

## OUR NAME

The state of Victoria has a storied history in the evolution of Australia's democracy - famously serving as the nation's capital for over a quarter of a century. Some fifty years prior, and an hour's drive up the road from here, a far more noteworthy event occurred.

It was in the spring and early summer of 1854 that tensions simmered on the goldfields of Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine. The third of December of that year is remembered as the day that a group of 'diggers' - independent miners - under the leadership of Irish rebel Peter Lalor, banded together in what was Australia's first tax protest. The government of the day had stepped too hard, too many times on the toes of those it thought it could exploit without repercussion. Those affected burned their exorbitantly-priced mining licences, swore allegiance to the Southern Cross, barricaded their position on Bakery Hill and trained whatever weapons they could find on their oppressors.

Ultimately though, our plucky band of heroes were no match for a well-drilled British regiment and the rebellion was quickly suppressed with the diggers sustaining heavy losses. The authorities may well have won the battle in decisive fashion. But they were about to find out that it was the miners who had won the hearts and minds of a colony. Victoria soon became the scene for Australia's first example of wholesale jury nullification when the treason and sedition trials against thirteen of the Eureka rebel leaders were famously thrown out and the defendants - now free men - were carried out on shoulders to the jubilant crowd outside. The banner that they fought under remains a potent symbol of rebellion and anti-establishment politics to this day. Peter Lalor, who lost his arm as a result of the battle, went on to become the first outlaw ever elected to parliament. And it is on the basis of his parliamentary record that I would regard Peter Lalor as being Australia's first libertarian politician.

In a speech to the Legislative Assembly in 1856, Lalor said:

*"I would ask these gentlemen what they mean by the term 'democracy'. Do they mean Chartism or Communism or Republicanism? If so, I never was, I am not now, nor do I ever intend to be a democrat. But if a democrat means opposition to a tyrannical press, a tyrannical people, or a tyrannical government, then I have been, I am still, and will ever remain a democrat."*

A little over a century later, this variation of the “if-by-whiskey” riff was echoed by another statesman. This time it was John F. Kennedy who said:

*“If by a ‘Liberal’ they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people—their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights and their civil liberties—someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a “Liberal”, then I’m proud to say I’m a “Liberal.”*

These two quotes resonate a great deal with me. A lot of people complain that the name of the party, The Liberal Democrats is generic, broad, meaningless. That the labels “Liberal” and “Democrat” mean so many things to so many people as to be useless in terms of meaningful political discourse.

I agree that labels themselves are meaningless, but those words do have meaning. **Liberal is an adjective that means willing to respect or accept behaviour or opinions different from one's own, a Democrat is one who advocates democracy - the decentralisation and equal distribution of political power among the citizenry.**

**We don’t just accept these labels, we take pride in them. We are liberal, we are democrats, we have a vision, a vision of a society that can justly be described as a liberal democracy. A society where a plurality of ideas and conduct are tolerated - even valued, a society where every man and woman, regardless of race, creed, wealth or status has equal access to the mechanisms of the governance structures they live under. A society where individuals have the freedom to flourish.**

## **OUR PARTY**

**The Liberal Democrats are, first and foremost, a party for people.** We hold as our highest aim the creation of a society that is concerned with the advancement of human flourishing. Any course of action that inhibits or constrains human flourishing must be held as antithetical to our cause. The snake-oil salesmen who talk of freedom but seek only to advance their own power must be exposed for the frauds they are.

**It is liberty, the freedom to follow one’s own natural inclinations, that provides for the greatest degree of human flourishing. Only**

when free can humans ascend the hierarchy of needs and move beyond their base requirements of food, water and shelter toward self-fulfilment. It is liberty that provides the conditions necessary to meet Jeremy Bentham's famous utilitarian maxim that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation."

The natural inclinations of human beings are many and varied, reflecting the complexity of our brains, the values we hold and the rich cultural milieu in which we develop. These inclinations - as long as they do not infringe upon the liberties of others - must be tolerated even where we would never endorse them. That we disapprove is not sufficient justification for imposing our will. Our approval is irrelevant. **The conduct of others should only be held to the requirement that it be peaceful, voluntary and provide no impediment to others wishing to go about their lawful business.**

This is not an appeal to populism. In fact it is quite the opposite. **To flourish in a libertarian society an individual must work to provide value to others.** The idea of living at the expense of their countrymen is far more palatable to most. We will not be popular. We will be ignored, cursed and spat at by those whose golden goose we seek to slaughter. But we will hold our heads high. The arrows and barbs of our enemies will fall harmlessly at our feet because we cloak ourselves in the immutable and steadfast knowledge that we are right.

