

CIS NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026



Taylor pressed on trade, migration and the limits of government

Michael Stutchbury sat down with new Opposition Leader, **Angus Taylor**, as he laid out the economic reform agenda required to shore up Australia's modern prosperity.

“ *The way back is core values: free markets, economic liberalism, something that I know is championed here at the CIS* ”

— New Opposition Leader **Angus Taylor**

Angus Taylor came to the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) in February in very different circumstances from what had been expected. What had been scheduled pre-Christmas as an appearance by the shadow defence minister became his first major address outside Canberra as newly-elected Liberal leader.

After his speech, our discussion turned to the questions that will shape the Coalition's credibility on economic management, trade, immigration and the scope of government.

Open markets or protection?

On industry policy, there has been renewed talk by some about 'sovereignty' and rebuilding domestic manufacturing, including regret over the end of car making after tariff protection was removed. That debate cuts across the reform tradition that lifted Australia's prosperity from the 1980s onward, a tradition CIS has consistently defended.

I put to Taylor that any drift towards protectionism would come at a cost. CIS research over five decades has shown that open markets, competition and lower barriers to trade are central to productivity growth and rising living standards.

Taylor's answer was clear. He said he "intensely dislikes impeding trade because it is not good for us". Australia must keep a strong predisposition to open markets. If we want more industry onshore, he argued, the task is to reduce taxes, energy costs and regulatory burdens, not raise tariff walls.

That position sits squarely within the reform principles CIS has long advanced.

Housing and structural reform

Housing was another pressure point. With affordability deteriorating, especially for younger Australians, I pressed the need for structural reform rather than short-term subsidy. For years, CIS chief economist Dr **Peter Tulip** has shown that restrictive

Continued on page 2

planning rules are a central driver of high house prices, and that boosting supply is the durable solution.

Taylor endorsed opening up housing supply to restore the path to home ownership. That aligns with the evidence. Without planning reform, no amount of demand-side spending will fix the problem.

Immigration and civic cohesion

Immigration and social cohesion formed the most sensitive part of the exchange. With intake numbers elevated after the pandemic and minor parties exerting pressure on the Coalition's right flank, Taylor committed to reducing migration levels. But he framed the issue in terms of values as much as numbers.

In the wake of rising antisemitism and the shocking attack at Bondi, he said a Liberal government would "shut the door" on those who do not accept Australia's basic freedoms. He described this as a values-based approach, not one grounded in race or religion, and directed at extremism, including Islamist extremism.

CIS's ongoing antisemitism research project has highlighted the strain that imported hatreds and weak civic integration can place on the social

compact. A liberal immigration program depends not only on economic contribution but also on a shared commitment to democratic norms, equality before the law and freedom of religion.

The reform test ahead

Underlying all of this is the broader economic drift. Living standards have stalled. Productivity is weak. The government has grown larger and more intrusive.

Taylor repeatedly returned to a smaller, more effective government, stronger incentives to invest and work, and a sharper focus on core functions such as education and defence. On schooling, he reinforced the need to return to core knowledge, another area in which CIS has been active.

He was disciplined and focused on reform themes. The harder task lies ahead, turning sound economics into a coherent political alternative.

At CIS, Taylor signalled that he understands the reform playbook. The question is whether he and his colleagues can apply it consistently in the contest of ideas that now looms.

Watch the first of CIS's NEXT50 lecture series videos with Angus Taylor and Michael Stutchbury at cis.org.au/commentary/videos or via our YouTube channel.



CIS Chairman Nicholas Moore, Deputy Liberal Leader Jane Hume, Leader of the Opposition Angus Taylor, former Prime Minister John Howard, Senator James Patterson and CIS Executive Director Michael Stutchbury

Blaise Joseph to lead next chapter of CIS education reform



CIS has a strong record of shaping education reform in Australia. Our work on phonics and evidence-based early reading instruction is widely recognised as a landmark policy success.

The introduction of a nationwide Year 1 phonics check, followed by research and advocacy led by Dr **Jennifer Buckingham**, helped lift the focus on effective reading instruction across the country.

In 2026, we are building on that foundation with renewed focus and leadership.

We are pleased to welcome Dr **Blaise Joseph** as Research Director of our Education program.

Blaise returns to CIS after five years in New York, completing his PhD at New York University. He first joined CIS in 2017, when there was broad agreement that Australia needed to lift outcomes, especially for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Examining the data, Blaise found something striking. Schools in disadvantaged communities were achieving strong academic results without receiving more funding than others serving similar populations.

