

ALIA president joins Labor taskforce on the Knowledge Nation

The Australian Labor Party has established a *Leader's Taskforce on the Knowledge Nation*. The Taskforce reports to leader of the ALP, the Hon Kim Beazley on measures to encourage the development of the Knowledge Nation.

Hon Barry Jones AO is the chair of the taskforce, with Mr Martyn Evans, shadow Minister for Science and Resources, as his deputy.

The taskforce consists of prominent Australians with expertise in and experience of education, training, biotechnology, information technology, and green technology, venture capital financing and manufacturing. ALIA president, Mairéad Browne is a member of the taskforce.

Other members of the taskforce include: Mr Clem Doherty, chairman of Like-Minded Individuals; Professor Jane Marceau, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research, of the University of Western Sydney; Ms Cathy Zoi, director of Next Energy; Mr Evan Thornley, chairman and chief executive officer of LookSmart; Ms Tracey Ellery, president of LookSmart; The Hon John Brumby MP, Victorian treasurer, Minister for State and Regional Development; Mr Stephen Smith MP, shadow Minister for Communications; Senator Kate Lundy, shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industry and Technology on Information Technology; Mr Kevin Rudd MP; and Dr Craig Emerson MP.

In its second meeting, the Taskforce discussed a working definition of the 'Knowledge Nation' to provide a focus for deliberations.

They determined that a Knowledge Nation is a self-confident nation of highly-skilled and educated people who create increasing living standards and improved opportunities for all through the application of knowledge to industry, government, improving social wellbeing and solving environmental challenges. The Knowledge Nation is not just for scientists and people working in the 'new economy' sector. It will improve opportunities and security for every Australian, no matter what their age or level of education by strengthening traditional industries, creating new jobs and helping people re-train and re-skill. The Knowledge Nation will be a fairer nation.

The key characteristics of a 'Knowledge Nation' will be:

1. A 21st-century education system that:
 - provides all of its citizens with the opportunity to improve their skills and gain a secure and well-paid job through properly funded TAFE, vocational education and lifelong learning programs;
 - makes every school — state and non-government — a centre of excellence and provides every child with a first-class education;
 - has world-class universities that attract the world's leading researchers and teachers; and
 - encourages speculative research and the study of the humanities as well as applied knowledge.
2. An economic system based increasingly on competitive advantage, innovation and the creation and commercialisation of ideas. A nation that exports more high technology goods and services than it imports. This means:
 - stronger manufacturing, extraction and service industries transformed by the application of new technologies and the re-skilling of their workforce;
 - new industries in emerging fields such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, information and communications technology, and green technologies; and,
 - taking advantage of rapidly expanding export opportunities in service industries, particularly in education, health and environmental management.
3. Leading-edge telecommunications, transport and research infrastructure in our cities and regions. Regional development as a core economic and social objective.
4. A sustainable environment and a full understanding of the extent of our natural and man-made assets. The application of knowledge to reduce energy use while improving living standards. Regarding the environment as an opportunity.
5. A transformed national culture that emphasises knowledge, excellence and innovation, and an international reputation that reflects this. Like Ireland, Finland and Israel, our international "image" must be transformed.
6. The application of knowledge to eliminate social inequality, improve health levels and promote tolerance and understanding. The creation of a more livable environment to help reverse the 'brain drain' and make us a net importer of skills. ■

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