



AUSTRALIAN FABIANS

Planning session – 2009

New International Bookshop – Dec 13

Executive summary

The Fabians in Australia have been long-lasting, resilient and are still trying. They have humanist principles, are social democrats with lots of ideas, but not much political clout, and act mainly in an ad hoc and a not focused or effective fashion. However, they are interested in social and economic governance and provide a vehicle and a platform for great minds to form good ideas.

The key emerging issues were:

- The need to clarify our mission and to promote a clear image of the Fabians as a conduit for people to progressive politicians and thinkers around topical issues of significance.
- We could position ourselves as a connection between the various policy instruments within the labor movement but we need to re-brand our image and to attract younger members without alienating the older ones, in order to be seen as the intelligent left with a social democratic emphasis.
- We could fly some different alternative policy kites and unpack and unravel policy for lay people by taking a role in clarifying 'left of centre' and progressive politics and pointing out the role of politics to provide a vehicle that is accessible to a broader range of disengaged people.
- We could identify and raise issues, building around the importance of a social democratic tradition and take an opportunity to take up current community concerns as well as taking the time to challenge and act proactively.

Some key considerations for 2009 were as follows:

1. More joint forums and focus on collaborative endeavours.
2. Bring informed, committed people to consider policy matters in face to face discussion through forums, summits, and conferences on particular subjects which provide a follow up summary.
3. Use the website more and use emails to draw attention to it.
4. Aim for the PM at the 2009 Annual dinner.
5. Initiate publications, particularly online, from within Victoria.
6. Identify and build a database of experts and make more use of them.
7. Design more interactive sessions using Zing.
8. Plan Campus meetings and promote a young Fabian presence.
9. Consider more varied time-slots and venues.
10. Design a monthly 'Community Cabinet' format.

A number of possible topics, in priority order, were canvassed:

Rank Order 1	New federalism - COAG and electoral reform.
Rank Order 2	State of the Economy - including tax reform and regulation.
Rank Order 3	Retirement income - Pensions and superannuation.
Rank Order 4	Transport and infrastructure.
Rank Order 5	Health. Including mental health.
Rank Order 6	Housing Policy.
Rank Order 7	Globalization – Impacts on environment and economy.
Rank Order 8	Education – cradle to the grave.
Rank Order 9	Employment - rights and responsibilities.
Rank Order 10	Charter of Rights and civil liberties.

Rank Order 1a	International issues – The Obama effect.
Rank Order 2a	Social democracy - European models, particularly Scandinavian.
Rank Order 3a	The ALP - a revue/review. A national report card.
Rank Order 4a	Environment and climate change – is Emissions Trading a furphy and a sleight of hand trick. (ref Davidson and Denniss) see www.sandbag.org.uk
Rank Order 5a	Migration policy – normal migrant levels, refugees and asylum seekers.
Rank Order 6a	Child Care issues – the economics of survival.
Rank Order 7a	The challenge of a disengaged electorate.
Rank Order 8a	Lessons from New Labor in the UK for Rudd.
Rank Order 9a	Infrastructure issues and PPPs.
Rank Order 10a	Industrial relations – the choices for work.

The first Forum for February has been agreed. Minister Jenny Macklin has agreed to talk on Indigenous Policy and we will approach Pat Anderson who was willing last time. We could also consider Pat Dodson or Noel Pearson where there is a growing divide and altercation.

The second Forum in March might involve Ken Davidson and Richard Denniss who have published their real concerns about the efficacy of an Emissions Trading Scheme to address the issue of climate change. It could be provocative enough to entice Minister Penny Wong along.