That discovery shaped his research agenda. His doctoral work focused on high-performing disadvantaged schools and how their practices can be understood and replicated. The aim is practical: to help other schools achieve similar success.

At CIS, Blaise will lead a program grounded in a clear four-step approach: identify the problems, build public understanding and consensus, propose practical evidence-based solutions, and work with schools and systems to implement reform that measures progress.

In 2026, the Education team will focus on three challenges:

1. **Early numeracy.** Too many students fall behind in maths in the early years and never catch up. **Kelly Norris** is leading our early numeracy check program, working with schools to identify gaps early and support evidence-based intervention.
2. **Teacher preparation.** There is a well-established science of learning, yet too many initial teacher education courses fail to equip graduates with this knowledge. **Trisha Jha** is leading work to make the science of learning more accessible and to develop a teacher beliefs survey that helps schools improve teaching quality.
3. **Student behaviour.** Australian classrooms are among the most disruptive in the OECD. Blaise's research in New York found that improvements in discipline are a leading predictor of academic gains for disadvantaged students. He will lead a project partnering with schools to measure behaviour and implement effective classroom management practices.

Over the past decade, real per-student school funding has risen by around 30%, yet outcomes have stagnated. More spending alone is not the answer.

Under Blaise's leadership, CIS will continue to focus on what works and ensure that research translates into better outcomes for students.



Scan here for the latest education research or visit cis.org.au/research/education

Antisemitism and the failure to draw lines

“ People, particularly Jewish people, are very worried that a lot of antisemitism has risen in Australia like never before, and the government doesn't stop it. ”

That was Sir **Frank Lowy's** assessment when **Michael Stutchbury** spoke with him last October.

Sir Frank was not speaking in abstractions. He was describing what many Jewish Australians were already experiencing. A sense that intimidation was rising, that public hostility was normalising, and that institutions were hesitant to act.

At that time, CIS had already commenced its three-year antisemitism research program, *The New Intolerance*. The program did not begin as a reaction to a single event. It was designed to examine how antisemitism manifests in a liberal democracy, how institutions respond, and where lines should be drawn.

Upholding civic limits

The first stage of research included three major papers that analysed antisemitism through the lenses of ideology, civic cohesion, and the limits of liberal tolerance. The conclusions were consistent.

Antisemitism must be named directly. Intimidation must be treated as intimidation, not reframed as mere expression. Existing criminal law must be enforced early and consistently. And free speech is protected by clear boundaries, not by dissolving them.

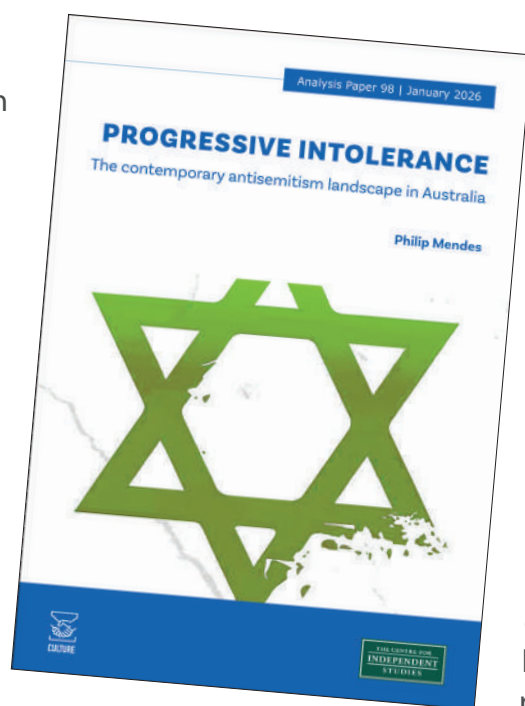
Two months after Sir Frank's remarks, the Bondi attack brought those questions into sharp focus.

A test of enforcement

The tragedy did not arise in a vacuum. It followed a period in which antisemitic incidents had escalated, and public confidence in enforcement had weakened. CIS argued that the danger was not robust debate, but a prolonged reluctance to uphold civic limits.

When the federal government released its *Plan to Combat Antisemitism in 2025*, CIS responded constructively. The plan reflected much of what our research had already established: a serious case for acting early and enforcing the law consistently.