**The Liberal Democrats eschew the very essence of identity politics.** The notion that people can be defined by their inherent characteristics and accorded stratified rights based on their membership of certain classes is nothing more than a caste system repackaged and sold as "social justice". To wit we share in the dream of Dr Martin Luther King that our children grow up in a nation where they be judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

The Liberal Democrats are innovators, we are entrepreneurs and we are disruptors. The Liberal Democrats do not simply seek to better the approaches of the other parties - who do that which is popular regardless of whether it is right. **The Liberal Democrats seek to change the fundamental nature of politics in Australia. To do what is right, regardless of whether or not it is popular.**

Our policies reflect this desire to do what is right, to advance human flourishing by creating those conditions that enable humans to flourish.

**We are for lower taxes.** Not through greed, nor a desire to deny resources to others, but through the knowledge that high rates of

taxation mean that individuals are disincentivised from providing value to others. Wealth is an individual's measure of the value they have provided to others. Taxation means that individuals can never be properly compensated for the value they provide which renders them less inclined to advance their own station. Taxation turns us into crabs, squabbling over the detritus that falls from the ocean of big government.

Allowing individuals to retain their own wealth, and respecting their choices in how to spend it gives people the mechanism by which they can forge their own path in life rather than following that laid down from on high. All taxes are regressive. All taxes hit the poorest members of our society hardest, regardless of who they are levied against.

**The Liberal Democrats are for smaller, more limited government.**

Government, by its very nature runs counter to individual liberty. If we are to have a government it must be reined in tightly. Its powers curtailed or handed back and its voracious appetite for our wealth greatly curbed. Over the past century and a half, accelerating dangerously in the last few decades, the size and scope of government has increased dramatically.

The sum total of commonwealth law, state law, council regulation and statutory authority bylaw that we are currently bound to obey runs to sufficient volume that no single person could ever comprehend the entirety of it. Nevertheless, we ordinary humans are hit with fines and other penalties for even the most trivial of infringements. Governments, commonwealth, state and local need to learn to live within their means. Budgets should aim for neither surplus nor deficit but balance. Borrowing money under the expectation that somebody else will pay it back constitutes aggression against those not yet old enough to cast a vote.

**The Liberal Democrats believe that government needs not one, but several handbrakes in order to check its ever-increasing lust for power and control.** We favour a return to strictly constitutionally limited government, to return Australia to the competitive federalist model that the architects of our constitution envisaged. At the turn of the last century Australia had relatively free immigration, very little tax or regulation and one of two powerhouse economies in the world. Then we unleashed a federal government and of all of the colonies invited to take part in federation, only New Zealand appears to be better off for their decision. **The Liberal Democrats believe that the impact of government upon the citizenry can be further limited by allowing electors greater access to direct the levers of power.** To this end we

propose the introduction of fixed parliamentary terms, recall elections and citizen-initiated referenda.

**We are for free speech.** In order for an individual to be able to achieve their desires, they must first be able to articulate them. Those individuals who espouse methods which may be deleterious to others cannot be disabused of harmful notions if they are not permitted to express them. The mind is the locus of our humanity. To suppress our minds is to suppress the very essence of what makes us human. Freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, freedom of political expression, freedom of religion and freedom of association all hinge upon the ability of individuals to fully express themselves without fear of judicial sanction. Ideas cannot hurt us, however noxious ideas that are unable to be refuted fester into noxious actions that do cause harm in society.

