not people.

Dad – it's true that you and mum taught me my values.

But that day, it was the Liberals who taught me why Labor Governments matter.

That was more than 30 years ago.

In the decades since, bit by bit, Liberals and their mates in big business have slowly chipped away at that great Australian guarantee:

*Train up – work hard – live well – retire safe.*

Those words are foreign to young people today.

Delegates,

It is the job of Labor Governments to change the system for the better.

Today, I want to share how my Labor Government is rebuilding that Australian guarantee of a skilled, secure career.

And it starts with an apprenticeship.

Every hospital, every rail line – every wind farm, school and home – relies on apprentices.

They earn while they learn, they build something real and get skills for life.

If we want to fight insecurity, apprenticeships are a powerful weapon.

But over time, they've lost some of that power.

Apprenticeships used to mean identity, pathway, job, security.

Back in the day – say, you were an apprentice for the SEC – you would have a job with the SEC.

Now, it's outsourced – and getting a start on a site is up to you.

Kids are forced to jump around from site to site, job to job, without secure work at the end.

You want to know why more and more young people aren't completing their apprenticeships?

*That's why.*

We cannot let the apprenticeship pipe-line become a pipe-dream.

Three things are clear:

We need more apprentices to build our future.

We need them to finish their training.

And we need to step in where the private market is failing.

That's why, today, I am proud to announce that the Allan Labor Government will create Australia's only publicly-owned apprenticeship academy.

There won't be 50 apprenticeships on offer.

There won't be 100 apprenticeships.

There'll be 2,000 apprenticeships.

And every single one of them will be directly employed by the State Electricity Commission.

2,000 young workers in the SEC Apprenticeship Academy

Earning while they're learning, working for Victoria.

Building cheaper, homegrown power, and finishing with a life-long career.

The SEC will become the largest employer of electrical apprentices in the whole state.

And guess what?

They'll be the first such apprentices employed by the Government since the SEC was privatised, all those years ago.

What makes this different?

These apprentices won't just study together.

They'll work together – on SEC projects.

Build a career together.

By 2040, our energy workforce will need to grow by 50 per cent – to support renewable energy projects, manufacturing, our charging infrastructure and our data centres.

37 per cent of these workers will be in regional Victoria.

We need to train these workers here – in Victoria.

If we don't, investment will fall away.

And energy costs will stay higher for longer.

And if we fall behind on renewable energy, we rely more and more on an unreliable world.

A world where one man in Washington can cause a worker to run out of diesel in Werribee.

Everyone knows global insecurity is something that's happening to us.

Only Labor believes we must fight it.

Only Labor believes that we're better off growing our energy at home.

Only Labor believes that renewable energy jobs are the coal-fired power jobs of this century.

Only Labor believes that cheap, renewable energy will be more enduring than any coal mine – and more affordable than any nuclear power plant.

Labor believes it.

Liberals, Nationals, One Nation don't.

The right-wing road to the future runs through the past – but without all the secure jobs.

They'll close TAFEs, cut the SEC and sack frontline workers.

Delegates, as a young fella, my dad was promised a lifelong job in the electrical trades.

But the lights on that job went out during the most productive years of his life.

Dad – I will never give up on that promise.

I will never give up on it for kids today in Bendigo, in Ballarat, in Geelong, in Melbourne – anywhere.

I want those kids to know there is a different way.

Investing in people, securing their jobs, and training up the next generation to grow our economy.

That's the Labor way.

And that's exactly why – under Labor – the Victorian economy has grown faster than any state in Australia.

That Labor way is what this election is all about.

In an uncertain world, this election is about whether we have a government that steps up – or a government that steps back.

I've believed my whole life, that when times get tough, Government should muscle up and get in the fight.

That's why we made TAFE free – and made it permanent.

That's why we've hired 17,000 nurses and midwives – and we're paying them more.

That's why we're supporting teachers with the highest pay in the country.

That's why we're protecting work from home from Liberals who dream of clawing it back.

And that's why we're giving you 20 per cent off your rego – and making PT half-price for the rest of the year.

Cost-of-living help that Labor delivers. Cost-of-living help the Liberals oppose.

In six months, the Victorian people get a chance to answer a question.

Real change to make life easier, safer and more affordable, or cuts you can't afford.

Labor's change or Liberal cuts.

It will be the honour of my life to lead this great movement into that fight.

It won't be easy. But failing this challenge will be far harder for the millions of people who rely on Labor governments – and labour unions – to secure a fairer deal and a better life.

And I am prepared to put our Labor values up against 40-billion-dollar Liberal cuts, every single day of the week.

Thirty years ago, a Liberal Government switched the lights off on my dad's career.

Now we're training thousands of young people to switch them back on.

Dad always said: if you don't fight, you lose.

Today – in front of this Labor movement – I want him to know:

My Labor Government will fight for the future of working people in Victoria.

And we'll never stop.