The following recommendations were made at the end of the meeting:

More focus on more collaboration:

- Contact the U3A (University of the Third Age) in each locality and offer them senior rates
- Have more combined events - like the Friends of the ABC, which gives access to more speakers and a wider audience.
- Pursue action by national executive. It's vitally important that the national executive operate properly, otherwise disband it
- Seek cooperation with other state branches

Format of events:

- Have four or five floating events for things that come up during the year
- Get a quote on permanent name tags for all paid up members and a set of visitors tags that are temporary at the occasion.
- Consider debate formats with contested view e.g. As in NSW
- Acknowledge that venue and ambience do matter.
- Remember that we can influence speakers as well as learn from them - follow up with feedback ideas

Better planning:

- Build our databases of speakers, like organisations, media outlets etc but give someone the task to do it
- Settle on a list of forums, conferences, interactive sessions etc and then find topics
- We need to choose high priority tasks and allocate responsibilities for them
- We also need to sort out the federal /state issues and responsibilities ASAP.
- Better clarification on who does what and division of responsibilities so the load is spread and we know what we can do and who has agreed to do it.

Promotion

- We need to address membership renewal - retaining existing members is critical!
- Pay more attention to targeted advertising or notifications
- Follow up on those attending who do not belong - get an email address and/or hand them a membership form and follow up by email after that.
- Have a membership form at all events
- Build a Victorian homepage into the website with chat function on issues etc.
- Must focus and get the message across that the Fabians are a community based discussion group around social-democratic policies and change.
- Work out ways to make greater use of video and face book capacity

In conclusion

We need to work at changing our image, securing wider interest – particularly from younger people and we need to build on our considerable and unique attributes. We also need to work at being taken more seriously within the Party and particularly amongst parliamentarians.

Every effort should be made to create a welcoming, social and communal ambience at our events and to reinforce the value of membership.

We need to recognise the limitations of our resources and design the ways and means of carving up the various responsibilities in ways that spread the load or else consider other alternative means of ensuring what needs to get done gets done.

We have more than enough topics to cover and there will be other opportunities that arise throughout the year. We need to create a series of topics as a backbone for the year with some flexibility built in to adapt and respond to circumstances as they arise. Whatever we choose to take up, there needs to be an unself-conscious preparedness to reach for the stars and target top level speakers and contributors – starting with the Prime Minister at our Annual Dinner. Our attempts to engage senior Ministers at state or federal level will depend on how creatively we conceive and present the opportunity. It is only in this way that our audience will grow and with it, our membership.

Max Dumais
Events Manager

Where the Fabian Society fits in within the range of activities directed toward left-leaning policy development. What might be its role and how effective it could be:

- We need to throw off our image as a 'Seniors Talk Fest and Leftist Book club and be taken seriously as part of the left agenda setting process.
- We could set up briefing sessions for parliamentarians following our events and following analysis.
- We could position ourselves as a coordinating point for fellow travelers of the left or as a conduit to parliamentarians for people who are sympathetic to progressive politics but not aligned to any party.
- Potential to become a training ground for electorate and ministerial office staff on policy discussion and a vehicle for cross age communication within the party between the baby boomers and gen x/y.
- Capacity to generate ideas through discussion to contribute to policy of ALP and Greens.
- We must publicize material and ideas from events more effectively in media.
- We need a clearer definition of left of centre politics, to which we claim to belong. This is often so vague as to become meaningless
- We should clearly state outwardly that we are a social-democratic philosophical policy development and discussion group, which welcomes input and participation from all strata of society.
- We should act as a constructively critical vehicle of governments.
- Identify other think tanks in order to identify issues and raise awareness.
- We could design strategies to develop and promote solutions and promote strategies and options.
- Position ourselves to develop communication links with key stakeholders.
- Articulate Progressive Reformist policy development without revolution and by means of an incremental Platform
- We should aim to influence ALP policy and ideas and tap into the existing Government Initiatives and expand on them in a revolutionary and futuristic way.

What we do well that we could build on in 2009 and how:

- Bring informed, committed people to consider policy matters in face to face discussion - forums, summits, conference
- Produce publications like the John Button Commemorative and also commission others.

