

Revenue Summit 2023

Transcript: Panel #2

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“Panel #2 Revenue for Public Services”

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Rachel Withers: What I might I might just ask our panellists to come up and sit, and we're going to we're going to be a bit casual and sit down and go down the line, but I'll introduce them all before they give a couple of remarks each.

Rachel Withers: So as Ebony mentioned, we are here to talk about how to spend money and why it is so essential to raise revenue and the scale of the problem I suppose, that we're trying to address here. So I will go down the line and introduce everyone one by one, and then we'll everyone will give their sort of five minute remarks. So, to my left, we have Dr. Lachlan Clohesy, the secretary of the NTEU's ACT division, and he's replacing Dr. Terry McDonald, who unfortunately has come down with COVID and couldn't be here today. We have Annie Butler the Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. We have Maiy Azize, the national spokesperson for Everybody's Home. June Reimer, the deputy CEO of First People Disability Network, and Professor Peter Yu AM. He is vice president of the First Nations portfolio at the Australian National University. So if we give everyone a round of applause here. And then we'll start with Lachlan.

Dr Lachlan Clohesy: Okay, cool. Thanks very much. So today I'm going to talk about the funding problems for our public universities. And I think it will be clear that most of the problems I'm going to talk about were problems that existed before COVID and everyone will be aware that our sector got smashed during the pandemic. And this will help explain why it hit us so hard. So if we're in 1989, this discussion on university funding would be pretty easy. At that point, 80% of university revenue is from federal government funding. However, if we fast forward to 2019, I call this the last year of the before times, we can already see that we've got a university system with major areas of vulnerability instead of universities being supported by one thick pillar of federal government funding, the universities had instead been balanced on three really flimsy, unstable pillars to ensure their financial survival. Those three pillars were, one: the mass casualisation of our workforce, particularly the academic workforce, two: an overreliance on international student income to subsidise operations for the rest of the university, and three: a makeshift pillar which I describe more as two sticks, which is sort of broken and then sticky tape in the middle. And there's two sides of that. On the one hand, the remnants of what federal government funding is there and the costs that are being shifted onto students being forced to pay their own way universities.

So I'll discuss each in a little bit more detail. I should say that remainder of government funding, so that's down to 33% from 80% of university revenue by 2019. So number one, casual employment in 2018 on a head count basis. Employees in our sector, 43.8% of university workers are employed on a casual basis. And universities may have felt that the funding squeeze meant that they had no choice but to cut costs on labour, with the result that most face-to-face teaching was not necessarily delivered by eminent experts in their fields, but by graduate students teaching on the side while they study or post-PhD tutors caught in the casual employment trap. These staff are usually not paid for developing any research expertise, developing pedagogy, attending staff meetings, or otherwise participating in the collegial scholarly environment of the university. These staff do their best, but they are simply set up to fail. And this has implications for the quality of education and student experience. And I won't have enough time. But there are also huge implications on job insecurity, on research in universities as well.

And second one, the overreliance on international student revenue is extremely problematic. This is our third biggest export industry, but these students are too often treated as cash cows. Students are often accepted without being university ready, lacking the literacy or prerequisites necessary and not afforded appropriate support when they do arrive at universities when they get here. The focus of universities has often been to get students in the door, and this has led to lack of standards and also concerns over unscrupulous migration agents.

At the same time, this is a tap that can be turned off very suddenly, and this is what we saw during COVID. Markets like India and China are developing their own universities, which are rising in the rankings. China has been making noises about requiring Chinese degrees rather than foreign degrees for prestigious jobs like the Civil Service. Recent decisions around a lack of recognition for Australian online only courses further threaten this market. And of course, international student revenue distorts the sector and increases the unevenness within the sector. The big beneficiaries of international student revenue, largely Group of eight, they are largely capital city metropolitan, big universities, Sydney universities, the University of Melbourne, Monash, U.N.S.W, that sort of stuff. For universities in low areas like regional universities get left behind. The third issue is the shifting of the burden from public to individual students. That's a huge equity of access issue. So we've gone from free education through to increasing to introducing HECS and then to the Job Ready Graduates program more recently, which over time decreases real funding per student

while charging students more. It sets us on a path really, that's a student debt sort of system. More approaching the United States in the sorts of user pays university experiences you get there.

So in short, all three pillars are flimsy and make our sector vulnerable as we saw with the economic devastation of the pandemic on our sector and tens of thousands of job losses. But in each case we're seeing a problem caused by the retreat of public spending instead of the federal government. And the cost is instead borne by precariously employed university staff through decreased wages and conditions and too often by wage theft. Instead of the federal government, the cost is instead borne by exploited international students who are set up to fail. And instead of the federal government, the cost is borne by domestic students paying their own way. Rather than having a publicly funded education sector for the public good. With poor kids being locked out of the sector. Whether we're comfortable with that is a question for all of us. Thank you very much.

Rachel Withers: Annie.

Annie Butler: So the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation is the National union for nurses and midwives and care workers across the country, across every health and aged care setting, wherever they work. I'd just like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land, Ngannawal and Ngambri people, and pay my respects to elders, past, present and any First Nations people joining us today. And I want to acknowledge the difficult time for many First Nations people post the referendum result. The IMF was a very strong supporter of the yes campaign and yes to the voice. And I just want to say that the IMF will continue to walk the walk with First Nations people towards voice treaty and truth.

