



LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

**ADDRESS TO SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRESS CLUB
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It is always great to be in Adelaide.

I know I say it every time I come here, but I enjoy this city - the vistas of the Hills and the coastline, the glorious light, and the beautiful architecture.

But most of all I think it's the big dose of tenacity in South Australians that makes this such a great place.

Whatever the odds, the people of South Australia prove over and over again that they can set the bar high then grit their teeth and get over it.

My old mate, and prominent South Australian, Mick Young, rose from shearer to one of the most senior members of the Hawke Cabinet. – Mick was the sort of bloke who wouldn't have seen that as a big change in status!

I guess it was in Mick that I first identified that true South Australian spirit.

I've seen it over and over again since then, in film director Scott Hicks, in astronaut Andy Thomas, and in lawyer, judge and State Governor, Dame Roma Mitchell.

They all set new benchmarks – just as Stuart O'Grady has ridden his way into the history books of world cycling.

I recall being upstaged by the O'Grady family on a visit to Adelaide back in 1998. We pulled up in front of the ABC and there was a media pack there, so I did up my jacket and prepared myself for a doorstep.

As I opened my mouth to speak, I caught the tail end of the pack as they rounded on my driver, Brian O'Grady, who just happens to be Stuart's dad!

The night before this, Stuart had become only the second Australian to wear the leader's yellow jersey in the Tour de France, and everyone wanted a word with his proud dad.

Stuart, Andy, Dame Roma and Scott are the ones who get the headlines.

But there are thousands of other South Australians who receive little recognition for the good work they do.

I'd particularly like to welcome today the Ansett workers sitting with Labor's hardworking candidate for Hindmarsh, Steve Georganas.

They made Ansett one of the world's great airlines and unlike the Howard Government, I won't rest until they're in the air again!

I flew to Adelaide today on a chartered Ansett plane with Ansett staff which is more than interstate tourists and the people of South Australia can do. John Howard didn't think to put Adelaide on the map as far as Ansett Mark II is concerned.

The airline is flying between Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane -- but not Adelaide.

But I guess after five and a half years of a Howard Government, and eight years of a State Liberal Government, South Australians are used to missing out.

After years of neglect by Liberal Governments, South Australians face a serious choice at this election -- about their security, and about their future.

I think South Australians deserve a special plan for recovery, and I'll come to that in a minute.

But first you should know that people all over this country are fed up with the way the Howard Government only seems to look after the better off in the community.

Whether it's the decline of our public hospitals and schools, or the disparity in living standards between the country and the city, or whether it's the way the GST has attacked so many small businesses, this Government has nothing to offer people in financial difficulties.

In these insecure times, what we need is a Government that offers us security at home as well as security abroad.

I believe my security credentials are second to none. I was a Defence Minister for five years, and a member of the Security Council of this country for 11 years. I put the defence forces in the good shape they are in today, and I have a much better plan than my opponent for ensuring border protection for this country.

The Howard Government has ignored the real security needs of Australians, particular as regards their jobs, their health, and their education.

And no one knows this better than the people of South Australia.

This State's economic performance has been consistently worse than that of the rest of the Australian economy.

The rate of job creation here has been well below the national average, and most of the few extra jobs have been part time.

But in spite of all of this, the Howard Government has never recognised the special needs of this State.

Well, the party I lead, the Australian Labor Party, has a plan to get this State back on its feet.

I am here today to pledge that a Beazley Labor Government will mend the damage done by John Howard and John Olsen.

I am pleased to announce today that we plan to spend an extra \$65 million over four years on a package of measures to build on this State's undoubted strengths, and to put you in position to take advantage of the new opportunities of the 21st century.

Most importantly we will tackle the crisis in this State's power supply with a \$20 million grant – a move critical to securing lower power prices for your businesses, and security of supply to your households.

As well, we will nurse back to health South Australia's public hospitals that have been allowed to decay alarmingly under the Liberals.

We will create industry and job opportunities through a range of measures including the establishment of an Institute of Manufacturing, and in assistance to the defence, fisheries, and wine industries, along with the revitalisation of regional centres.

And we'll do much more to improve the environment.

I can promise today a Labor Government will ban nuclear dumps in this state.

Today I am also proud to announce details of Labor's plan to tackle salinity which will involve additional spending around this country of \$169 million. I can promise you that we will not rest until we have improved the water quality of our great national resource, the mighty River Murray.

Labor has listened to what South Australians are telling us.

The Labor Party's South Australian package, which I present to you today, has been carefully developed between the State Labor team led by Mike Rann and our very able Federal Candidates.

Labor knows that people want to feel secure about their future, and the future of their children.

Labor's plan to make Australia a Knowledge Nation means developing our existing industries as well as nurturing the industries of the future.

This is how we will secure the high-wage, high-skill jobs the people of this State deserve for themselves and their families.

Ladies and Gentlemen

You all know that South Australia's electricity supply problems have caused nothing less than a crisis for this State's economy.

John Olsen's bungled privatisation deal, and John Howard's GST, has left South Australian businesses and families with an expensive and unreliable power supply.

In recent years South Australians have sweated through summers with frequent blackouts.

