



**Catalyst Australia incorporated**

# **Annual Report 2010**

**good lives  
good work  
good communities**

## Introduction

With the success of Catalyst's inaugural publication late last year, 2010 became a year of setting out a long term campaign agenda. Beneath the din of election campaign sound bites the Catalyst office was focussing on the bigger picture – Corporate Power. The post-GFC climate produced lots of talk about regulation. Missing was a broader conversation the power corporations hold and what expectations communities should have of its corporate citizens.

While some of this work is still very much in its genesis some important building blocks have been laid. This includes our work with The Australian Institute on the successful **Money and Power** conference, our poll on community attitudes to corporate power. We hope to repeat this success with a follow up conference in 2011.

We continued our work on tax, and the Fair Share tax campaign was a result of Catalyst's contribution to TaxWatch and the Community Tax Forum which began in 2009. As part of this work Catalyst commissioned a poll and produced a short video addressing the balance between personal and corporate tax contributions. This work was led by our researcher Brett Easton who left Catalyst in the first half of 2010.

Another big feature of the year was our involvement in the local campaign for a financial transactions tax spearheaded by Jubilee Australia. Catalyst participated along with Oxfam, World Vision, Action Aid and the Evatt foundation on the campaign steering committee throughout 2010.

Catalyst also had some excellent media opportunities over the course of the year and thanks go to Phil Davey and Tim Vollmer for their media expertise and advice.

In the second half of 2010 Catalyst focussed on building the corporate power project. While much of this work will not be released until early next year we have formed fruitful new relationships with other organisations who will contribute to this work.

Our achievements are set out in the report, made possible through the support of members, sponsors and partners over the course of the year.



Jo-anne Schofield  
**Executive Director**

# Membership

Catalyst currently has 45 financial members. This includes five institutional members, seven donor unions and 33 individual members. 30 members renewed between July and September.

In addition to direct members, Catalyst has a growing supporter base, with nearly 260 'fans' on facebook. Strengthening our supporter base and reaching new communities will be a key activity in 2011.

# Networks

Our networks continue to expand in 2010 resulting in several successful collaborations involving the Australia Institute, Australian Council of Trade Unions, Anti-Slavery Project UTS, Community Tax Forum, Public Education forum and UnionsNSW.

Our most successful coalition in 2010 involved our participation in the campaign for a financial transactions tax, joining Jubilee Australia, Oxfam, Worldvision, ActionAid and the Evatt foundation to launch the Robin Hood Tax campaign in Australia.

# Campaigns and issues



## Fair Share: Tax Reform

Following the launch of Catalyst's first publication 'Equality Speaks' in late 2009 Catalyst examined inequities of the Australian taxation system in the lead up to the Henry Tax Review.

With assistance of UnionsNSW Catalyst produced a four minute video exploring the loopholes in our corporate tax system that enable companies to greatly reduce the amount of tax they pay. This video features respected Victorian academic, Professor Rick Krever and AMWU members Andrew Peach and Lesley Weers. Participants also explain the social cost of allowing companies to pay significantly less tax than individuals.

In February Catalyst commissioned Auspoll to explore attitudes to corporate tax levels. It showed strong support for business to pay its fair share of tax: three-quarters of people felt that big business should pay a greater share. Although most respondents were comfortable with the current 30% company tax rate the majority of people disagreed with the various deductions that companies can use to lower their actual tax rate to as low as 5%.

A full copy of the poll result is available at [www.catalyst.org.au](http://www.catalyst.org.au), as is our video.



## Robin Hood Tax Coalition

2010 saw the beginning of a new partnership between unions, think tanks faith groups, aid organisations and other NGOs through the launch of the Australian Robin Hood Tax campaign. This campaign is part of a global movement spanning the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Germany, France and Belgium.

The Robin Hood Tax campaign grew from a base of general support for taxation of currency markets (popularised as the Tobin Tax in Australia), but more specifically in direct response to the G20's request that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) investigate how the financial sector could make a 'fair and substantial contribution' to society following the GFC and its attendant bail-outs.

A financial transaction tax of 0.05% on global financial transactions such as foreign exchange, derivatives and share deals would raise billions of dollars to fight global poverty and the effects of climate change.