I just want to lay this out pretty simply. I hope most people would understand what we're dealing with in health and aged care at the moment. For most people, it can take up to six weeks to see a GP and often you have to pay. And so if you can't afford to pay, you don't go. And so if you don't go, you often get sicker and once you get sicker, you end up in an emergency department. But emergency departments are overflowing so often you don't get seen in time or it gets delayed or there are difficulties there, and if you need to get admitted, you might not get admitted straight away because there are people stuck, stuck up in wards, particularly people who need to go into aged care services or need to access disability services. Sometimes they're there for 150 days. The system just continues to spiral. People can't get their chronic diseases managed effectively. They get sicker. It just keeps getting worse and worse.

Most of us have some picture, particularly if you live in a more disadvantaged area, have some picture, an understanding of what that feels like. So we take that to governments and ask for we need more resources, we need more funding, we most definitely need better policy. And very often we're told things like budget balance, structural deficit, vertical fiscal imbalance, share of GDP. I have no idea whether any of that made any sense. I suspect not. Doesn't make a lot of sense to me, but it doesn't make a lot of sense to the average person. What does make sense is that when they need to see a doctor, they can see a doctor. That when a new mother, a new parents have a crying baby and they don't know what to do, they can access a midwife or a maternal and child health nurse right away when they need it. When the little four-year-old who has asthma has a cold and their breathing's starting to struggle, they can get straight to an ambulance if needed. But let's hope not. But they can get straight to an emergency department and not have to wait and be seen straight away. They can know that they can get into hospital in a reasonable time for that hip replacement or that and a knee replacement. They know they can know that when their relative is dying, perhaps when they're in aged care at the end of life, that they are surrounded by skilled, knowledgeable, caring staff who are there to make sure that

there's a peaceful end, that it's comfortable, pain free, and that people have time and space to deal with that moment. That's what most people want.

But how do we quantify that experience? None of those terms. And I don't really know what they mean. I used before really makes sense to the average person. But those things really matter to the average person. So how do we go about shifting resources? How do we go about getting the allocation of the revenue that we raise into the right places so everyone can have those experiences? I want to just give you one example. So the ANMF and other unions had a case in the work of the Fair Work Commission to increase wages for aged care workers at take some time. That takes some time. But November we got an interim decision 15% wage increase for all direct aged care workers. You know what that means for registered work now? First of all, to their credit, the government committed and they committed to funding that. The Fair Work Commission said you have to fund the whole thing and you have to do it now. Great. So what that meant was the government funded put 11th rate, \$11.3 billion in this budget this year towards that wage increase. Oh, that's a tear. All what it took cost all year. The biggest budget spend, all of that kind of stuff. You know what it was? It was an investment. You know what that means for a registered nurse? That's \$5 an hour. That's \$40 a day. That's \$200 extra a week. That's enormous for people in this sector. But you know what an extra it means. The churn stops. They don't necessarily leave, so they stay. So when my father is at his end of his life in his nursing home, the registered nurse will be there. The care workers will be there. He will be kept in comfort, pain free and allowed to see out the last days of his life in dignity. That's just one example of what we're asking for and what we need. I guess we'll come to more of it because I was going to say, we don't really care how we raise it, but actually we care very much how we raise it. And if Greg Jericho's here in the room for the average aged care worker who's permanent, who who's a part time worker, female probably 52, generally from a migrant background, we want alternative three. Thank you.

Maiy Azize: Thanks. Well, thanks to the Australia Institute for inviting me to be here today. I'd also like to start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, the traditional owners of the lands we are on. And I'm going to talk about housing. And so it's very fitting to start with an acknowledgement because nobody in Australia is suffering more than Aboriginal people, especially in remote areas when it comes to Australia's housing crisis.

I want to talk a bit about what housing used to look like in Australia back in a time when it was affordable for several decades in Australia. We lived in a country where the government understood that it had a role to play in providing housing to people who needed it, and they did that after the Second World War governments all around the world and including here in Australia, really started to step up and invest in public housing options. For those couple of decades, we were building about 30,000. The government was funding about 30,000 homes a year at the high point. About one in four homes that was being built in Australia was like a home that was being built by the government. That started to drop off as the decades wore on. By the seventies, it was sort of somewhere between ten and 15% of new builds were government homes. And by the eighties, again, this was part of a global phenomenon that we often think Australia is unique. But governments around the world started stepping back from supplying housing. The Federal Government in Australia really stepped back in the eighties and nineties and started sort of saying, well, you know, it's not really our job to provide housing. The private sector can do this better. And that was kind of the beginning of the end of affordable housing for Australia.