Given the State's heavy reliance on electricity-intensive industries, South Australia's unreliable electricity supply is the most significant barrier to improving the State's economy.

Businesses here have faced massive price increases, and their electricity bills are undermining their economic competitiveness. From 2003 every house in the State could face the same skyrocketing power bills.

John Howard's GST has made the impact of electricity prices on the family budget, and on the business bottom line, even worse.

The Howard Government believes that we should simply leave the power supply to the free market. Labor disagrees.

A Beazley Government will provide a capital grant of up to \$20 million to support the development of an electricity inter-connector between South Australia and New South Wales or Victoria. These funds may be used for the augmentation of the gas supply, if that is proved to be more useful.

When I talk to South Australian industry, they tell me that the power crisis is the State's greatest immediate economic challenge.

Today, I am putting Labor's solution on the table. The people of this State, and the future of the once strong manufacturing industries here, demand no less.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A Beazley Government will also redress the squeeze put on South Australia's health services by the Howard and Olsen Governments.

South Australians will benefit from many of our national health plans, such as our recently announced \$100 million scheme for dental health care for low-income earners. South Australia would be entitled to up to \$7.2 million under this scheme,

While the Liberal Governments blame each other for the deplorable state of public health, a Federal Labor Government will work with a Rann State Government to provide real funding growth for South Australia's hard-pressed hospital system.

More details of Labor's Medicare Alliance will be released later in the campaign, but I can reveal today, with a great deal of pride, some major projects that will be funded as part of Labor's commitment to South Australia.

A Labor Government will provide \$15 million to accelerate the second and third stages of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital redevelopment.

Another hospital with a long and proud tradition of serving the South Australian community is the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

At the R.A.H. Labor will spend \$8 million on cancer treatment services with the replacement of two radiotherapy machines and the provision of additional staff.

Labor will also provide extra funding to reduce hospital waiting lists.

And Labor will establish an independent inquiry to investigate the contract and operations of the privatised Modbury Hospital.

This privatisation appears to show that the Olsen State Government has the same blinkered ideological approach to health care as the Howard Government.

Well, we in the Labor party think your Medicare card should be more important than your credit card, and that is the attitude that will govern all our health care policies in government.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Turning to the health of our environment, while I have said repeatedly that the Howard Government gives South Australia nothing, there are two things John Howard and his South Australian based Federal colleagues are determined to give this State.

They are nuclear dumps, where the nation's radioactive waste will be deposited, and the polluted salty remnants of the once mighty Murray.

Last time I addressed this Press Club I outlined my plans to resolve the vital national issue of managing the River Murray.

I explained salinity, land degradation, and declining water quality were costing Australians billions of dollars each year and South Australia was at the rough end of a national and systemic crisis.

Well, more than a year later there's been no improvement.

Already in South Australia, all agricultural districts exhibit some degree of salinity and, a word of warning for those who drink the water from the Murray; in 20 years time that water will not pass World Health organisation standards on two days out of five.

I now commit a Federal Labor Government to spending \$169 million dollars fighting salinity, with incentives to stop land clearing in the areas affecting the Murray River.

The Murray's predicament is not generated in South Australia alone, nor can it be solved here in isolation.

The impact of unsustainable land practices are often realised at great distances from their origin.

We will address land clearing because it is a major cause of salinity, land degradation and loss of biodiversity. We will assist the States to implement clearing controls to reverse the decline in quality and extent of native vegetation.

Within the first 150 days of coming to office, I will convene a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments to address salinity as a matter of priority.

A National Strategy will be coordinated by a new Office of Sustainable Development within the Prime Minister's department and will be driven through COAG.

Land managers are the stewards of our landscapes and will necessarily play a critical role in maintaining and protecting our natural environment.

While today's landholders are more environmentally conscious than ever before and in many areas, they are leading the world in environmental management, the status quo is clearly not sustainable.

It is the role of governments to assist and encourage landholders to move towards more sustainable practices through education, provision of incentives and implementation of minimum standards.

Governments and the broader community must recognise the environmental services that landholders provide and where property rights are affected, we must provide due compensation.

The Howard Government, which has done nothing to solve the salinity situation, has been active in other areas: it has scoured Australia looking for a place to dump the country's nuclear waste.

South Australian Senator Nick Minchin headed the scouting mission and found a number of preferred sites – all, funnily enough, in his home state.

Labor recognises that South Australia has had its fair share of unsafe and ill-considered nuclear experiments at places like Maralinga and Emu.

We have listened to the overwhelming opposition of the people of South Australia and decided this state is not the place for a nuclear dump.

If, on November tenth, you can't decide on which party to vote for think of this: A Liberal Government will dump nuclear waste in your great state, a Labor Government will not..

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The serious economic challenges facing the State demand action from the Federal Government.

As I have already stated, the great immediate challenge is to secure South Australia's power supplies.

But there are also long-term commitments that must be made at the national level if South Australia is to set itself up for future growth.

South Australia has a number of industrial strengths – we all know what they are – manufacturing, the defence industry, the wine industry, agriculture and fisheries.

