

Thank you, Jenny, for your very astute and, especially given today's climate context, prescient speech! You have a reputation for taking on the tough questions and I thank you for your thought provoking speech tonight, addressing one of the most pressing questions in our own country and globally: how do we secure a thriving future where both people *and* planet can flourish and no one gets left behind?

Your strong statements stay in my mind, specifically that “we will keep going backward on climate change as long as we keep going backward on inequality”, and I would add absolute poverty.

Your assessment that our nation's lack of policy progress on climate change is intimately entwined with inability to date to grapple with rising economic and social insecurity resonates strongly. We know from our work at the Brotherhood that economic insecurity is a growing threat to the wellbeing of many Australian communities, especially in the outer suburbs and regions where prosperity's gains are deeply uneven and poverty is becoming more deeply entrenched. It is almost inconceivable that in one the world's richest countries, 1 in 8 people live below the poverty line - some 3.2m people.

To add some further perspective on this number, I would like to share some of our recent research into women's over-representation in poverty stats – research with single mother-head households and with older women who are the fastest growing cohort in homelessness and who face deep discrimination in finding sustainable employment.

Sandra is a jobseeker on Newstart living in regional Victoria. She recently told us she was starting to think that living in her car might be a cheaper accommodation option given her meagre resources. Despite all her challenges, Sandra who is in her 50s, has not given up on the Australian dream, and aspires to a secure home and job.

A single mother, Sandra moved to a country town when her son left home. She is now covering rent and expenses on her own in an “old house with lots of maintenance issues”. “I pay \$240 per week for a house with no insulation. When it rains the back part of the house leaks so I have towels everywhere to catch the drips. The house is freezing! I hate putting on the heater because I know that means no food.”

In our research, we often hear that people are faced with the stark choice of heating or eating.

Sandra has been on and off Newstart as she juggles part time and casual jobs and is part of the new, disturbing and growing narrative in our community, one of insecure work, and indeed food insecurity.

Jenny, as you have acknowledged, an increase for Newstart is needed as part of a package for a new social wage. Indeed, we say it's time to urgently reclaim our social security system from a growing the narrative of the deserving and undeserving poor.

It is evident – just look in our streets – that is increasingly difficult for some groups of people in our society to live a life of dignity where they can contribute to and share in the nation's remarkable prosperity. We actively support the chorus of voices calling for an urgent increase in Newstart, but go further to say that the underlying principles of our social security system need reform for the challenge of the 21st century. It is a profoundly different labour market today where insecure work has become a hallmark. Our society and economy has changed and our social security system, constructed last century on the premise of the male breadwinner, needs to also change with it.

Jenny, we very much affirm your assessment that we need an inclusive social protection system, as the foundation for any social and economic policy changes.

The Brotherhood proposes five principles to reframe and underpin our social security system so that it contributes to a just, fair and compassionate society that we have long cherished as Australians.

Some of the key words that underlie the principles we propose are:

Adequacy: Economic security is a human right and a precondition for wellbeing.

Dignity and autonomy of individuals: to live the life they choose.

Equity: a fair and impartial system.

Accountability: If work is held to be the best form of welfare, government must ensure that decent, sustainable jobs exist and the education system and social safety net supports people into those jobs...
Mutual obligation must be truly mutual.

Solidarity: Social security provides a safety net for all of us.

It is, indeed, as Professor Peter Whiteford's analysis has shown around 70 per cent of working-age households included someone who received an income support payment at some point between 2001 and 2015 - and this did not even include those receiving an age pension or family payment.

Jenny, listening to your speech I found your analysis that the impasse on climate change is connected to growing economic insecurity that we see in the community to be incisive and persuasive. That it is simply wrong to blame those people who don't immediately see the benefits of a low carbon future for themselves and their families, and instead recognise that they are not being irrational in their resistance to change. Without addressing inequality and insecurity, those who see themselves as losing out in the transition to zero carbon will logically oppose such moves as they weigh their immediate needs against future challenges.

We need bold initiatives that set a path forward for just transitions, and we must identify, welcome and test new ideas to break the policy impasse - the younger generations are demanding no less from those in leadership roles.

There is no doubt climate change will affect every Australian and many of its impacts will hit low-income households hardest. Older people, babies and people with disability are particularly at risk during heatwaves, like today, which are predicted to become even more frequent and severe in south-eastern Australia. And our research over the past decade, into effects of climate change on low-income people, found consistently that those with the least, pay the most and highest proportion of their incomes for energy.

Your proposal, Jenny, for a new employment and emissions accord gives us all much food for thought tonight. We support your call for bringing together government, business, unions, community, specialist agencies and social sector individuals for a deeper social dialogue about overcoming inequality and disadvantage, together with exploration of the policy settings required to move to a low-carbon future. We agree that a just future is one where growth is not at the expense of the poor and magnifies climate change. Your focus on the conditions required for future prosperity resonates with our mission: that we all have the right to participate in creating and sharing our nation's prosperity. Again, some of your statements will stay with me, particularly that of the need to build a bridge across the chasm to a zero-carbon future that fulfils the promise of full employment, and your

plea that we need to give those whose economic security will be most impacted 'a reason to trust in a just transition' so that they can show their 'characteristic remarkable courage and fortitude' in facing these significant changes.

I think we can also draw comfort from the sentiment you have expressed that 'although good policy is never inevitable, it is always possible.'

And with that hope, in one of the richest countries, to do nothing is a policy choice and not an inevitability, and we agree it is a choice we cannot afford to engage in for the sake of all people and our planet.