We've now got a mentality where public housing especially is so scarce that it's limited to people who are at the absolute margins of society. We used to live in a country where a whole lot of

people could expect to have a home that was provided to them by the government. Often when I talk about the affordable housing crisis, you know, for people like essential workers and construction workers and say that the answer is more social housing, people come back to me and say, well, those people aren't going to live in social housing. They used to live in social housing. It used to be that if you were a construction worker, you could expect to have a home provided to you by the government if you were if you were doing that kind of work. In fact, earlier this year, I was on a panel with with Greg Jericho, and he mentioned that he grew up in effectively public housing because his parents were teachers and they had a home provided to them by the State Education Commission. This was a fairly normal expectation. People would spend, you know, years of their lives, you know, in these homes, would help them save for their own home. And then what we saw in the eighties and nineties was the government stepping back. And then in the nineties, we saw some really perverse decisions where new homes weren't being built as much because the government wasn't playing that that role in building the homes. And we saw some decisions being made about, well, you know, what can we do to bring some private investors in? And that was when we saw some big changes to the Australian tax system. And they've been really bad changes. What we've seen now is the wrong people have been incentivised to provide housing in Australia.

We used to have the majority of landlords in Australia used to be positively geared, which meant that they weren't highly leveraged and that was probably a bit better for renters. Now we've got a scenario where there are so many highly leveraged amateur investors that they can't give their renter a week's break if they need it. You know, they can't deal with the latest interest rate increase. It's been it's a huge problem. And of course, we've got a huge shortage of public community and affordable housing. There are over 600,000 households in Australia who are in the most severe rental stress and hundreds of thousands of more in rental stress. We've got over 175,000 people waiting for public housing right across the country. It doesn't need to be this way. The really ironic thing I know we're here about talking about how what our spending priorities are. The interesting thing is that this system is actually incredibly expensive now because we don't have average people paying market rents into the system anymore. It used to be a lot more sustainable. We now have a system that's for much fewer people and it's never been more expensive to maintain. So I'm here to make the case for the government really stepping in and taking up the mantle of providing housing for everybody who needs it in Australia.

June Riemer: So good afternoon. I also would like to acknowledge we're on Aboriginal land here today and sovereignty has never been ceded. I'm a Gumbaynggirr Dunghutti woman from the north coast of New South Wales and come from a long line of activists. But you know, being in the community care sector for over 40 years, nothing has really changed for our First Nations people. Our First Nations people are going backwards in regards to getting the appropriate supports. Our services, the Aboriginal community care services are going backwards and receiving appropriate funding to provide those supports. So I work at First Peoples Disability Network. We're the only national peak representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability and their families. And in regards to funding, we've been around for 23 years. Our work is from a human rights framework. We say society creates the barriers to our people with disability participating. But for FPDN, we weren't funded for the first ten years of our life. We're actually recognised more internationally. You know, we set up the Pacific Disability Forum to help the Pacific Islands, you know, work better with their people with disability, but we couldn't even be funded in our own country. So for ten years our elders and our founding members and board worked as volunteers, including myself and our CEO, to set up this network to be a representative

body, as we would say, for those most disadvantaged and those most vulnerable in our communities.

As you said, you know, housing is a major issue in our communities. And what creates, you know, that lack of appropriate housing creates disability in our communities. We already have, you know, high numbers of psychosocial disability, you know, from past experiences and past history. But when you add, you know, bad health outcomes, you know, lack of appropriate housing, you know, so if you go out to Utopia, which many of you would never have been to in the NT, we've got 30 to 50 people living in two bedroom houses with no utilities, no electricity, no water. And this is Australia.

So what we ask at FPDN is a voice for our people. We ask that, you know, we're funded appropriately. We ask that the disability royal commission that we advocated for ten years with all the other disability peaks in Australia, those recommendations be funded appropriately. So, you know, we can change the outcomes for mob living with disability, you know, and the results of, you know, appropriate supports, appropriate outcomes when you're supporting those living with disability means economic prosperity. You know, they can be educated. They can be employed. And so it's not a lost cause. We can change the narrative of, you know, most of our young people being incarcerated. Most of our young people committing suicide. We have the highest suicide rates in the world with First Nations people. We have the highest incarceration rates. We're the only country in the world that locks up ten-year-olds. And we know most of those ten-year-olds have undiagnosed disability because they don't have access to health. Many of our rural and remote communities, there's nothing good. There's no transport. We heard about transport infrastructure earlier today. What roads? What roads do you ask? You know, how do people get appropriate? Health comes to change, you know, the narrative. You know, our mothers want the same as everybody else. You know, they want their child with disability to be able to access early intervention programs, but it doesn't exist. The NDIS has failed First Nations people because it was a program that was developed in a Western concept. You know, for most First Nations people, and particularly those living with disability, we walk in two worlds. You know, our culture and our family and our communities come first. So when you're developing programs without asking, you know, the appropriate people how it should look in your community for your family, and just assume that one size fits all, you're never going to change the narrative.

So we need funding urgently for, you know, our community care sector to, you know, improve the lot for our people. You know, in regards to many outcomes, there is an outcomes for First Nations people. Life expectancy, you know, is well below what it should be in a wealthy country that we have today. You know, we heard the answer from our country that, you know, we don't matter. And that's what's happened, you know, in the last week across our communities. Our communities are sad, you know, that we don't matter. Our life doesn't matter. You know, our young people are hearing we don't matter. You know, you don't want to help us. You don't want me to be educated. You don't want me to have an outcome, you know. I've seen it for myself and, you know, the last 15 years, the conversation we had earlier today about the big 4, that's where the money goes. It doesn't get to the ground, to the community care sector. The funding goes into these big consultancy firms that have never met an Aboriginal person in their lives sometimes. And yet they're developing programs and talking about us as markets. You know, that is so offensive to Aboriginal people and for particularly people with disability. You know what we know from our families, when you know, appropriate funding and appropriate services are provided, there are outcomes.