In January, **Peter Kurti** appeared before the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. He made clear that the state has a duty to respond to violence, harassment and intimidation. But he cautioned against criminalising 'hate' as a concept, arguing that blurring the line between speech and incitement risks weakening both the law and social cohesion.



The issue is not symbolism but resolve

Our work extends beyond formal submissions. Last year, before the Bondi attack, CIS convened a private roundtable in Sydney with community leaders, including **Jillian Segal**, Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. This year, we held a second roundtable in Melbourne, again bringing together policymakers, researchers and community representatives to examine how institutions are responding in practice and where gaps remain.

The discussion was frank. It reiterated that the core issue was not symbolism, but resolve.

The next stage of research

In 2026, *The New Intolerance* enters its second year. It will include national fieldwork to measure how antisemitism is experienced on the ground, a closer examination of institutional responses, and an analysis of whether enforcement has genuinely shifted.

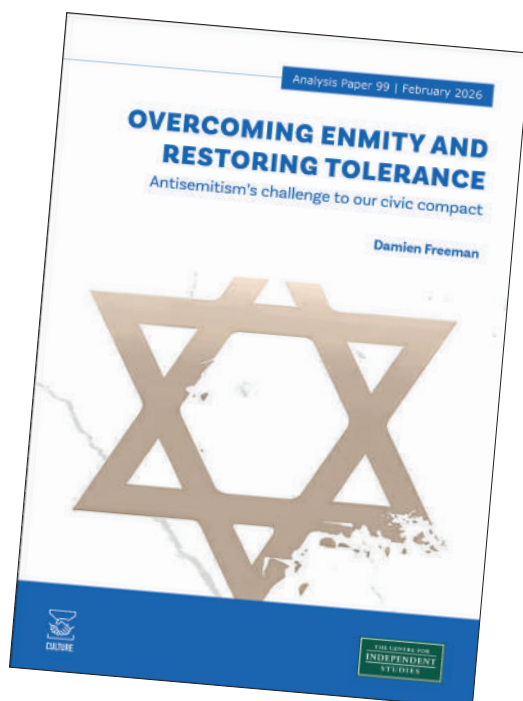
If there is a lesson from the past two years, it is that liberal democracy depends on moral and institutional confidence. Problems must be named early. Boundaries must be enforced consistently. And the political cost of doing so must be accepted.

That is the purpose of this research: to move from warning to accountability.

New papers

In *Progressive Intolerance. The contemporary antisemitism landscape in Australia*, author Professor **Philip Mendes** details how antisemitism is particularly rife in sectors of society traditionally considered progressive.

He says mandatory education is badly needed both within all secondary schools — public, private and faith-based — and universities, to directly counter antisemitic arguments that are prevalent and currently uncontested.



In *Overcoming Enmity and Restoring Tolerance: Antisemitism's challenge to our civic compact*, author **Damien Freeman** argues that identity politics has transformed Australia's political culture by turning disagreement into hatred and opponents into enemies.

The surge in antisemitism is one of the clearest warning signs of the shift and he warns this represents a direct threat to Australia's long-standing tradition of tolerance and commitment to giving everyone a 'fair go'.

To read **Philip Mendes** and **Damien Freeman's** papers, published as part of CIS' program *The New Intolerance: Antisemitism and religious hatred in a fracturing civic compact*, scan the QR code and download the report from the CIS website.



Scan here for the latest culture research or visit cis.org.au/research/culture-prosperity-civil-society



Author Philip Mendes, CIS Culture Director Peter Kurti and author Damien Freeman

Drowning in a sea of diagnoses

Emeritus Professor Steven Schwartz on how medicalising distress is overwhelming Australia's mental health system and failing those most in need.

“Mental health is now one of the largest areas of disease-specific health expenditure in Australia, comparable in scale to cardiovascular disease and exceeding expenditure attributed to cancer.”

— Emeritus Professor **Steven Schwartz**

Australia has seen decades of expanding government spending on mental health. Programs have widened access to services and increased support.

Yet, as Emeritus Professor **Steven Schwartz** argues in his new CIS paper *Drowning in a Sea of Diagnoses*, outcomes have not materially improved.

Suicide rates remain high. Psychiatric drug use is at record levels. And increasing numbers of Australians are classified as mentally ill.

Professor Schwartz identifies a paradox: despite sustained growth in funding and services, the system appears to have encouraged diagnostic expansion while doing little to improve long-term recovery.

The NDIS and autism diagnoses

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is forecast to reach an annual cost of \$52.3 billion this financial year.

