

# **CATALYST** >>

**Catalyst Australia incorporated**

## **Annual Report 2009**

**good lives  
good work  
good communities**

## Introduction

After a formative year in 2008, I am pleased to report to members about some tangible achievements in 2009.

During the past year we have worked closely with a broad network of people and organisations. In April, we led the way to co-convene the first conference of progressive think tanks.

We followed this with a major event featuring US campaigner Jeff Blodgett. More than 200 people came along to this event which helped establish Catalyst as an innovator in public debates. It also created a massive level of media interest and over 2000 visits to our website.

In October we released our first publication *Equality Speaks: Challenges for a fair society*. Consistent with our role as a network, we drew on a diverse group of writers including unionists, academics and non-government organisations to contribute to this work.

As part of our financial contribution to the discussion about inequality, we commissioned new data on wealth distribution in Australia. This showed deepening inequalities for women, casual workers and tradespeople.

During the past year we also explored new medium – producing a light-hearted video with a group of primary school children in a format that sought to ‘popularise’ our equality agenda and make it accessible to a broad audience.

And we have made a solid contribution to the progressive alliance on tax reform in the lead up to the far-reaching review of our tax system, due to report at the year’s end.

The challenges for 2010 remain great. We want to sharpen the equality agenda to tackle issues like corporate responsibility, finance sector reform, trade, industry and environment policy. And we want strengthen our alliances with unions and other progressive organisations.

Catalyst is a small organisation and our ambitions are only limited by resources. We are grateful for the continued support of our major sponsors and we over the past year we have increased our sponsorship base.

Finally, thanks to our small and growing membership for their continued enthusiastic support of Catalyst. We look forward to broadening that involvement over the coming year.



Jo-anne Schofield  
Executive Director

## Membership

Encouraging membership and participation is an important objective of Catalyst. Our growth has been slow and steady. We now have 45 individual members and 15 organisations that have joined or re-joined Catalyst in the past year.

Membership includes academics, union members, social justice activists, lawyers, think tank and NGO staff, Labor MP's and staff and Greens members.

## Networks

Catalyst continued to work with diverse networks over 2009. Our collaborations and partnerships over 2009 have included the following organisations:

The Anti-Slavery project at UTS, the Australia Institute, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Community Tax forum, Australian Council of Social Services, Centre for Policy Development, Chifley Research Centre, Evatt Foundation, National Foundation for Australian Women, PerCapita, Search Foundation, Union Strategy Research Group, UnionsNSW, the Women and Work Research Group.

## Campaigns and issues



### Equality Speaks: Challenges for a fair society

In October 2009, Catalyst released its first publication – *Equality Speaks: Challenges for a fair society*.

*Equality Speaks* is a collection of essays from a range of contributors including unionists, academics and community leaders and covered topics such as taxation, wealth and income equality, education, transport, health, women, child poverty, homelessness, and

indigenous equality amongst others. It delivered a stark report card from a range of respected experts who have highlighted the failure of government policies over the past decade.

As part of this collection, Catalyst commissioned new research on wealth distribution from the National Centre for Economic Modelling (NATSEM). This drew sharp attention to widening gap between the rich and poor, showing that wealth inequality has worsened over the decade of our economic boom. Catalyst intends to continue to monitor trends in wealth over the next couple of years, using this data as a base.

A copy of the book was sent to all members of Catalyst, sponsor unions and complementary copies were sent to federal Labor and independent MP's, select media and others who have supported our work over the past 12 months.

*Equality Speaks* is retailing for \$14.95 and has been stocked in independent bookstores – Gleebooks in Sydney, Paperchain in Canberra and we expect it to be picked up by select independent stores in Melbourne and Brisbane.



## Imagine if Australia was a village...

Co-inciding with the publication Equality Speaks, Catalyst asked a group of primary school students to imagine what Australia would look like if it was a village of 100 people. This quirky slideshow used drawings to present information about inequality in an accessible way.

It has received wide distribution and applause as being both 'adorable and informative'.

The original concept for this work was from Richard Archer and the style was created by David Alonso Love. Brett Easton provided research, with input by several young artists who worked with the material to draw out the issues and themes that they thought were important. Overall the experience of engaging a young audience in this project was fun and rewarding.