Professor Peter Yu AM: I might feel more comfortable standing up here. Okay. Of course. Thank you. So, with some sense of irony, I suppose I'm standing here. Given that this is the hall in the centre of authority and power. And yet we had the highest yes vote supporting the referendum in the ACT, but it didn't count at all. Thank you.

The most glaring fact of market failure in the Australian economy relates to First Nations peoples. Our participation in the Australian economy is appalling and all the flow on effects that you already indicated are all well known. And we've just been through this very gruelling campaign of the referendum in the Voice where these facts were publicised ad nauseum. Yet Australia has voted overwhelmingly to maintain the status quo. It's as if it's a situation as entrenched and normalised as part of modern Australia. It is certainly not acceptable as far as First Nations people are concerned, or for the five and a half million Australians who voted yes and I suspect that many more. We need fundamental change in public policy and institutional arrangements concerning the relationship between First Nations people in the Australian economy.

Australia has never had a committed, comprehensive economic development policy approach for First Nations peoples. That says something about settler Australian view of First Nations peoples, and I think it was reflected in the referendum vote. It is a deficit view of us and it shapes the imagination and thinking of governments. In this public policy response to the crisis of First Nations economic marginalisation. In some some situations circumstance, you could probably describe it as economic apartheid. The overwhelming character of Indigenous public policy in Australia is deficit by social policy. That is highlight highlighted the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap. Which, according to the Australian Productivity Commission, is not working because governments are not committed to its implementation. The Closing the Gap Targets are fundamentally important, but the approach must be supported by a comprehensive economic empowerment strategy. And that strategy cannot be on government terms. It must be developed in partnership with First Nations leaders and representative organisations. It must be First Nations economic self-determination approach. By this I mean empowering First Nations people to use their rights and interests in assets to create wealth for themselves on their terms. Over the last 18 months or so, we at the First Nations portfolio at the ANU have been developing the First Nations economic self-determination comprehensive policy position through an inclusive process of a national symposium and a series of six seminars to be concluded in about three weeks time. The process has been a serious investigation, and this goes incorporating more than 200 people, including first Nations, traditional landowners, land owning entities and businesses, industry researchers, NGOs and government officials. A comprehensive First Nations economic self-determination position will be finalised early next year, but we have commenced engaging government through the Secretaries of Treasury and Finance on those key features. In essence, the policy position is about activating the potential wealth from First Nations assets. Those assets are extensive. More than 50% of the Australian landmass is now subject to some form of first nation land title. Whether it be statutory land rights or native title determinations. It is extraordinary, given these assets that it is in this region of Australia, that First Nations impoverishment is the most pronounced. And of course you'll realise that the majority of the rural and remote communities in this country voted overwhelmingly just for the voice. The kind of sense of where we are and the disconnect that actually happens here with the east in the south coast to that of us to live in the north. So we are dirt rich and cash poor.

The First Nations policy position that we are developing is about unlocking the wealth creation potential of the First Nations land assets. It'll be comprehensive, incorporating a number of areas of policy reform, such as capacity building, building fungibility of land title, water rights and

intellectual property. But one critical area that I want to talk about now is the access to finance, which you are currently engaging with government. We are seeking important reforms of the public and private capital can be accessible to support first nation businesses and entities to grow the first nation economy. We know there is a huge potential to grow First Nation enterprises, the capacity to employ First nations peoples and very significant other multiplier effects they can have in local first nation economies. We also know there is a strong interest in the large and growing responsible investment sector to invest, to displace, to make an impact on First nations social outcomes.

However, a challenge that we face is that for most of the responsible investing sector, Australian First Nation enterprise is, generally speaking, perceived as still being unable to deliver on return expectations or meet risk tolerance profiles. This is where government comes in. Australian governments have a long history of using structures such as the former Innovation Investment Fund program or the current Clean Energy Finance Corporation or the North Australian Infrastructure Facility to use public funds to lower the hurdle rate and de-risk investments in sectors deemed important for the Australian economy. But whereby market failure has resulted in flows of private investment that are inadequate to activate the sector. No such structures exist specifically for First Nations economy. And mainstream programs don't quarantine funds exclusively for First Nations ventures. Perhaps this is further validation of the value of Australia's place on its First Nations. We will be putting the government that this should and can be done, which could have a significant impact on growing the economy. First Nations Economy. Our early thinking is that the government should consider establishing a specific vehicle with its own funds and with the capacity to galvanise the integrated public and private investment in prospective First Nations enterprise development.

We suggest three principles which should guide the design and structure of this vehicle. One is the investment decision should be led by professional private investors to reduce the risk that first stage businesses are not viable and will not deliver important on ground. Socio economic multipliers utilise scarce public and private capital. The role of government is twofold to use this capital to go and visit or co-finance First Nation ventures with the private sector led investment in order to reduce hurdle rates and risks to a level whereby the private sector investment is mobilised and to mitigate against the risk of government funding, crowding out the coming out of the limited private investment that is flowing to First Nations enterprise and to ensure that the resource, the full ambit of government industry support programmes are brought to bear for these purpose purposes. That is to say in many cases the new vehicle may not need to use its funds to lower hurdle rates and risk, but rather assist in bringing capital from other government programs to bear. Most importantly, and obviously the First Nation venture is a subject that is the subject of investment, the financing must be included in decision making on a fully informed basis from the outset for this transaction. Thank you.

