

I write to briefly touch upon some highlights of yesterday's conference, and acknowledge some significant contributions. I'll send to all Left members a more complete report on the Conference in the next few days.

Firstly, Daniel's speech again set the tone for the day - and for the state of politics in this State. Once again he captured the mood of the movement and delivered an address which clearly defined a progressive agenda, and a deep commitment to hard and collaborative work towards the 2014 election. In Daniel we have a leader we can be proud of, who will make a great Labor Premier. His contribution sat neatly with President Cath Bowtell's thoughtful and challenging opening address.

Today's further revelations regarding Geoff Shaw drive home the possibilities of making Baillieu a one-term Premier - an imperative reinforced by his commentary on Labor's commitment to fund whooping cough vaccinations through abolishing the ideologically-charged state building inspectorate. This, of course, lends further weight to the critical importance of supporting Jen Kanis' campaign in the Melbourne by-election.

Many important contributions were made by Left members on the floor yesterday. Frontbenchers Steve Herbert, Lily D'Ambrosio, Jenny Mikakos, Brian Tee, Richard Wynne and Gavin Jennings all showed their respect for the forum. In marked contrast to their right counterparts, they put their policy priorities before members and affiliates. In the headline debate on jobs and skills we heard passionate speeches from Steve Dargavel, Leigh Diehm, Dave Noonan, Brian Boyd, Ingrid Stitt and Leon Carter which drove the agenda of the Conference and left delegates in no doubt as to the resolve of the Party on this core Labor agenda.

Later in the day, more substantial policy work was done - all of it driven by the Left. It was terrific to see so many new delegates deliver inspiring contributions, opening up the Conference to a more diverse range of views. And we have a strong statement furthering Party reform to build a growing, outward-looking party of debate which is more accountable...

It was disappointing that some Right delegates chose to attack the very concept of direct democracy and to personalise this by reference to the national ALP president election.

It seems that losing that ballot means elements of the Right will continue to argue against opening up any process to contestability - and so they are arguing for a top-down Party that is fundamentally anti-democratic.

Looking to October's conference, the concerns many Left members have

had for some time around the format of state conference should be addressed. I continue to be of the view that we need to move to one 2-day conference a year, enabling delegates and members to do more than sit in their seats as we push through business with an eye to quorum. Some work is already underway on improving distribution of papers, moving to electronic versions wherever possible. I'm keen to seek the ideas of all delegates as to how we can improve this vital forum, and really get it working.

The Left is dominating the ideas debate within the Party, but we need to do more to better engage the breadth of the membership in this conversation.

We had a successful conference yesterday, comrades. But there is much work to be done to make concrete those successes.