- Make the most of the fact that preselection is neither challenged nor enhanced by the free speech and Chatham House rules that prevail.
- Getting government and other political speakers that most people don't have access to is a unique selling point.
- What about resurrecting the Fabian Sing-along?
- Use name tags at meetings and focus more on social emphasis
- Get better at asking difficult questions and offering constructive criticism within the party context.
- Use Mary Delahunty more as a moderator within a panel discussion
- We identify current relevant issues for events but have had a mixed success with attendance.
- We could consider lunch time meetings in the City to reach workers on their break.
- Campus meetings with prominent activist speakers on social/environmental issues
- We could take up the challenge of providing excellent information to those who want to know while providing opportunities for politicians to listen to real people who think.
- After work time slots should be varied, Politically aware young family people can't attend and we should provide reports via email.
- Promote debate - more potential to be explored here with relation to joint auspice events.
- The organisation and focus on major public policy issues forums, particularly in conjunction with other groups. Opportunities for collective input into government policies and to be public and open about it.
- The annual dinner.
- Ensure meaningful outputs from all meetings.
- Interactive workshops using zing
- Promote the Fabian lapel badges.
- Partnerships with a recognizable brand and joint events.
- Any aspiring social democratic person who wishes to get their ideas aired publically should be able to make use of the Fabian society e.g. Whitlam Hawke, Rudd, Blair, Beazley
- We have connections to influential and high profile people who can speak on interesting subjects, and attract an audience. We should continue to do this in through the Wednesday forums and other occasions.
- More publications on interesting subjects. Need to co-ordinate with federal body to achieve this.
- We do well with coming up with new ideas, but are not claiming the rightful recognition or announcing that we generated them and that they have been actioned.
- Hold a monthly 'Community cabinet' as if we were the government about how and what we would implement.

- Have two or multiple Fabians Badges. One that says 'Fabians' the other 'What the topic of the month is'.
- Hold Fabian 'meetings or discussions' within a certain section (at the back) of a tram/train.

Topics worth covering in 2009 and how might we ensure that they relate to possible policy considerations:

- A Bill of Rights - discussion on the respective prerogatives of parliament and the judiciary - Burnside and Craven for example.
- Education revolution - has it run out of puff already!
- Issues around disability.
- Reviewing the role of regulation in the economy.
- Globalization and its social, economic and environmental impacts.
- Recession or depression and ameliorating the likely impacts on people.
- National reform agenda and COAG arrangements under new federalism.
- Infrastructure initiatives - should this be our response to recession.
- The relationship between old age and health issues.
- Climate change and the greater use of recycled waters
- Lifelong and continuing education - cradle to a change of vocations!
- Local government/state government federal govt agenda? Moves afoot to shift balance and recognition within the Constitution.
- Why is the electorate disengaged(ref: the last local government election in Victoria)
- Maybe we should have 4 set topics and leave space in the program for issues as they arise - using a less formal format. (e.g. Discussions which are quick to arrange.)
- Civics education?
- Housing for life - policy for better housing for all ages (ref: Dimity Reed)
- Social inclusion – existing policy, but what does it mean?
- Privatisation of childcare.
- Import levies/tariff protection,
- Public housing
- The construction of public transport vehicles in Australia
- A major joint event with VECCI or another organisation on the economy. An event on transport. An event on the Obama presidency and what it represents for Australia and the world. An event on the alp - future directions, structure, role in the 21st century.
- Retirement incomes,
- Mental health,
- Employment opportunities,
- Civil liberties and a charter of rights

- Addressing the inequity of the two-tiered education system and the restraints it presents on the development of a democratic social-cohesive society.
- National, tenure-neutral housing policy with a strong focus on urban consolidation and security of tenure.
- Health reform (AHRHC)
- Transport (Brumby statement)
- Healthy and democratic work places - Max Ogden
- Industrial Relations laws
- Public enterprise and regulation
- Electoral reform - non-vote wasting ensuring one vote one value - non-compulsory voting.
- Infrastructure and transport - a new funding model in the context of Climate Change policy,
- Public funding of education & childcare.
- Lessons from New Labor in UK.
- Water policy – both in Victoria and Nationally.
- Report on pensions and superannuation after the report is tabled. We should start to engage a speaker as soon as possible.
- Make Fabian forums available as an ongoing vehicle to create simplicity and issue as it has been announced by Mr. Ali Noroozi last week to bring people organisations and community together to simplify our Taxation system
- Taxation and tax reform – both personal income and company, because of the pending government report.
- Use the current ABC Learning Centre debacle as a sample/venue to mix corporate and social responsibility to keep them half running as a business and half as a NFP
- Make government local by doing away with State government and bring decision making down to Municipality level.