Rachel Withers: Thank you so much to all our panellists for those remarks. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners Ngannawal and Ngambri people, and I apologise for not doing that before getting you all up here and pay my respects to the elders past and present and all Indigenous Australians. I'd like to start off the panel discussion by returning to a point that he was making about the way we measure productivity and GDP and all those fine economists' terms. And we have seen this Government start to talk a little bit more about a wellbeing budget and measuring things other than just productivity. So I was wondering if you could all provide a bit of a perspective on what you would like to say from a wellbeing budget.

Annie Butler: You want me to start?

Rachel Withers: Yes.

Annie Butler: As I touched upon, it's so hard to quantify what is such a meaningful experience for so many people. And I say to people often we talk about technology and all these advancements and all these things, but the thing that you pretty much everybody remembers when you're sick and when you're scared and you're in hospital and all those things, you remember the kindness of the touch of the person who was with you. And how do you quantify that? And I don't know how to go about structuring a budget that, you know, that doesn't have GDP, that has well-being measures. But in health, we think about how we might adjust the measures. And to be fair, the government is starting these discussions and is open to how we start to adjust things. So because what we have at the moment, if we take primary health care, you know, pretty much the general practice system that we have out in the primary health care system is privatisation of a public good. Like when Medicare started back 40 years ago, great pay for service worked. Episodic care worked because of the nature of where we were 40 years later, chronic disease is just at an all time high. Episodic care doesn't work, and yet we still have this fee for service model. So they are starting to shift towards looking at how we might any gaps in the room. I apologise because I hate the word capitation, but better blended funding, funding models that are measured on outcomes and for outcomes in health that means so you have a person with type two diabetes, chronic asthma, other kinds of conditions. You know, you keep them out of hospital, you keep them well.

So those are sort of specific things that we can reach to in health that go to how we might shift, how we measure things. I'll just say one more thing like and because saying you've got to increase productivity to any of my members will probably get you short shrift, right, when you look at how hard they already work. But we can look at doing things much more efficiently and more effectively with good policy changes. One of the big policy changes that we are starting to see and have seen is mandated minimum staffing levels that are across hospitals. And now we're just introducing them into aged care and and that will start to have a shift. But when we tried to when we were we've tried we've been advocating for years to get these systems in. But one of the things that we did was ask some economists to do a cost benefit analysis because we thought money might talk the government about what it would cost, what the what the cost would be, let's call it the investment. So as an investment, what the return would be and we could quantify reduced hospitalisations or these sort of things. But they also looked at a quality-of-life measure. They started to look at how they might quantify a quality-of-life measure for people who live in aged care, in comfort, dignity and a respect for sort of an ultimate into their life.

Rachel Withers: Maiy.

Maiy Azize: I'm a little conflicted about this because, like, in my head, I have two answers. I mean, the first answer is sort of a face value. There are so many different ways that we can measure how it how we're going in terms of housing in Australia. You know, we've got record numbers of people in housing stress. We've got record numbers of people waiting for public and social housing. You know, we've got, you know, how long is it taking people to be able to leave home? This generation is staying at home, you know, far longer than any other generation. How many pensioners are in shared housing and insecure housing? Because that's something we hear about and is a part of the mainstream conversation at the moment. And then there's another part of me that kind of thinks. It's. It's not something we're ever going to be able. It's quantifying. It isn't how we're going to win the politics of it. Know, and I'm not I'm not convinced that quantifying it is how we're going to win

the politics of it. I think the problem that we've got at the moment is that in the housing space, government doesn't see a role for itself in providing housing anymore. And that's the problem that we've got. That's the root of all of the problems that we've got in housing in Australia. We've never built more housing in Australia. Right. At every single census, the number of homes per person goes up. But housing has never been more expensive. And the reason is the government isn't playing a role anymore through social housing and other mechanisms in creating affordable housing and distributing housing for the people who need it. That's the mentality that they're going to have to change. And I'm not sure if just like reporting on what is happening in the private market is necessarily the way that we're going to we're going to change change the politics of that.

I was really interested and I think this is a room where when I talk about it, people might actually know what it is. When Jim Chalmers wrote his essay in *The Monthly* about, you know, sort of laying out the government's philosophy towards the economy, and it was all about how instead of, you know, sort of supporting people directly, we're going to make the market work for us. You know, three things like that. He talked about the Housing Australia Future Fund and the housing Accord and things like that. And I think that that's a debate we're going to have to win. You know, we can't outsmart capital and we can't turn the forces that have created Australia's housing crisis into the solution to the housing crisis. We need to look back to when Australia had affordable housing. I know that a lot of lefties kind of love to talk about Vienna and all these things. We actually had that in Australia. We don't need to look to what other countries are doing necessarily and we need to look at what were the factors that made housing affordable. It was the government playing a role and I think I'd love it if the measuring what that is agenda is. It's something that got us closer to that, but I'm just not convinced completely. Yeah.

Rachel Withers: Did you want anything on how we think about GDP and things?