## Tax reform

Catalyst has worked closely with the Community Tax Forum and TaxWatch [www.taxwatch.org.au](http://www.taxwatch.org.au).

Over the course of 2009, Catalyst has contributed financial sponsorship towards roundtables on community and environment tax issues. In September 2009, Catalyst engaged researcher Brett Easton to work part time to provide research and organisational assistance to the Community Tax forum and TaxWatch.

This role will be ongoing in the lead up to the Henry Review and will include a focus on implementation of progressive reforms after the release of the discussion paper in December.

In early 2010, Catalyst will release the first of a series of short videos to popularise the progressive message on tax reform.

\* The Community Tax forum was established by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Council of Social Services, the Australian Consumer Federation and Australian Conservation Foundation. It has established links with over 100 unions, NGO's and academics to promote community input into the Henry Tax review.

## Paid parental leave

Catalyst was part of a successful collaborative public poll on Attitudes to Parental leave in Australia. The poll was released on 9 April, 2009.

The poll was supported by several women's organisations, Catalyst and UnionsNSW. Several radio stations, including ABC news covered the release, and ABC news radio did an extended interview with Catalyst's Executive Director.

The research showed that two out of three people supported all women having access to government funded maternity leave. This was strong across all age groups and income levels. Four out of 5 people preferred the government to fund parental leave rather than provide foreshadowed tax cuts to high income earners. The poll also looked at tax rates for women, and 4 out of 5 people believed high effective rates of tax for mothers reentering the workforce should be reduced.

# Events

## Crunch time: Australia's policy future

In April Catalyst initiated a major conference in partnership with Australia's progressive think tanks featuring 25 speakers over 2 days in Sydney. The event was attended by more than 170 people.

Keynote presentations included a filmed address by Ann Pettifor, head of Advocacy International in the UK. Ann is a leading progressive voice for financial sector reform and one of the authors of the **Green New Deal**.

A video of this presentation can be accessed through the Catalyst website.

Feedback from people who attended the event was extremely positive, and many people look forward to this becoming an annual event. It was suggested that a future program include more opportunity to work in small groups and to network with other organisations.

Catalyst and the Australia Institute underwrote the costs of this event, and the Catalyst office handled registrations, costs and conference administration, with the assistance of the Evatt Foundation and the Australia Institute.

Speakers at this event included:

Larissa Behrendt Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, John Falzon CEO St Vincent de Paul, Garry Weaven Chair ME Bank, Julian Disney Community Tax forum, Jane Caro Education campaigner, Prof Frank Stilwell Sydney University, Gabrielle Kuiper Labor Action Environment Network, John Connor Climate Institute, Marian Baird Sydney University, Peter Davidson – ACOSS, Kirrily Jordan Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy, Lindy Edwards ANU, John Quiggan Queensland University, Steve Keen UWS, John Dwyer UNSW, Warwick Funnell University of Wollongong, Jeff Lawrence ACTU, Sarah Hansen Young Greens, Emma Partridge Institute for Sustainable Futures UTS, David McKnight UNSW and Richard Dennis the Australia Institute.



## Catalyst fringe event at ALP National Conference

This was Catalyst's major event for 2009, attended by nearly 200 people during a busy week of ALP National Conference.

It featured US campaigner Jeff Blodgett to speak to political activists about the universal lessons for progressives from the Obama campaign. His was a positive message about how community empowerment can achieve lasting political momentum.

Jeff spoke about the importance of involving people in elections and keeping them politically engaged after the campaign by building participation in policy making – something that is occurring in the US through the healthcare debate.

Another important theme of Jeff's address was the need to counter the cynicism about politics by finding authentic candidates who talk about convictions, values and motivation in running for office instead of just focusing on policy issues.

Jeff is the most senior campaign strategist to visit Australia. He was state campaign director for Minnesota, and is the Executive Director of **Wellstone Action!** – a unique centre for training and leadership development in the US founded to honour the legacy to the late Paul and Sheila Wellstone.

People who came along to this event were a mix of unionists, Labor party members, greens and community groups. Feedback from this event was enormously positive.

There was great media interest in Jeff's visit and he was interviewed across radio, television and print media. A media library which includes radio, video and news articles is on our website.