Events, formats or processes to consider in 2009 in order to engage a wider audience:

- Pay more attention to the actual 'title' Have more sizzle in setting themes and topic headings
- More follow-up e.g have a points taker at each meeting with a statement under 500 words to be posted on the Web immediately after each event.
- Reorganise the website with a Victorian focus and list major categories with links.
- Use name tags to overcome anonymity at meetings and put more emphasis on the social events after meetings.
- Give speakers a briefing sheet e.g. a) Outline topic – possibly both pros and cons, b) Refer to any likely policy implications, c) provide

advice for further action and d) make reference to others who might be interested in the issue to follow up.

- Really work at involving other like bodies. Collaborate with like-minded organisations around issues of joint interest and cross promote.
- Have a regular meeting at parliament to brief interested members, particularly our own members on outcomes of our events.
- Pursue the establishment of our regional and local branches or hold regional meetings on local issues [jointly with ALP]
- Advertise in left learning magazines and get articles or essays in other socialist publications.
- Annual retreat – set it around a good topic, with great speakers and hold it somewhere nice or different. (Evan Thornley's offer still stands for his shearers quarters to hold 64 people)
- University forums on issues to relate to younger potential members - we must change our profile
- More personal engagement with others in the room
- Dot point reports sent to all members after each event = Open-on-line conversation tin response to dot point reports?
- Actually ask speakers what impact the questions might have after the event- sort of a 'feedback' idea.
- Change venues or improve lighting in the Trades Hall room- it's very depressing -maybe lamps?
- More joint meetings with other bodies on specific issues [leverage] and shared events a la FOABC
- Use Mary Delahunty more often as the panel convenor
- Institute an Annual lecture/lecture series. Resume the Autumn Lecture series.
- Need to think creatively about how we frame the event themes i.e., how can we create an element of controversy, a new way of tackling an issue etc,
- Have a Fabian lecture linked with a university.
- Processes - as a voluntary org we need to strategically audit what our capacity to deliver is e.g., who can do what tasks, what functions do the national exec perform, etc.
- Change name from **Australian Fabian Society** to **Australia's Fabulous Society**
- Centrality and access to venue
- Key addresses, annual lecture, half-day seminar, public outdoor lunch time talks on federation square
- Fabian members to seek invitations to secondary colleges of education
- Need to organise a couple of entertainments with younger performers.

- Engage the mainstream media - organise interviews, talk-back radio etc. with media releases immediately after events, with specific mention and recognition of the Fabian society.
- Hold a panel discussion with 3 experts and one 'non-expert' to bring up and discuss something from the ground floor up.
- Create a European Carnival like float parade whereby you take the Mickey out of politicians in a public parade. Give a prize for the winner.

Specific measures we could take to increase interest in membership during 2009, particularly amongst younger people:

- Make sure we leverage every event to effectively position the Fabians.
- Involve young people in our events and perhaps design a specific cross-generational event.
- Give young writers an opportunity to deliver their papers at a Fabian event
- Stop sending material to people who are on the promotions list and exhort them to join!!
- Make each event a friendly, welcoming and valuing experience for all attendees and task an executive member to host it.
- Develop a database of organisations which could be contacted to cross promote events.
- We need to orientate topics to things that young people care about e.g. Lack of faith in democratic processes - governments have not delivered. The environment and climate change and the future they will inherit
- Need to have small ads in like-thinking publications. Perhaps a trade-off for our contribution to Arena and Overland last year.
- Need to have a short resume of each meeting in an email to all.
- Must have a couple of people to really address the younger members and work with each of the key universities via young labor.
- People who attend but who are not members - get their email address and send invitation to join!!
- Presentations to VCE politics classes. Speak in schools or other student groups.
- What about some Face book activity?
- Target and network with local paper journalists- Melbourne times and Leader Press who are often looking for stories.
- Talk at Probus, Rotary or Lions.
- Approach Teacher organizations for free publicity – although we would have to choose specific events.
- Target specific business groups - if we want to influence their thinking they have to be able to hear what we say.