Diagnoses of autism have been one of the principal drivers of the scheme's expansion.

As of mid-2025, close to **40% of all NDIS participants had a primary diagnosis of autism**. Of these participants, **78% were under the age of 18**.

Children aged 0–14 now represent a significant portion of the scheme. **Sixteen per cent of all six-year-old boys in Australia are currently on the NDIS**.

Professor Schwartz argues that these figures require careful examination. He contends that lowered diagnostic thresholds and broadened service eligibility have created what he describes as a “diagnostic pipeline” — early identification, formal labelling and ongoing engagement with services.

“And once a child is labelled, the label does damage of its own: it shifts responsibility away from the child, undermines the expectation of normal development, and teaches children to understand themselves as deficient rather than growing.”



Thriving Kids: reform or replication?

The federal government has proposed the creation of the Thriving Kids program, intended to divert children aged eight and younger with mild to moderate developmental delay and autism away from the NDIS.

The program would be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the states and territories. It aims to identify developmental concerns earlier and establish a national system of supports.

Professor Schwartz argues that the design of Thriving Kids will determine whether it alters the current trajectory or reinforces it.

He contends that without structural change, the program risks continuing the pattern of expanding diagnosis and long-term service engagement.

Five reforms to restore balance

Professor Schwartz proposes a different model. He recommends five core reforms:

- 1. Support families without diagnostic labelling.** Assistance should not depend on attaching psychiatric categories to children whose development may fall within a normal range.
- 2. Expect developmental catch-up.** Policy settings should reflect the reality that many children improve over time without permanent classification.
- 3. Provide time-limited assistance.** Support should be structured to encourage recovery and exit, rather than indefinite engagement.
- 4. Reserve specialist services for severe developmental disorders.** Intensive clinical resources should be directed toward those with the most serious needs.
- 5. Measure outcomes in terms of resilience, function and social competence — not psychiatric codes.** Success should be assessed by improvement in capability rather than expansion of classification.

Professor Schwartz also argues that programs such as Thriving Kids should be led by educators, developmental psychologists and community organisations rather than psychiatrists.

He recommends extending support through middle childhood, when developmental catch-up is most likely, and offering mentoring, play-based learning and parent coaching without requiring diagnosis.

Success, he argues, should be measured not by the number of children entering the system, but by the number leaving it.

A system judged by recovery

The goal of reform is not to deny suffering or dismantle care, but to restore proportion and clarity to Australia's response to psychosocial distress.

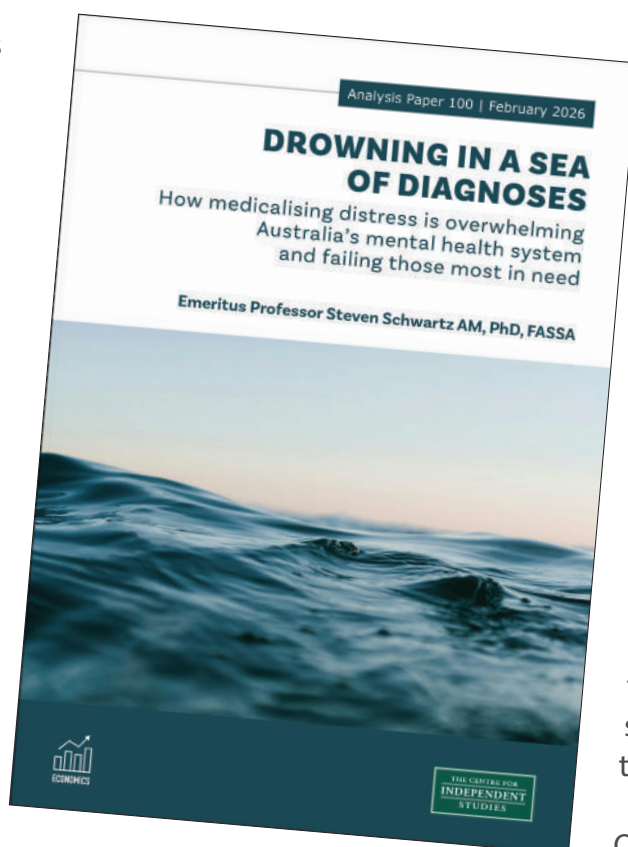
A mental health system should be judged not by how many people it enrolls, but by how many people no longer need it.