The future of these industries, and the future jobs of South Australians, is at risk unless we look ahead and show some real commitment to these industries.

My government will spend almost \$9 million over four years to establish the Australian Institute of Manufacturing.

The Institute will be the focal point of a network of people with skills in policy, strategy, finance, operations, technology, education and research.

The Institute of Manufacturing will support emerging and established manufacturing industries by aiding them in all aspects of their business.

As well, in a measure aimed at supporting this State's manufacturing industries, Labor will review the level and nature of assistance for the textile, clothing and footwear and automotive industries.

And we will do it before, not after, the current arrangements expire in 2004.

South Australia's manufacturing industries have told us they are worried about the effect of tariff reductions.

But the Howard Government says it will only review tariffs after the changes have been introduced. That's a bit like saying you'll think about getting Ansett up in the air after you've stood by and watched it collapse.

Seventeen thousand Ansett workers found themselves without jobs and without their entitlements when the airline was grounded last month. Tens of thousands more jobs were lost in related industries.

By conducting a review of tariff reductions before they take place we will be able to look at the possible outcomes and act accordingly.

We will act in the interest of thousands of South Australian workers and the many companies that will be affected by tariff reductions.

The Howard Government wants to sit back and see what happens to these industries and the workers. Well we think workers and their families are too important for this hands-off approach.

In 1987 I had the very great pleasure as Defence Minister of coming to South Australia to announce that the Collins Class Submarines would be built here in Adelaide.

In the past couple of years we have seen a substantial loss of highly skilled jobs from the Australian Submarine Corporation.

These losses included highly skilled production workers and top-level engineering, design and other staff.

South Australia has unique defence industry capabilities, and Labor will build on these local strengths.

We will support existing and new defence industry firms to create jobs and develop new industries in SA, through the creation of a \$7.5 million Defence Industry Cluster.

The role of the cluster will be to secure orders and jobs for the Australian Submarine Corporation workforce, and promote the development of existing and start-up firms linked to the ASC, particularly in the areas of advanced engineering and electronics.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

While Adelaide plays a dominant role in the South Australian economy, Labor believes it is vital for the welfare of the State and the nation to promote and encourage development in regional centres.

Two of the major industries that create wealth and employment outside the cities are the wine industry and commercial fishing.

The commercial sector of the fishing industry is now Australia's fourth most valuable food-based primary industry after beef, wheat and milk.

South Australia has the widest range of fishing related activities in Australia, leading the way at sea, and with land-based aquaculture.

Labor will spend more than \$4 million over four years further developing the Australian Fisheries Academy at Port Adelaide. It will promote the Academy as a national resource for training and research in the seafood industry.

One of South Australia's most successful and definitely most enjoyable products has already earned this State and the country many millions of export dollars. I take this opportunity to congratulate those in the wine industry on their marketing, their innovation and most importantly their product.

South Australia is home to around half this nation's wine industry – and what a great industry it is!

We will assist small wineries to resist the pressure that has been placed upon them by the tax changes implemented by the Howard Government by exempting them from the wine equalisation tax.

This will help the wine industry in South Australia to maintain the individuality of the many wine producers and regions for which South Australia is internationally renowned.

One of the great weaknesses of the Howard Government has been its refusal to believe in regional development. The time is long overdue to get the issue of regional disadvantage onto the national agenda.

We are all aware of the tests of rural life, but major regional centres such as Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla also face serious economic and social challenges. In recent times unemployment in these areas has never dipped below double digits.

Their future has been further threatened by the recent series of corporate collapses and an uncertain future for companies such as Pasminco.

While Labor's regional development policy is still to be released, I can say that Labor will actively support regional South Australia.

The Howard Government held a Forum for the Upper Spencer Gulf a few years back, but failed to back it up with a financial commitment.

Labor has never supported the Howard Government's "hands off" approach to regional development, and I announce today that the Upper Spencer Gulf region will be one of the first regions supported by Labor.

Labor also recognises that disadvantage is about more than a city/country divide. The challenges facing suburbs in Adelaide's north are just as entrenched. These communities have also missed out on a fair share of opportunities and jobs under the Howard Government.

These families were once the battlers John Howard claimed he would help. The only help he gave these people was a great big 10 percent GST, and a cut in vital health, education, and employment services.

Well, I won't stand for that.

My Government will work with State and Local Governments to create job opportunities and restore confidence in these communities.

..
A strong Adelaide, and strong regions, makes a stronger South Australia. And a strong South Australia makes a stronger nation.

And that's why a Beazley Labor Government will establish this special package for this great State – something you will never see from John Howard.

Before I finish today, I'd like to ask the Federal Labor team from South Australia to stand.

These men and women are dedicated to the future of South Australia. In developing Labor's South Australia package, they have worked hard to focus on the State's strengths, and position it to take advantage of new opportunities.

These are the people we need fighting for the interests of South Australia in Government.

We in the Labor party believe in a brighter future for this State.

But we know that it will take a special commitment to ensure that South Australians get a fair deal in their jobs, health and living standards.

Only Labor has that commitment, and a Beazley Labor Government will make sure the job is done.

A secure future for all Australians – that's what I stand for.

Thank you.