Catalyst is grateful to LHMU NSW Branch who sponsored Jeff's visit to Australia and particularly Damian Ogden who made arrangements for this visit after campaigning with Jeff in the US election. Thanks also to the Chifley Research Centre for providing the venue.

## Building the green economy and quality jobs

This forum in Brisbane in June 2009 presented four union leaders to talk about the challenges and opportunities for the labour movement to reshape productive industries to support quality jobs and sustainability for future generations.

Leading academics and climate change experts have argued persuasively for the creation of new jobs and skills in areas such as renewable energy. However public policy in Australia has not yet embraced the sort of industry policy, capital raising and public investment strategies that are necessary to support this transformation.

The forum looked at what change is being made within existing workplaces and industries and presented ideas for future reform.

## Contribution to other events and forums

Catalyst participated in numerous roundtables, forums, events and conferences over the course of 2009. Highlights include:

### Conference addresses

- ALP National Left Conference *Joining the dots on economy, climate change and jobs*
- Queensland Council of Unions Annual Conference, *Responding to the global financial crisis and climate change – what does it all mean for workers?*
- Anti-Slavery Project, July 2009 *Labour Trafficking* conference facilitator
- Women and Work Research Group, Women and the Global Financial Crisis, *The Wealth Gap and why it matters*

### Roundtables / forums

- National Foundation for Women, Select roundtable, Women and tax, March 2009
- Community Tax Forums May and September 2009
- Better Services roundtable, UnionsNSW, August 2009
- Catalyst / Union Strategy Research Group select roundtable with Professor Keith Ewing – *Future directions for union rights and collective bargaining*, October 2009.

# Media and communications

Our media and communications presence in 2009 aligned with our public events, research and a national parental leave poll. A longer term approach is planned for the release of *Equality Speaks*, which will continue into 2010. We will feature essays on our website around issues in the public debate.

## Media

Thanks to Phil Davey and Tim Volmer from Mountain Media for their hard work over the past year. All media is accessible on our website. Media achievements in 2009 included:

*What the hell does social inclusion actually mean?* Executive Director Jo-anne Schofield thoughts published in the National times, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009

*Women victims of gap in wealth.* Interview with Frank Stilwell in The Australian, 4th November 2009 on the release of Catalyst wealth data.

Interview with Frank Stilwell on PM, with Stephen Long, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2009

*The wage gap: we're stuck in the dark ages* by Executive Director Jo-anne Schofield published in Crikey, 22nd September 2009

*Unions Shape Future of Work*, Executive Director Jo-anne Schofield's opinion piece on the role of unions in leading the workforce out of the Global Financial Crisis, Illawarra Mercury, Thursday 20th August 2009.

*Winning with Obama:* News articles, radio interviews and videos featuring Jeff Blodgett:

### Radio

92.1 Perth Community radio  
3AW Derryn Hinch  
4.30 Perth – Howard Sattler  
2UE Mike Carlton  
Radio National Fran Kelly  
4BC Brisbane  
2GB Morning Show  
ABC Hobart Drive time

### TV

ABC2 Breakfast  
Channel 7 – interview at conference  
Lateline Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July

### Print

Sydney Morning Herald – Feature  
Australian Financial Review - Feature

*Poll backs paid parental leave*, ABC Online, 9th April 2009. Executive Director Jo-anne Schofield featured in radio interviews on ABC and several other stations outlining findings of the poll.

*The New Politics*, ABC Radio National Background Briefing, 5th April 2009 included Catalyst in a series on progressive think tanks in Australia and overseas, and conducted a lengthy interview with speaker Jon Cruddas who was our keynote presenter at our 2008 *Engaging with Labor* event.

*Government must deliver on parental leave scheme.* Executive Director Jo-anne Schofield in letters section, Sydney Morning Herald, 3rd March 2009

*Ingenuity can do what leaders won't.* Executive Director Jo-anne Schofield's opinion piece about moving forward after the announcement of the Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme white paper, published in the Sydney Morning Herald, 23 December 2008.