June Riemer: Yeah. I think, you know, the starting point for us that First Peoples, you know, the work that we do, we talk about a social model of care and the barriers to society that, you know, stops people participating. And you know, currently the model for most first people living with disability is that medical model. Again, what you're talking about is, you know, no good outcomes. You know, it's bandaid effects. So you know, in regards to, you know, our work, as I said earlier, is from the United Nations principles and the rights of Indigenous people in the rights of those living with disability, which Australia is a signatory. And that conversation has a starting point, nothing about us without us. And that's what currently happens, you know, across many of our communities. So in regard to, you know, a wellbeing budget, we need to think about it differently. You know, we for First Nations communities, they are diverse, not one size fits all, but the programs that are currently rolled out is an assumption that everyone that understands, or everyone has connectivity or everyone who lives in, you know, a three bedroom house with, you know, the front and backyard and has a car and has access to transport. And, you know, we need to start thinking differently, you know, in regard to First Nations people, You know, we have our law, Larry, which is different to, you know, L.A., w in Australia, but we have to sit under the L.A. W laws and it just doesn't work. It hasn't worked today. So you need to think about, you know, the the funding and the investments that are put in with no outcomes really, you know, as a individual budget or in your own home. If you weren't getting outcomes with your budget, would you not change it? So I think, you know, what we see is, you know, whatever, you know, economic outcomes have to have a cultural overlay and understanding the culture comes first to our communities. You know, what we see in developing countries that don't have social supports, They have what's called a whole a community approach where you talk to the whole a community and invest in, you know, working out, you know, what are the correct ways culturally to support

those individual communities, because we don't come as one. You know, when we talk about the NDIS for it's an individualised program, it doesn't support the layers within a person's life in regards to their immediate family, their informal supports or their community or their culture.

So we need to start thinking differently if we want better outcomes. So for me and well being bumped, it has to have culture first and foremost included in that. But acknowledging that when you have half a population that have some form of disability because of, you know, the impacts of history, you know, and if you want better outcomes for those living with disability, that should ensure that they have the same outcomes and the same rights and the same supports as everyone else in a civil society. We have to start thinking differently and what that looks like. But first and foremost, talk to those that are going to impact. You know, if you're not talking to us, you won't know, you're not hearing. And, you know, I tell people in communities, you know, constantly talk about, you know. They're hearing, but they're not listening. And I think that's the problem in Australia today. And, you know, we're only going to get outcomes when we really start hearing. So, yeah.

Rachel Withers: I'm going to take us on to another question for you, Peter. I we've we've come away from measuring things in, in budget bottom line, but I'd like to take us back to it now and ponder what are some of the financial costs of not spending money that needs to be spent now or putting it off or never getting around to it? So, you know, with climate change, we often fail to acknowledge the costs of not acting. We always talk about the costs of acting on it. And I was wondering if you could speak to some of the costs of not acting.

Professor Peter Yu AM: I think it's not necessarily a question of the additional kind of advertisement. The question more is what you're not doing with your current investment. I think that's a that's an issue of structural reform to pensions. There's been a lot of nonsense spoken about publicly about the amount of investment in the Aboriginal space, of course, which is absolute crap, you know, because we know that the very convoluted nature of our federated system, that most of that is taken up by the states and the territories in the nature of the service delivery functions. It's not I don't know what the Productivity Commission estimates are probably about \$0.30 or less than \$0.30 on the dollar. That hits the ground on real projects. Most of that is invested into the co-dependency, the welfare dependency, which is basically the public service providing that. So if you go up north and you've got a free motorcar and you've got a nice, highly subsidised rental and you've got air conditioning allowance, and every time you go out bush to talk to your clients, you get a, you get a camping allowance, you travel to Perth or Melbourne or Sydney every two weeks for training course and you're up there on a two or three year contract and then you leave. The situation hasn't changed except that you're paying off your second or third mortgages in the capital city. I think you'd have to say that that that level, that methodology would have to be a reason why fundamentally we don't see the outcome of the results.

I know that I worked in the public service an early start of my career. I got to stay there and retired on \$2 million super. I didn't. But that's the reality. And I think unless Australia invests in itself, it goes back to the whole Well, big question, because we have to invest in altering the nature of the kind of understanding and the psyche in this country. What we have is a systemic nature of structural dependency that won't deliver the outcomes. And so the wellbeing is an highly aspirational objective that will never be reached, in my view, unless the closing the gap is not going to cut it, not going to cut it. I mean, every how embarrassing. The Prime Minister gets up into Parliament and says, we've had 20 targets that we've met, you know, 0.02% of them to the three of those targets. I mean why, why aren't we asking the question about that? It's just it's just

really I mean, it's a nonsense. It's an absolute nonsense. And Aboriginal people get blamed for the nature of that lack of outcomes. So there has to be structural reform being put into place and that's perhaps what the opportunity is. Notwithstanding the defeat of the referendum. The opportunity now is, as June says is to do something different re model. The nature of that can only come by a you know, I think there should be a kind of a national inquiry by the Federal Cabinet to be able to look at these structural issues because that is what the critical impediment is. It's not necessarily the intent or the intention to want to do the thing. I think that they do it the right things, but it's stupid. I mean, it's absolutely stupid that you spend all this money doing taxpayers money going into this and the lack of results in outcomes. So I don't think there will be well-being for Aboriginal people.