Despite the dry subject matter, (taxation of speculative financial markets), the campaign has captured the public imagination and in a very short time, built a support base involving thousands of people and organisations and prominent supporters.

The Australian chapter has operated out of Jubilee Australia. In addition to participating in the campaign committee Catalyst has made financial contribution to the campaign and has played an active role in its steering committee. Our involvement will continue in 2011.



There are several key moments in the coming two years for securing global agreement and strengthening global support from unions and development organisations. In particular conditions in Europe remain more optimistic than they have been for a long time, and although global agreement to implement a financial transaction tax is an outside chance, the implementation of a Europe-wide tax or variant of it or another form of bank tax is a serious possibility.



## Corporate Power

In 2010, Catalyst set out to create a better understanding about the nature of impact of corporate power in our society.

Recognising that our biggest and most profitable public companies draw their wealth from local resources, consumers and workers, we saw that communities are not well organized to articulate what standards and behavior they expect from corporate Australia.

At the same time, there has been a growing reliance on private corporations to provide public and community services, with an expanding suite of taxpayer funded agencies created to regulate and sustain corporate activities.

Our research project sets out to explore the impact of growing influence of corporations. Working closely with leading academics and practitioners we have stepped inside the systems that corporations used to explain their activities. Focusing on aspects of corporate governance, labour practices and workplace standards, taxation, social investment, and environmental practice, our analysis and discussion will be released throughout 2011.



In 2010 we explored public attitudes about corporate power that clearly show this a growing area of concern. In a poll undertaken by the Australia Institute with Catalyst, we found that 4 in 5 people surveyed thought big business had too much influence over their everyday life and 94 percent of people surveyed felt regulation was necessary to ensure big business behaves responsibly.

These results are available in a slim fold out poster which was produced by our design partners, boccalatte. Copies are available by contacting the Catalyst office.



## Events

### Money and Power Conference August 2010



Catalyst partnered with The Australia Institute to hold a major conference event for 2010 – *Money and Power: How much is too much in corporate Australia?*

The conference worked across four major themes: the global financial crisis, the banking system, the impact of corporate power on workers, and corporate donations to political parties.

Despite the distraction of a federal election campaign, the conference was attended by over 70 people from academic, union, community, political and public sector backgrounds. The event was preceded by the release of research by the Australia Institute on bank fees.



We are extremely grateful to the following speakers who contributed to this successful event: **Bernie Fraser** - Chair, Members Equity Bank, **Maree O'Halloran** - Director, Welfare Rights Centre, **Jack Gray** - Woolley Centre for Capital Market Dysfunctionality, UTS, **Ross Buckley** - Professor of Law, UNSW, **Tony Maher** - President, CFMEU Mining Division, **Josh Fear** - Deputy Director, the Australia Institute, **Joan Staples** - Visiting Fellow, Faculty of Law, UNSW, **Andrew Macintosh** - Assoc. Director, ANU Centre for Climate Law and Policy, **Rae Cooper** - Research Fellow & Senior Lecturer, University of Sydney, **Rod Masson** - National Communications Director, FSU, **John Sutton** - National Secretary, CFMEU, **Lee Rhiannon** - NSW Greens MP, **Keith Ewing** - Professor of Public Law, Kings College, London, **Louise Tarrant** - National Secretary, LHMU.

Some of the conference papers, along with an audio of the address by Bernie Fraser, can be accessed at [www.catalyst.org.au](http://www.catalyst.org.au).

## Professor Joseph Stiglitz Australian tour

Coinciding with the Money and Power Conference, Catalyst supported the Sydney lecture of Nobel Prize winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz, during a national tour hosted by the Australian Society of Economists.

A public event, held at the Sydney Opera House, was promoted widely to Catalyst members.



*"We allowed markets to blindly shape our economy, but in doing so, they also shaped our society. We should take this opportunity to ask: Are we sure that the way that they have been moulding us is what we want?"*

*Professor Joseph Stiglitz, January 2010*



## Suraya Pakzad – Voice of Women

In September, Catalyst hosted a breakfast in Sydney featuring Afghani Human Right activist Suraya Pakzad as part of her Australian speaking tour.

60 people attended including a small delegation of Year 12 students from Canterbury Girls High School.