## Website

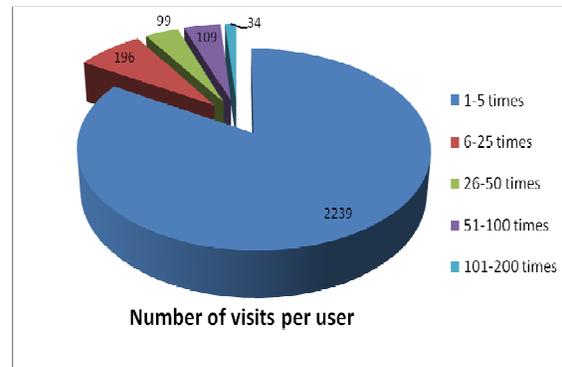
A review of our website was part of our communications review in early 2009, and improvements were made throughout the year.

Over the course of the year, Catalyst has had

- 6,417 unique visitors to our website
- 23,000 pages have been viewed
- An international presence with nearly 300 people visiting the site from the US and 190 from the UK.

The communications plan showed that there was a dramatic increase in web 'traffic' around our events.

Co-inciding with Jeff Blodgett's visit to Australia, the site was visited 2,677 times particularly to access the media library. Of these nearly 2000 were unique visitors and nearly 200 were visitors overseas.



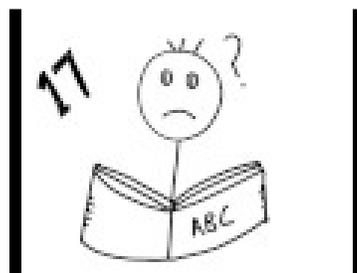
## e-newsletter

In October 2009, we emailed our first e-newsletter developed with our web-partners Boccalatte. The e-news letter went to over 300 subscribers.

We aim to release 3-4 newsletters a year around big events, publications or achievements.

Catalyst has branched out into social networking, establishing a Facebook site in November 2009, where we already have over 130 fans.

We have also used YouTube to post material.



The video 'Imagine if Australia was a village' has been visited by over 1200 people on YouTube.

It also featured on Crikey as their video of the day.

# Sponsorship

Catalyst is extremely grateful for the financial support of all sponsors and supporters in 2009. A copy of the audited financial accounts for the 2008-09 year is available to all members.

## Major sponsors



Australian Education Union



Amalgamated Metal Workers Union



Community and Public Sector Union, SPSF Division



Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union



Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union



Maritime Union of Australia



Members Equity Bank

## Other donor unions, sponsors and supporters



National Tertiary Education Union



Australian Nursing Federation



UnionsNSW

## Management committee

The Management and Executive Committee has provided ongoing advice, direction and support over 2009. Members are Dr Richard Archer (President), Susan Hopgood (Vice President), John Sutton (Secretary-Treasurer), David Carey, Alison Peters, Dr Lindy Edwards, Julius Roe, Dr Christopher Sheil, Louise Tarrant, Dr David McKnight.

## Staff

Catalyst has delivered sound administrative and financial management with a very small number of staff. Jo-anne Schofield, Executive Director, appointed November 2007 (32 hours week), Catherine Turner, Executive and Policy Assistance, appointed July 2008 (20 hours week) and Brett Easton, Researcher, Community tax project, appointed September 2009 to January 2010 (20 hours week).

We have continued to draw on the sound advice and support of our web and design partners, Martin Ford and Suzanne Boccalatte from Boccalatte, and the media and public relations support from Phil Davey and Tim Volmer from Mountain Media.

David Alonso Love worked with Catalyst part time until May 2009. We are grateful for his assistance in getting the website established, and his work on the Australian village project. David was also responsible for completing a Communications Strategy for Catalyst in early 2009.

## Our plans for 2010

Catalyst is in a strong organisational position to strengthen its place in progressive debates over 2010.

The equality agenda will continue to be a focus in 2010, both to promote our existing work through events and forums, and to sharpen this agenda into new areas of economy, environment, finance and industry policy. And we will continue to focus on social inclusion and community development.

In March we will partner with the Australia Institute and other interested think tanks to convene a one day conference following on from our Crunch time event in 2009.

Mid-year, Catalyst will host Professor Keith Ewing to talk critically about *A Bill of Rights: What's in it for Workers?*

In early 2010, we will be consulting with members, sponsors and stakeholders to determine projects and campaigns for the year that and take it up a level.

To keep up to date with our activities, log on to

[www.catalyst.org](http://www.catalyst.org)