We also got to forget it's not just about the kind of economic wealth issues. Just pointed out a number of times this afternoon. People don't understand the brutality of colonisation. People don't understand the inter-generational trauma with highly symbolic gestures in relation to the apology to the Stolen Generation and other things like that. But we have no substantive investment in dealing with that trauma issues. And this is learnt and generational trauma which will continue. So the situation you see in Alice Springs and Broome and Derby in Darwin, in in Perth, in the juvenile detention centres, they they're bubbling away under the surface, they bubbling away because people are resisting. We have the highest incarceration rate anywhere in the world. I mean, tell me this. In the Pilbara, which is the epicentre of wealth generation creation in Australia and probably the globe. You've got a prison there with 90% black faces from the community. How do you juxtapose the nature of this? This this cruel irony. You know, this is what I talk about, the kind of the economic apartheid that exists. So we can but it's not only investing in Aboriginal people, it's investing in the nation. We need to invest in the wellbeing of this nation because I think what we've seen in relation to the politics that have arisen in the last 12 months or last six years, particularly with the campaign, clearly indicates that we're in a path not so healthy in terms of the wellbeing of the country.

Rachel Withers: Thank you, Peter. And Lachlan, did you want to speak to what you see as some of the costs of not investing properly in higher education?

Dr Lachlan Clohesy: Yeah, so there's a couple, probably two main areas. So research and then the teaching education side. So we're talking about research. I know this morning we heard from politicians who said you don't get good decisions on a three-year electoral cycle and that's actually how research works in universities. You get three-year contracts. So what that means is that research gets prioritised. If it can be delivered in a short period of time, lead to an outcome and that sort of thing. But what happens really in universities is that researchers will spend about a year and a half researching and a year and a half preparing their grant to get their next research contract. And that cycle sort of keeps continuing. It's incredibly inefficient. We don't get the important long term research. And because of the lack of public funding going into the system becomes more reliant on private funds. And that means the research tends toward outcomes that can be commercialised and turned into profit.

Now, if you're looking at that as the driver of it, if we keep going down that trajectory, let's pick an example from 2018. Where's the money in 2018 in epidemiology, in public health policy and social psychology, And then we know that COVID comes out of nowhere and all these experts are suddenly, you know, critically important and on our TV screens every night. So it's those things that come up in the future that we don't necessarily foresee now that are going to be critically important. And that's why research, even research that doesn't necessarily have commercial

outcomes at the end of it needs to be prioritised. And if I go back to the teaching quickly, I mean, putting money into that is obvious. There are clear problems that we already have in this country and education is part of the solution. So and those problems I'm talking about are things like the teacher shortage, the shortage of nurses, where the nurses and teachers learn to be teachers and nurses. A large part of that is in universities that involves placement that is usually unpaid. So that means you have to be sort of independently wealthy enough to put other jobs on hold to do the placements and those sorts of things. So there are plenty of areas where we could be looking at investing more public funds to address those bigger problems that we have as a society.

Rachel Withers: I think we might open up to a couple of questions. We probably got time for two questions from the audience, and it would be great if we could hear from some women just.

Annie Butler: Before we go. Yeah, of course. Comment just on the things that are not. Yes, not, but because I just want to take a little issue with something that Dai Le said this morning. And with respect to her, I just thought it was a politician's answer. When she was asked something, she said, we need the numbers. We need to understand the numbers. No, we don't. We have the numbers. We know, we know. We've known for years about the disparities. We've known we know for years about where the investment is needed. We just need to act. So I just want to.

Rachel Withers: All right. We have a question up here.

Audience Question: Hello, My name is Beverly Baker, and I'm the chair of the Old Women's Network. We are invisible. We have the largest group of over 65-year-olds are women, and we are invisible, and we are usually silenced. But what I want to throw into the mix is a word that has lost favour. And that is called redistribution. Our wealth is concentrated in an upward direction. Our capitalist society requires three arms. They require capital, labour and government. And when government suppresses labour, capital explodes. And we are where we are today because of the wealth disparity and the greed and the Everest of those at the top and the politician today, the same one you mentioned, said. People don't want to let their wealth go. They did not earn it on their own. They earned it on the back of workers who paid their taxes, who created the infrastructure for them to do it. So my question to all of you is how the hell do we reverse this thing that has been swallowed, the Kool-Aid that has been swallowed – that the wealth will trickle down? I'm old enough to know that the only thing that trickles down is usually warm, wet and goes cold.

Rachel Withers: Who would like to start with that one? Well.

Maiy Azize: I love I love what you what you just said. We actually do a lot of redistribution in Australia. You know, I'll I'll try to stick to housing examples, but, you know, we in the last 50 years have gone from spending at the federal level, a lot of money investing, a lot of money in housing for people who need it. And now we actually lose a whole lot more of that money. On supporting investors. In a way that's actually making housing more expensive. You know where I get in trouble when I say spending people profit, you know, because we're losing it out of the budget, but we're choosing to forgo money that we could otherwise have. I'm really I'm perfectly comfortable with calling that spending.

