

Dear Tom

Firstly we would like to congratulate the CPSU on organising the Better Tasmania campaign that highlights the important role of the public service as well as asking candidates to outline their commitment to your document Public Services @ Work: Tasmanian Public Sector Policy. Furthermore we would like to congratulate the CPSU on providing ALL candidates with an opportunity to respond to your proposed policy and not just the major parties.

I am happy to inform you that Socialist Alliance fully supports the principals outlined in the Public Services @ Work: Tasmanian Public Sector Policy. We believe in ensuring fairness, security, innovation and governance in Tasmania public services.

We have always supported the salary nexus that would provide workers with pay parity with workers in the rest of Australia. We therefore have supported unions including the CPSU and their members in the Tasmanian Public Service who have been courageously fighting for pay parity despite the State Labor Governments opposition to it over the years. We will continue to support unions and workers who oppose wage agreements that renege on keeping the salary nexus. We were also opposed to the Labor Governments' proposal to try to slash about 800 public service jobs due to the global financial crisis and we were opposed to their axing of the entire Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts.

Community mental health services are also struggling as they are staffed well below the benchmark when it comes to both allied health and nursing mental health professionals. The Bartlett Government has released glossy papers on Mental Health Promotion and Early Intervention yet people with acute mental illness and complex co-morbidities sit on waitlists. Grassroots mental health clinical staff would like to extend their services to do early intervention and health promotion activities but because of the chronic understaffing, they end up having to spend all their time responding to those in crisis. Also the hospital psychiatric ward in the Royal Hobart Hospital absolutely needs at least one more social worker, psychologist and occupational therapist to be able to provide real multi-disciplinary treatment to the large numbers of patients.

Health workers play a crucial part in providing public services to Tasmanians yet a Mercury article dated January 29, 2010 stated that a national Report on Government Services reveals that "Tasmania had a lower rate of public hospital doctors and nurses than the Australian average". Socialist Alliance therefore supports an increase in the number of hospital doctors and nurses and this would have a positive impact on services and on the elective surgery waiting lists.

Socialist Alliance therefore believes that the Bartlett Labor Government is not committed to fairness and guaranteed services as they state in their comments regarding your public sector policy. We are also concerned with their apparent push to de-professionalise many areas of the public service which we consider to be a threat to the quality of services to meet the needs of the Tasmanian public.

Socialist Alliance would properly fund all health services to ensure that Tasmanians receive the quality care they deserve. However Socialist Alliance also believes that the public sector should be extended to cover all those economic sectors where public provision would be cheaper, more efficient or provide equality of access. Our belief is that energy and water utilities, postal and telecommunications services, financial institutions, airports and airlines, shipping, railways, the extraction and sale of natural resources, public housing, transport, prison facilities, aged care, child care and health care services should be publicly owned. We also believe that drug development and production should be entrusted to a state pharmaceutical firm; and there should a state superannuation fund, eliminating the risk of workers losing their savings.

For the past two decades both the Labor and the Liberal party have lied to us claiming privatisation would provide cheaper and better health and education along with more affordable and efficient transport, housing and communication and care for our children and elderly. This period has shown us that this is not the way privatisation works and instead it has forced bills up, jobs down and created a larger division between the rich and poor.

Instead Socialist Alliance supports the rebuilding of our public sector, one that is very well funded and encompassing latest technologies with boards comprising workers, consumers and administrators to ensure accountable, transparent and democratic management. This would provide a system where the government would be directly accountable to the people and would deliver a system of quality, efficiency and duty of care.

Furthermore we propose an alternative to the privatisation of public assets and resources and call for the nationalisation of Gunns Ltd to put these resources in public hands and make the government accountable for their practices.

Another public asset that demonstrates the dangers of privatisation is the Tasmanian rail system. We want to avoid another disaster after it was sold off and then bought back in worse condition. We need to massively expand the rail workforce so that we can provide quality and publicly owned rail services in Tasmania. Unlike the Liberals, Socialist Alliance does not want to expand the Midlands Highway but instead we support the introduction of fast speed trains between Hobart and Launceston as these are a safer and more environmentally friendly alternative.

While we agree with the policy on consultation when any major changes are put on the table, we would argue that unions, as workers' representatives, need to be involved from the start and major changes to the public sector would need union approval.

To conclude Socialist Alliance has a proud and long history of supporting worker's rights and struggles both in Tasmania and at a National level and we will continue to do so. The Tasmanian Public Service needs more support to enable it to better meet the sometimes complex needs of the people of Tasmania.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you require any further clarification.

Kind regards

Jenny Forward

Socialist Alliance Candidate for Franklin

Current CPSU Delegate

Mel Barnes

Socialist Alliance Candidate for Denison

Emailed 26/2/10