- Target special interest groups on topics e.g. childcare/kindergarten association health - Nursing Federation etc
- Advertise through the ALP branches
- Stand at orientation week events at Universities etc.
- Advertise in student magazines and offer concession to students
- Link with Young Labor and Young Unionists network
- Using 2009 to unveil a suite of events - including joint events to be held at new locations. Also target our audiences better. In addition to publishing to the regular list of members before an event come up with a detailed list of interested parties to promote the event to.
- Compile a list of organisations that will enable cross promotion - they send out info on us and we do the same for example Readings.
- Direct approach to politics teachers at secondary schools especially private schools.
- Give people reasons to join the Fabians. Appeal to ALP members on the grounds that Fabians provide an avenue for policy discussion and debate.
- Chase up the National Executive re membership renewals. (Max is working with Xavier on this for the next Newsletter mail out)
- Have a well known entertainer host an occasional event e.g. child care.
- Victorian Branch may have to take more responsibility for the National newsletter.
- Re organise Young Fabians on Campus. Establish a presence on tertiary campuses.
- Organise student representation through Student Representative Councils etc. Establish events of interest to students.
- Be more transparent and upfront, say what we do and what we have achieved and claim the responsibility.
- Make sure indicators, processes and activators of major shifts in our society are taught at Secondary Level.
- Invite more radical socialists groups to our events.

Possible alternative venues:

- State library meeting rooms.
- Take on a university partner.
- 45 Downstairs in Flinders Lane.
- AMES and Melbourne City Council's Multicultural hub.
- RMIT hall venue and Storey Hall for large events.
- Capitol theatre, RMIT.
- St David's in Swanston opposite the library.
- CAE in Flinders lane.
- Wesley Church in Lonsdale.
- Salvation Army hall, Bourke street
- YWCA, Elizabeth St

- Capitol theatre - RMIT
- William Angliss function rooms.
- St Michael's Convention Centre
- State Library theatrette.
- Federation square BMW edge
- Botanical gardens during the summer
- Astor theatre St Kilda
- St Kilda road theatre 200
- Melbourne town hall upstairs reception room
- ABC Southbank Iwaki auditorium

Fabian Planning meeting – background comments

December 13 – New International Bookshop: 10.00 am till 1.00 pm

The following statement of what we are all about appears on our website.

Who We Are *Though we call ourselves a think tank, the Fabian Society is more than this. For more than half a century, we have been at the forefront of research and debate into progressive political ideas and public policy reform.*

Australian political life is entering a new era. There is a renewed hunger for public policy options that reflect progressive values and principles. There is no doubt that people are once again ready to face up to the challenges of policy development in a changing society and that there is an urgent demand, as seldom before in our history, for progressive thought and searching debate.

Our aims. *All this gives the Fabian Society four general aims:*

- 1. To contribute to a renaissance of left of centre and progressive thought, by generating and disseminating ideas that are original, meet the challenge of the times, and are of high intellectual quality.*
- 2. To contribute, by getting these ideas into the public domain, to the creation of a left of centre political culture and consensus.*
- 3. To help create an active movement of people identifying with the left of centre and engaged in political debate.*
- 4. To influence the ideas and policies of the Labor Party (and other parties) and Labor Governments to encourage progressive reform in practice.*

If you want to help make the new thinking happen there is a place for you in the Australian Fabian Society. The Australian Fabian Society - established in 1947 and active ever since - is Australia's oldest political think tank.

Fabian publications, including our long-running pamphlet series, have played an important part in determining both state and national political agendas.

What makes the Fabian Society distinctive?