We spend enormous amounts on an extremely unfair housing system that just lines the pockets of people who you know, and there are people who don't do that well out of it. You know, and I know that. You know, every time you talk about negative gearing, someone's got a story about,

you know, oh, well, you know, my auntie did a you know, used it to do, you know, blah, blah, blah. If we had a system that worked, we shouldn't need to become a supplier of housing to other people. You know, to create a bit of security for herself in retirement. Yeah, but I think I think it's also a bit disturbing that we're seeing in the housing space. A lot of that kind of rhetoric that was being applied to tax and income a couple of decades ago that we just need to build more and it'll just like magically get to people who need it. You know, you like that. We just need to allow developers to just like, build more stuff and the government doesn't have to do anything to make that housing more affordable. It doesn't need to take any steps that that that housing is just going to get to people who need it if we if we allow them to build more. That's what we've been doing for the past few decades. We've been building. It's not getting to people who need it because wealthy people just use more housing. They buy second homes, they live in smaller households. That's why we need the government to step in and redistribute the right way. Yes.

Rachel Withers: Yeah. Just quickly and then we'll take one more question. Yeah.

Annie Butler: Tiny little crack. First of all, right. With your sister, we're seeking an industrial means across the union movement. And when I talked earlier about the 15% interim increase, by the way, there's more to come, but 15% wage increase because part and again delay you just mentioned, but she talked about people with those \$3 million super balances, how they've worked hard. To tell you, nurses and aged care workers work hard and most 89% of them are going to end up as the women that you're talking about. But there is a shift industrially to try and build up the strength of the labour, the labour part of your equation again, and particularly with the bills that we're trying to get encouraged to get through Parliament that now have to have gender equity as part of the objects of the act and value like systematically redress the persistent undervaluation of our work, women's so called women's work, caring work. So we are taking that industrial means.

Rachel Withers: All right, we've got one time for one more really quick question.

Audience Question:Hi there. Helen Fisher from the Equality Rights Alliance. I just wanted to pick up on something that Professor Yu raised about the deficit model being used for program design and what June Reimer was saying about the fact that programme design is not working and why would you not go back and review it? To what extent is the panel think that the lack of a Human Rights Act in Australia is skewing the design of programmes towards people to whom the programmes are directed being seen as recipients rather than as the holders of rights. And do you think that a Human Rights Act in Australia might make a difference to the way we design programmes?

Rachel Withers: Peter, did you want to start there?

Professor Peter Yu AM: I'm not an expert in that field for sure, but I think something needs to be done where there is a very clear definition of what those rights are and our ability to be able to effectively exercise and use those rights in the best, you know, most productive kind of way. But, you know, obviously being an Aboriginal person, it's something excuse me that I think would be entirely beneficial. I mean, the question the next question we're having now is that in the next few weeks, I think when Parliament resumes, there'll be some movement on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It would be interesting to see where that ends up in relation to its possible domestication. I mean, you know, we've we, we've had the obviously the Racial Discrimination Act and then, you know, we've had this enormous debate about the kind of the Section 18, the racial vilification in respect to the, you know, against us versus the right of freedom of speech will largely it's largely academic not for white people but for Aboriginal people, because you don't for us, you know, if you've seen the kind of the nature of the toxicity in the debate that's happened in the last few months directed at that at Aboriginal people and we've seen very little in response from governments and there's been no legal framework in which to deal with that appropriately, not under the Race Discrimination Act currently or otherwise, so that I could understand, you know, theoretically and academically there's this tension between the kind of rhetoric of racial discrimination and vilification and then the ability to act upon them. So there has to be, in my personal view, because having been through most of this my entire life, as all Aboriginal people would have and had to suffer, which is part of the compounding of the trauma of the lives that we've had in our community. I think there needs to be some very serious consideration about what the definition of that is through a Human Rights Act or however that is addressed. But we're not giving it the level of attention we ought to and we'll be sorry for it in the future.

Rachel Withers: Did anybody else want to chime in on spending for public services from a human rights perspective, Jane?

June Riemer: Yeah. I mean, you know, as a person that's been the United Nations for many years, you know, and it's just appalling, the rhetoric from the government on the rights of, you know, first and foremost, you know, people living with disability. But, you know, the rights of indigenous people that we we're so arrogant on the national stage that we don't have to uphold those rights. But I think, you know, getting back to the earlier conversation, you know, for our people, we don't get to old age, we don't get the opportunity to access super, we don't get the opportunity to live a good life at an older age. So, you know, what sort of society are we building when those, you know, that, you know, play an important part of our culture and our heritage and we're not recognised in that.

So, I think for anything that's developed, you know, well, you know, we have to acknowledge culture. We are a cultural, you know, part of this Australian. Community and we're not recognising that, and things won't change until, you know, we understand, you know, that First Nations people were here first. You know, we have a lot to offer in regard to, you know, how programs, how economies, you know, can be invested in and can be developed. But they must look different, you know, and the idealism that we see and the racism we see, you know, across anything that's developed is because we're not asked. You know, all we're asking is, you know, speak to us first. And when we talk about the top end of town, you know, how many, you know, Aboriginal people are employed or how many Aboriginal people with disability are employed in those parts. So you can't change the narrative unless you're talking to the people that it impacts you. Oh, yes. Okay.

Rachel Withers: Well, thank you so much again to our panel. Can I get you to give them another round of applause? It.