A humane system does not shrink compassion; it sharpens it by distinguishing those who truly need lifelong care from those who need understanding, structure and the opportunity to recover.

Only by recognising when helping turns into harm can Australia build a system that genuinely promotes recovery, resilience and human flourishing.

To read **Steven Schwartz's** full paper, *Drowning in a Sea of Diagnoses*, scan the QR code and download the report from the CIS website.

CIS



Scan here for the latest economics research or visit cis.org.au/research/economic-policy

It's policy that counts: 50 years of impact

This year marks 50 years since the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) was founded — a half century of ideas and policy impact that have helped shape modern Australia.

“It's very easy for political parties to go asleep at the wheel. You've got to have people constantly yapping at your heels. CIS is as good a heel-yapper as I've encountered.”

— **John Howard**, Prime Minister (1996-2007)

Looking back over CIS's record, what stands out is its sustained impact, from taxi deregulation and liberalised shopping hours to tackling school reading failure, Indigenous disadvantage, welfare dependency and housing supply.

CIS has repeatedly taken early, unfashionable positions, grounded them in evidence, and seen those ideas move from argument to policy.

Our challenge today, and for the next 50 years, remains the same: to make the enduring truths of classical liberalism relevant to the lives of ordinary people.

The early years

CIS was founded in 1976 when a young maths teacher, Greg Lindsay, wrote to philosophy professor Lauchlan Chipman about forming a “centre to promote the study of liberty”.

Six months later, CIS held its first seminar at Macquarie University. Almost 100 people attended, an early sign that there was an audience for free markets, a minimal state and individual liberty.

By the late 1970s and 1980s, CIS research was shaping public debate. **Geoff Hogbin's** *Free to Shop* helped drive the liberalisation of retail trading hours in NSW. **Peter Swan's** work on taxi regulation

exposed how entry restrictions harmed consumers and workers alike.

Nobel laureates such as **Milton Friedman**, **Thomas Sowell** and **James Buchanan** delivered John Bonython Lectures that brought world-class economic thinking into Australian public life.

Reform through evidence

Across the 1990s and early 2000s, CIS deepened its focus on the social consequences of policy failure. **Barry Maley's** research on family structure and child wellbeing challenged complacency about the drivers of disadvantage.

In education, **Jennifer Buckingham's** landmark CIS paper *The Puzzle of Boys' Educational Decline*, followed by the monograph *Boy Troubles*, helped trigger a federal parliamentary inquiry. Her later work, co-authoring *Why Jaydon Can't Read: The Triumph of Ideology Over Evidence in Teaching Reading*, marked a turning point in the reading wars by exposing how ideology had displaced evidence.

Peter Saunders's critique of poverty statistics forced a reassessment of how disadvantage was measured, with the ABS later conceding that widely used low-income data was too flawed



Milton Friedman & Michael Porter | Greg Lindsay & Thomas Sowell | Barry Maley, Greg Lindsay & Kathryn Greiner | Jennifer Buckingham

to rely on. His research on welfare dependency helped shape later welfare-to-work reforms.

Indigenous policy realism

Nowhere was CIS's willingness to confront hard truths more evident than in Indigenous policy. Research by **Helen Hughes** and colleagues challenged decades of failed orthodoxy by insisting that incentives, land tenure and economic participation mattered.

Hughes' landmark CIS book *Lands of Shame* was a devastating critique of third-world living conditions in remote Indigenous homelands. It broke open a long-overdue debate about decades of policy failure, and what would be required to turn conditions around.

Engagement with communities such as Banyala helped lead to concrete reform proposals, including long-term leasing arrangements to enable private investment and home ownership.

Education — following the evidence

Education and child wellbeing have been defining areas of CIS impact. Building on earlier work, **Jennifer Buckingham's** leadership of the FIVE from FIVE initiative translated research into reform, helping drive the introduction of phonics checks and explicit instruction across multiple school systems.

CIS research also reshaped child protection policy. **Jeremy Sammut's** works exposed systemic failure in out-of-home care and helped inspire changes to adoption and permanent care laws, ensuring that

vulnerable children were placed at the centre of decision-making rather than the bureaucratic process.

Today's challenges — and tomorrow's work

In recent years, CIS has focused on problems directly affecting living standards and opportunity. **Peter Tulip's** research on housing supply reframed the affordability debate around planning restrictions rather than demand-side subsidies. His work has since been reflected in ambitious rezoning policies and national housing targets.