Though we call ourselves a think tank, the Fabian Society is more than this. We are rooted in a social and intellectual movement: the Fabian Society has been a central part of democratic socialist, social-democratic and Labor tradition throughout the 20th century in Britain, and in Australia since 1947. Although our output is thoroughly

contemporary and relevant, it will never be rootless: by dint simply of who we are, it is organically connected to the previous history of the left.

Our goal is not merely (as by and large it is for other think tanks) to produce interesting ideas for the elite policy community. It is the promotion of socialist and progressive thought throughout society. We aim to change the intellectual climate of the Australia (and indeed of the wider world). We want to make broadly left of centre ways of thinking commonplace.

A crucial element of this, obviously, is to help such thought be translated into practice, particularly by government. Producing workable policies which manifest left of centre principles, and encouraging their consideration by the Labor Party and by Labor governments, is therefore a crucial part of what we do. But it remains our aim to get left of centre ideas into the wider public domain. Our function in providing arenas for ordinary people to engage in intelligent discussion - in local societies and in conferences, schools and other meetings - is absolutely central to our purpose.

The Society is also distinct in being a democratically constituted membership organisation. We provide members not simply with direct access to our publications and events, but to a say in the running of the organisation. Mindful though we have to be of the opinions of the elite political community, our membership reminds us constantly that we exist also to serve a wider constituency.

Because political ideas matter

Historically the Fabian Society has always been a source of ideological and philosophical argument, not just practical policy. This emphasis on ideas is particularly important now. For example, we live at a time when it is far from clear what socialism is. The term itself has largely gone out of use in polite society. The world which shaped the classic positions of the left in the 20th century has changed, and continues to do so. This is as a result both of the triumph of global capitalism, and the long hegemony of the neo-liberal governments which served its purposes, and of deeper social, technological and cultural forces. Confronting these changes, and faced with the apparent discrediting of many of its own former beliefs, the left throughout the world is searching for new definitions.

The task before the Fabians today is therefore not simply to produce new policies or ideas which reflect broadly understood left of centre principles. It is to help define exactly what it means to be on the left in the first place. In this process ideas, conceptual frameworks, philosophical positions and ideological statements play a central role. Of course they must issue in practical policies capable of being introduced in the real world. But there is something prior, and it's in articulating and debating left of centre ideas that the Society plays a distinctive and critical role.

Radical thought, searching debate

The Fabian Society is an independent organisation which looks in particular to the Labor Party for giving effect to social democratic principles and values. Our relationship with Labor governments is that of a 'critical friend'. We are neither 'on-' nor 'off-message'. Some of what we do may be congruent with government thinking; some not. Good government needs new ideas and public debate. It is our positive responsibility to ask difficult questions - and if necessary to propose difficult answers - where we feel this is important. There is little use in a think tank which does not do this, and our constitution and history demand it of us. Our independence of mind is fiercely guarded.

Moreover, our constituency extends well beyond the Labor Party. We are a forum and a resource for people throughout the progressive wing of politics. One of our roles is to act as a bridge between those inside the party and on the conventional left of centre and those sharing similar aims and values whose identities and forms of political organisation lie elsewhere.

Suggestions received prior to the meeting:

1. **Barbara Norman:** try to get the Rudd Government interested in a cities agenda rather than spending all the Infrastructure Australia funds without a plan!

2. **John Burke's comments:**

It seems to me the Fabian Society does a number of things well; in particular, bringing informed, committed people together to consider policy matters in face-to-face discussion - evidenced by the forums, summits, and conference.

The underlying question though is whether, in doing these things well, the Fabian Society is effective in achieving its Aims. These aims seem to me well stated in the About Us page of the website. (as stated above):

While the consideration and promulgation of ideas, discussion, development of left-leaning perspectives (Aims 1 and 2) are clearly important, I think the creation of a movement and the impact on the political processes of policy making and implementation (Aims 3 and 4) are those on which to focus.

Some observations on these aims:

- It is pretty clear that there are big steps from the consideration of policy ideas, in various formats, to their adoption and implementation. We can do lots of work on summits and forums with key people involved, but with little apparent consequence.

