Trust building policies to restore confidence in government

Good social policies underpin a democracy and are essential to ensuring that everyone has a fair go.

Trust in our politicians and political institutions is at an all-time low, fed by a range of scandals, Royal Commissions, infantile behaviour and a failure to address real problems. Short-term economic fixes, tax cuts and one-off local bribes are recognised for what they are: an attempt to buy-off voters rather than dealing with the myriad of issues that need addressing: sustainable, renewable energy, affordable access to health care and education, environmental health and wellbeing, a fair go for all Australians including those seeking refuge.

To restore trust and address the critical issues we face today, we need sensible policies, hardworking representatives and to work together.

Here are some proposals to consider, distribute and promote. These are starting points for those seeking election or re-election, options that can earn trust, create a fair go and enhance the common good:

Funding and Services

1. **Restore 'public' services.** The privatisation of public utilities and services has eroded public trust in government, treating people like consumers, not citizens deserving affordable services that governments provide. Reclaiming control over these enterprises will be an important step to reassure citizens that public funds (pooled taxes) are committed to essential services, and to ensure these are affordable, environmentally responsible and reliable (e.g. electricity, roads, public transport).

2. **Allocate funds fairly to public education.** Publicly funded education should be non-profit, culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible. Ensure fair allocation of public funds to all types of education (schools, technical education, universities), sustaining education systems that promotes good social outcomes paid and unpaid opportunities.

3. **Re-establish community-based children's care and other care services.** Community services need to be local/community based and controlled, funded adequately, culturally appropriate and delivered by non-profit organisations that reflect user needs and allow relationships as the main basis of good services. Ensure local services (child care, NDIS, community health) have community input to best meet user needs, are affordable and not driven by profit motives.

4. **Support a fairer health system.** The gap in Medicare and private health insurance is widening, and affordable care becoming less accessible daily. Close gap payments in Medicare reimbursement and with private health insurance, dental health and Aboriginal health. Revamp funding regimes to ensure affordable, quality health care for all, supporting communities in rural and remote areas.

5. **Re-establish local social planning.** Social planning determines the location and mixes of aged, disability, children's and educational services that are based on community need. Reintroduce these models and engage communities in decision-making and management to ensure user needs are appropriately met. Allow 'for profit' services to co-exist, where needed, but within planned locations with controlled fees/costs.

6. **Introduce measures immediate to address climate change and sustainability.** Government infighting and (in)action on the environment is a major cause of voter cynicism and distrust in Australia. Develop a cohesive vision that goes beyond political parties and the private/public divide. Develop a vision of the future that supports an Australia powered by renewable resources and industries that are tech savvy, responsive to today's needs, and community / environmentally sustainable.

Equity and Fairness

7. **Develop fair refugee and immigration policies.** Develop a sustainable, humane refugee and immigration position that includes the closure of programs on Manus Island and Nauru, adequate alternative location of existing refugees (e.g. in New Zealand, Australia and other like countries), and that clarifies the situation for those on temporary visas in Australia.

8. **Support Indigenous self-determination.** Work with Indigenous leaders and the broader community to implement the Uluru Statement, listening to Indigenous voices and supporting self-determination and consultation in public policy, issues regarding Indigenous people, communities and wellbeing.

9. **Measure social productivity of both paid and unpaid activities.** Establish new criteria for measuring progress and wellbeing that replaces assumptions that only traded/tradable material goods and services 'count'. These new measures should include the full range of unpaid contributions made in society: caring, social, creative, innovative, traditional and cultural.

10. **Demand ethical behaviour by corporations.** Implement legislation requiring ethical behaviour by companies, a social licence to operate, including fair taxation, business and environmental responsibilities. Ensure that all sectors are covered, ie banks and other financial /legal institutions, health care, aged care, education, infrastructure and social services.

11. **Engage in new thinking on paid and unpaid work, revise welfare to make it accessible to those in need, create a supportive culture that eliminates toxic gender stereotypes, violence and discrimination.** Enter the discussion, develop wide engagement about these issues which impact dramatically on social health and wellbeing, support critical change.