Suraya is known both within and outside Afghanistan for her commitment to protecting the nation's women. She has received numerous international awards, including the Global citizen Award, Women of Courage 2008 Award and was recognised last year as one of the world's 100 top influential people by Time Magazine.

As well as hosting the Sydney event, Catalyst collaborated with the ACTU women's Committee to hold a small evening workshop with Suraya in Melbourne.

The event was a great success and raised the profile of Suraya's organisation, Voice of Women, amongst the progressive community.

## Contribution to other events and forums

As well as participating in a variety of events and forums, the Executive Director provided the following conference addresses:

*Getting to Equality in Education* Address to AEU National Conference January 2010

*Valuing children, communities and citizenship*, Address to Public Education Dinner, Illawarra, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

*Union and Community Partnerships*, Panel convened by Catalyst for the Anti-Slavery Conference, Working with Communities, November 2010.

# Media and Communications

## Media

Thanks to Phil Davey and Tim Vollmer from Mountain Media for their hard work over the past year. Media achievements included:

### Opinion pieces

*Time for banks to bail out global poverty*, ABC The Drum, 8th October 2010

*A party machine we can believe in*, The Punch, 29th September 2010

*The mining tax ads counter the miners' fear campaign*, The Punch, 8th June 2010

*More Howard than Hawke in Rudd's Labor*, The Drum, ABC, 10th May 2010

*Super scams flush billions from retirement savings*, The Punch, 28th April 2010

*Putting patients before premiers' egos*, Eureka Street Online, 19th April 2010

*Debunking the myths of corporate tax*, The Punch, 12th March 2010

*Pass the buck: voters call for companies to pay bigger share*, Sydney Morning Herald, 12th March 2010

*Opinion poll result favours taxes on big business*, The Australian, 12th March 2010

*'Robin Hood Tax' takes from the banks to give to the worthy*, The Age, 25th February 2010

*My School is a stunt if it's not backed up by funding*, The Punch, 11th February 2010

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

A number of improvements were made to the Catalyst website in 2010 including the addition of an events calendar and an easy sign up form for Catalyst's e-newsletter. The introduction of this e-newsletter in late 2009 has helped bring people to the site.

Across the year the site steadily increased the number of visitors rising by 16% compared with 2009.

## e-newsletter

Our first newsletter was released at the end of 2009, and in 2010 we sent out four newsletters which directed readers back to our website. Each coincided with the release of new work by Catalyst and showcased our major conference (Money and Power), the Voice of Women/Suraya Pakzad event and other work including the 'Fair Share' Tax campaign.

The newsletter also featured the Robin Hood Tax campaign which directed readers to the Robin Hood Tax website.

# Sponsorship

Catalyst greatly appreciates the financial support of all sponsors, members and supporters in 2010. A copy of the audited financial accounts for the 2009-10 year is available to members on request.

## Major sponsors



Australian Education Union



Australian Manufacturing Workers Union



Community and Public Sector Union, SPSF Division



Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union



Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union



National Tertiary Education Union



Members Equity Bank

## Other donors



Australian Nursing Federation



Unions NSW



# Management committee

Catalyst's Management and Executive Committee provided ongoing advice and direction during 2010. Members are:

- Dr Richard Archer (President)
- Susan Hopgood (Vice President)
- John Sutton (Secretary-Treasurer)
- David Carey
- Alison Peters
- Dr Lindy Edwards
- Paul Bastian
- Dr Christopher Sheil
- Louise Tarrant
- Dr David McKnight

## Staff

With a small staff comprising Jo-anne Schofield and Catherine Turner, Catalyst relies on its sponsors, members and supporters to help promote and direct its work. Our Executive committee are particularly valuable in providing advice regarding our work. This year, we were grateful to enlist the services of Brett Easton to work on taxation reform. Brett was employed from September 2009 to February 2010.

## Our plans for 2011

Challenging corporate power and illustrating change are our big projects for 2011. Our work on corporate power is involving a series of collaborations with academics and practitioners. This series will be released early in 2011.

Over the course of the year Catalyst is planning to host workshops 'Illustrating Change'. These events will highlight good practical policy solutions to some of the big issues of today.

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

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