- It is often noted that left-leaning policy activities are not coherent in ways say the right-wing think tanks were able to emphasise the themes of deregulation and small government with considerable impact
- The process of policy making within political parties, ALP in particular, often seems ad hoc, lacking depth and continuity; it is not clear how they can be influenced through the external consideration of policy matters

So the Fabian Society might consider its strategic position in achieving these latter aims and what flows in actions. An additional question could be:

Where does the Fabian Society fit in the range of activities directed toward left-leaning policy development? What is its role?; and how effective is it?

These other activities include:

Media – largely online and print Australian Policy Online; New Matilda; Arena; Dissent; The Monthly; Eureka St;

Think tanks: (note FS distinction) Australia Institute; Evatt Foundation; Centre for Policy Development; Per Capita;

Political parties: Labor; Greens; Democrats;

Each of these carry out different functions as elements of the process:

Media – in the promulgation and debate of ideas

Think tanks – in the more detailed examination and analysis of ideas

Political parties – in the translation of ideas to policy and its implementation

With limited resources, the Fabian Society cannot take on all the roles in this process. But it has independence and respect, and the capacity to draw these elements together (as evidenced by the think tanks workshop at the conference). It could become a strategic element seeking to influence the process through, for example:

- increasing its understanding of how the process works and how ideas can move to policies and implementation; task groups or other means to see this happen
- further developing a capacity to engage with the various elements at the different points in the process; encouraging some rationalisation and interaction (relating in a movement)
- focusing on the policy development process within the ALP – how can deeper, continuous examination of ideas and policies occur through branches, policy development officers, policy committees, platforms, conferences, advisers, ministers and shadow ministers; monitoring effectiveness

- picking up issues for public discussion that emerge from these interactions and have a capacity to be pursued further by other organisations
- monitoring the continued examination and progress of issues

If this line of thinking about a "strategic element" has support, I think it could be implemented in a fairly simple low-key way for a start (although it is easy to construct it as a daunting task beyond resources etc.).

First step could be to establish a small working group to consider the role of FS in facilitating the policy development process - get a common understanding of how it works, what the links in the chain are; begin to introduce this possible role of FS to others in the chain; shape the Fabian's other activities with this role in mind (e.g., seeking to ensure that summary outcomes of forums pass to other orgs - media, think tank, ALP policy committee, minister's office,... - which will pick them up; initiating some particular forum topics).

If the idea is appropriate, the gradual establishment of a facilitating role for Fabians in a network of potentially collaborating - or at least relating - policy-focused organisations may well identify future directions and the energy available to pursue them.

A case study approach as an example of how all this might be rolled out:

Based on an article by Ken Davidson last week (We can't afford an ill-fitting carbon cap) in response to a research/position paper by Richard Denniss at the Australia Institute (Fixing the Floor in the ETS - The role of energy efficiency in reducing Australia's emissions.)

Richard suggests there is a fundamental flaw with the proposed ETS, that basically locks us into a target and individual/business abatement will be meaningless. As I understand it, since the ETS applies to the supply side of emissions, reductions in householder use, the demand side, would have the effect of reducing the requirements for carbon permits of some supplier, enabling these to be sold on to other suppliers - with the overall levels of emissions being maintained.

Leaving aside for the moment whether this is the inevitable outcome - but taking it as a reasonable proposition for further consideration - this might be the kind of policy issue/idea the FS would take an interest in facilitating through the "chain" of policy development. At least starts some thinking about how this activity might be realised in practice.

It seems to me a working group might shape a model of the policy development process along lines of

- ideas generation and sharing
- identification of significant policy gaps

- examination of policy options
- formation of policy proposal/s
- engagement of political support
- enactment of policy
- implementation

At various points there are decisions as to whether to move forward - nothing can stop ideas being explored, but the Fabians might decide to selectively pursue the facilitation of some idea because

- this is a priority issue area
- it is an issue of particular consequence
- it reveals a significant policy gap

In this case, Fabians might answer all affirmatively - climate change has been identified (through summit etc) as a matter of particular concern to the Fabians Society, the necessity to provide encouragement for individual action has been recognised, and it looks like a gap.