Robert Carling's work has also played a central role in debates over tax reform, Reserve Bank governance, superannuation policy and government spending restraint — often influencing policy long after the initial argument was made.

As CIS enters its 50th year, the lesson of this history is clear: evidence-based research, pursued patiently and independently, can change policy.

With thanks and looking ahead

This work would not have been possible without the sustained support of donors, members and partners who believe that ideas matter, and that policy should be grounded in evidence rather than fashion.

As Australia faces rising fiscal pressure and declining institutional trust, the need for serious, independent policy research is greater than ever.

If you would like to support CIS in its 50th year, please scan the QR code below to learn more about how you can be part of the next chapter of impact.



Helen Hughes, Greg Lindsay, Jenness Warin & Djambawa Marawilij | Peter Tulip, Chris Minns & Chris Bishop | Glenn Stevens & Robert Carling



Parnell Palme McGuinness

Freedom only matters if it works in real life

Parnell Palme McGuinness sets out to discover why freedom no longer resonates with young Australians — and how a low-choice environment is leaving young Australians disheartened.

As I started out on CIS's newest research project, looking at how we make freedom practical again, I kept coming back to a simple question: what does freedom look like in everyday life? In the quiet, complicated realities of how Australians work, care, form families, and make decisions within systems they didn't design.

A young woman told me she'd love a second child but doesn't believe she and her partner can afford one. A young man explained why the "freedom to choose work" sounds hollow when student debt, rent pressure, and insecure employment shape the options available to him.

“ *My boyfriend doesn't get paid super well re: job, and the cost-of-living crisis is very grim, so I have to be realistic with goals re how many kids I can afford.* **”**

Neither group are uninterested in responsibility or aspiration. They're navigating a landscape that offers very little room to move.

Why choice feels out of reach

Classical liberalism no longer seems relevant to the social and material realities of young Australians today because choice feels very limited. Government social spending has expanded, becoming enmeshed in every phase of life. The invisible hand of government has progressively reduced young people's agency.

If the web of social supports were beneficial, we might expect a thriving society. But all is not well in Australia or the West. Life satisfaction is trending

down with young people now reporting the highest levels of misery of any age group.

The insights in *Generation Trapped* arise from listening, not lecturing. From asking young people about the pinch points, pressures, and trade-offs that shape choices long before the decision moment. And about their values.

Not waving, drowning

The research started with young adults, because they are inheriting a world where the old pathways — study, job, home, family — have become uncertain and expensive. They talk about choice, but

“ *I probably won't be able to purchase property in Sydney due to cost of living.* **”**

their decisions are shaped by housing costs, benefit taper rates, insecure work, student debt, and rules that narrow their options.

The first paper categorises young Australians into six 'tribes', offering insights that are not available when studying the age group as an aggregated whole.

Some of the key insights emerging from this paper are:

- Despite changing lifestyles, most young people still have traditional aspirations, like financial security, home ownership and family formation.
- Many young people now feel they have less ability to influence the barriers to their aspirations than older Australians.



- This lack of a sense of personal agency correlates with low life satisfaction.
- Handouts aren't working to improve the wellbeing of this age group and may be worsening it by limiting the sense of personal agency in young Australians.

Values, not ideology

What's more, scrutinising the values held by different groups reveals that the much-discussed 'drift to the left' among younger Australians is not always the result of typically left-leaning values. In fact, many young Australians tend to endorse economically cautious propositions, while leaning towards socially progressive views.

This research will be released in the first quarter of 2026. It will form a foundation for analysing new and existing policy, arguing against band-aid politics and for policies that enable young Australians to keep more of their own money, giving them more control over their lives.

The year ahead: New Australians

The next chapter in this series of papers will focus on New Australians. Using a similar methodology to the first chapter, this paper will examine the values, aspirations and barriers of New Australians — first- and second-generation migrants from all different backgrounds.

It will seek to understand what Australia means to first- and second-generation Australian citizens, how they understand the social contract of citizenship, how they view the welfare state, and what liberal democracy means to them. It will delve into the process of integration as they experience it and as they observe it being practised by others.

Ultimately, it will seek insights into the most effective way a multiethnic society can come together.

Making freedom workable again

Freedom has always been a powerful idea, but it becomes meaningful only when it translates into real options: the ability to choose work without being penalised; to form and raise a family without falling into administrative quicksand; to make personal trade-offs without being boxed in by systems built for another era.