**The Liberal Democrats reject the left / right dichotomy which merely represents two faces of the same tyrannical coin.** Left-wing and right-wing are archaic terms that no longer retain any real meaning. They are today used alternately as badges of honour or epithets depending on whether one is referring to themselves or to their political opponents. The Liberal Democrats realise that politics today is a battle between freedom and authoritarianism. Both left-wing parties and right-wing parties are authoritarian in nature. **The Liberal Democrats remain the only party in the country committed to combating authoritarianism regardless of its manifestation.**

**The Liberal Democrats recognise that a crime must - in order to be described as such - involve an identifiable victim.** A (possibly no longer) living, breathing human being who has had their rights abrogated by the accused's alleged conduct. If people wish to purchase and use recreational drugs, have sex with people of their own gender or those belonging to a different race, engage in prostitution, gamble or even ride their push-bikes without wearing helmets they should be free to do so as they are not infringing upon the rights of anybody else, assuming all such conduct is entered into without coercion. The Liberal Democrats understand that the "cure" for such so-called social ills - increased regulation and the enforcement regime that accompanies it causes, in nearly all cases, more societal damage than the activity it seeks to curtail. In terms of policing, the Liberal Democrats favour a return to the principles set out by Sir Robert Peel. A police force must carry out its duties with the utmost transparency, accountability and integrity if it is to be seen as anything other than a paramilitary enforcement agency for the state.

**The Liberal Democrats are passionate about private enterprise.** We recognise that central planning in any realm of human endeavour is a poor substitute for the efficacy of an open market. Whether in commerce, healthcare, education, industry, energy or agriculture - people coming together voluntarily to produce mutually beneficial arrangements will always produce superior results to arrangements imposed from on high by others with no incentive to produce a result that benefits anybody but themselves. **When property is owned by private entities instead of collectively then it has value.** People will invest time, capital and effort into maintaining and possibly increasing that value because it is of direct personal benefit to them. Privately run businesses have an incentive to respond rapidly to price signals and emerging technologies, where publicly-run entities have an incentive to resist change.

**In matters abroad the Liberal Democrats again prefer to push for mutually beneficial solutions over adversarial posturing.** We recognise that the more people participating in a market - whether it be financial, commodities or labour, the more adaptive that market will be to change. We now live in a global market. The Liberal Democrats abhor protectionism. Restricting access to our markets through tariffs, quotas, subsidies, excise or restrictions on foreign ownership only serves to raise the prices of both domestic and imported goods while reducing the willingness of our trading partners to deal with us. Just as the free movement of goods, capital and labour across national borders was one of the main drivers of wealth generation in the 20th century, the free movement of goods, capital, labour, information and expertise across national borders will be the primary driver of wealth generation as the information age blossoms in the 21st.

It should not need saying, but of the two mechanisms by which nations are able to obtain resources they cannot source locally, the Liberal Democrats are fundamentally pro-trade and vehemently anti-war. The cost of conflict - both financial and social - is far too great when the costs of trading in good faith are nil. **The Liberal Democrats believe that an Australian defence force should be primarily concerned with the defence of the Australian population that pays for its upkeep.** It is not our - nor any other country's - role to play global policeman. Australian troops should never be deployed offshore without the approval of a supermajority of the Australian parliament. Such a grave action as committing lives to combat, in full knowledge of the potential for civilian as well as military casualties, cannot be left in the hands of the executive.

Diplomatically the Liberal Democrats believe in maintaining cordial and open relationships with the overarching governing power in every populated part of the world. **We support the right of individuals within an already defined national area to secede and form new independent nations.** We reject colonialism and believe in self-determination for all the peoples of the world. We support the independence of Taiwan, Tibet and West Papua. Separatist movements, so long as their aims and actions remain peaceful should be acknowledged and consideration of the formation of new independent states supported as an ideal solution to territorial disputes.

**The Liberal Democrats exist to present a credible, comprehensive and complementary suite of policies to the Australian people.** To provide a genuine third way for Australia to move further toward securing our future as a peaceful, prosperous and secure nation, and to do so while handing back to ordinary working Australians those rights and liberties that have been eroded over time by the excesses of authority. To free life's canvas from the clutter of overregulation, burdensome taxation and moral indignation and allow all Australians the opportunity to flourish rather than simply survive. To tame the vicious tendencies of authority and the smothering embrace of nanny-statism. To welcome those who wish to participate in our markets and to advance the flourishing of humanity both at home and abroad.

**The Liberal Democrats exist to do what is right.**

For those of you who have signed on to represent the Liberal Democratic Party on the field of battle I cannot thank you enough. I only ask that you do one thing for me.

Give 'em hell.