If it got to this point, the Fabian working group might then consider

- how the substance of the idea could be further tested - e.g., who agrees/disagrees with Denniss's analysis (try Garnaut, Climate Institute, Climate Group, others with identified interest)
- if there is suggested substance, what are the policy options? (Here Denniss suggests one approach, but there may be other ways to ensure demand side actions have impacts on supply side emissions)

Round about here, this might get past the Fabian's capacity to support the process, but it might by then have come to an understanding with the Australia Institute to pursue further the options, and with other think tanks/orgs to review and contribute; perhaps also with another organisation (say Climate Group) to support this process; and have begun the activities of dissemination and engagement of political parties.

Rhonda Galbally:

Could the Fabians organise a discussion on future for disability.

Val Yule:

The focus here is on getting more people interested, and having action outcomes. The suggestions are not in order of priority, but as they come.

Promotion. Fabians are excellent in obtaining government and other political speakers to 'meet the people', an almost unique opportunity. Notices could emphasise this opportunity. When feasible, notices could also add 'followed by

informal discussion of follow-up action over a meal at . .

Ideas must get somewhere. People generally want something to come out of meetings, not to feel they have just sat there with a few questions at the end. Perhaps at each meeting people could be asked to volunteer for a group of 3-4 to meet at a place/ by email to put together [a statement of under 500 words to go up on the website and in the Newsletter](#) about policy directions for debate/promotion/action.

Future leaders. They need practice [in public speaking](#). Have a meeting later in the year, with pre-publicity asking young people aged up to 30, and older people who have not had public speaking experience, to prepare 8-minute talks on 'What needs to be done' on particular issues. According to response, at a Wednesday short meeting or longer weekend session, selected speakers can present their papers, have five minutes discussion of each, and while the rest of the meeting socialise and talk about content of the papers, a concluding workshop led by well-known excellent speakers can discuss with the presenters key points in how their public speaking can be improved. There could be a later class for them. (Trades Hall Labor College used to run such classes run by Chris G (can't remember) in the Trades Hall basement.)

The website. This is attractive, but it would be a great advantage if policies and ideas could be presented more accessibly:

1. **An index of topics A-Z**, that people can use to find what is there. It would be a learning experience about the policies for young or older Fabians to assist the Web-master in sorting out what is already up, to enter in the index.
2. **The home page could also have a 20-item list of major categories with links.**
3. **Setting out papers to be more easily readable..** Most look like a formidable lot of text. (The Blue papers I found mostly unreadable.) Yet so many of them have very good stuff in them – forgotten and hard to read.

To aid readers aged 14 and upward, paragraphs could use [color/and or bold print](#) to make main points easily visible when skimming. [Conclusions](#) could be concise summaries of action needed.

Anonymity at meetings. I still think that Fabians are being unduly modest in remaining anonymous at meetings, so that most people go away knowing nobody that they do not already know. This desire to remain anonymous is a widespread social phenomenon, also seen in the way people like to give first names only in meeting, so they can never be contacted again. I have spent about \$70 in providing materials for Fabian name-labels, to put my money where I think it would be useful,

but the aim, to make meetings friendlier, does not convince people that this means would be worth a trial.

City drop-in place. Many organizations that have achieved much (as well as many that have not) have named eating/coffee places where people can drop in and chat with whoever else is around. The Fabians could have one too. (Would the underground NIBS still be feasible for tea/coffee, and possibly a 30 cm shelf-space for Fabian literature?) Does the Exec have a preferred informal meeting place?

Shortage of volunteers. At meetings people could be asked to volunteer for short-term helping with Fabian tasks.

2009 Wednesdays meetings. Suggestions as made last time and including

- **Radical Literacy** - Should this be a taboo subject?
- **What skills are needed for tomorrow?**
- **Economic prosperity and saving the environment.** Are they contradictory?
Adapting capitalism to the need to cut waste.