I'm not undertaking this research to defend classical liberalism as it is, nor to discard it. I'm doing it because I believe deeply in the dignity of people steering their own lives. But that belief only matters if the policy settings around people expand, rather than restrict, the space in which their choices are made.

Parnell Palme McGuinness is an Insights and Advocacy Strategist for Policy Change, and a CIS Senior Fellow.



Scan here for the latest intergenerational research
or visit cis.org.au/research/intergenerational-equality/policy



Australia has lost its low-cost energy edge

Zoe Hilton and Michael Stutchbury on how Australia has squandered the low-cost electricity advantage that once drew global heavy industry to its shores.

The new CIS paper *Future No Longer Made in Australia: How We Lost Our Low-Cost Electricity Advantage* traces how Australia offered some of the cheapest and most reliable electricity in the world from the 1960s through to the early 2000s.

Powered by abundant coal, gas and hydro, and supported by stable policy settings, the country became a magnet for industries such as aluminium, copper, zinc, manganese and lead smelting.

How the advantage was lost

This historic advantage has now evaporated. Since the mid-2000s, Australian electricity prices have risen far faster than those of comparable economies.

Residential price data stretching back to the 1970s shows Australia shifting from around 30% below the consumption-weighted OECD average to around 30% above it.

Industrial users have not fared much better, with BHP's chief executive noting that Australian electricity costs are "two to three times higher" than those faced by key competitors.

The cost to industry and taxpayers

The consequences have been stark. Smelters that once anchored local economies are now closing, shrinking, or surviving only through increasingly large government bailouts.

Tomago, Boyne, Bell Bay and Whyalla have all required substantial intervention — typically through below-market electricity deals, subsidies, or government-led renewable energy "investments".

The report highlights that governments and energy market bodies have contributed to the policy fog by failing to maintain consistent, transparent electricity price datasets, making it harder to compare Australia's competitiveness over time against other countries.



What comes next?

Intermittent wind and solar power, backed by substantial taxpayer subsidies, have also failed to replicate the low-cost reliability once supplied by coal and gas.

As heavy industry becomes unviable, Australia risks losing not only the smelters themselves but the broader manufacturing and processing ecosystem they support.

Only a significant expansion of large-scale, dispatchable, low-fuel-cost generation can restore Australia's competitiveness. Without this, the government's ambition for a 'Future Made in Australia' will remain out of reach.

To learn more, check out **Zoe Hilton & Michael Stutchbury's** paper, *Future No Longer Made in Australia: How We Lost Our Low-Cost Electricity Advantage*, released in December 2025.

New Paper

In *Dead and Buried. Why our green hydrogen hope is gone for good*, authors **Jude Blik** and **Aidan Morrison** examine the reasons green hydrogen will likely remain prohibitively expensive, why projects are stalling and how the recently announced Orica subsidy exposes Australia's strategy as untenable.

Zoe Hilton is a Senior Policy Analyst in the CIS Energy Program and contributes to the energy debate through social media videos analysing energy policy.



Scan here for the latest energy research or visit cis.org.au/research/energy

Upcoming events

BETTER TEACHERS, BETTER TEACHING? Building a stronger education system

David Didau & Dr Jenny Donovan
with Trisha Jha

Tue 10 Mar, 6–7.30pm
CIS | 131 Macquarie St Sydney



FROM STRUGGLE TO SUCCESS: The power of fluent foundations in maths

Brian Poncy & Bruno Reddy
with Kelly Norris

Thu 19 Mar, 7.30–9am
CIS | 131 Macquarie St Sydney



THE NEW INTOLERANCE: Antisemitism and religious hatred in a fracturing civic compact

Lorraine Finlay & Ronald Sackville
with Peter Kurti

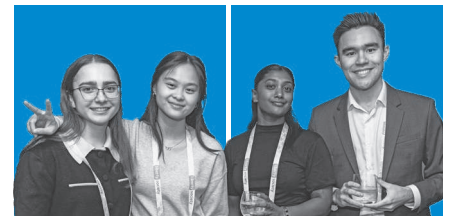
Tues 31 Mar, 6–7.30pm
NSW Parliament, Sydney



LIBERTY & SOCIETY. A condensed introduction to classical liberal philosophy

Student conference

Fri 22 – Sun 24 May
Pullman Sydney Airport



ACTON LECTURE. Focusing on the intersection of faith, freedom, and civil society

Rachael Kohn & Peter Kurti

Tues 16 Jun, 6–7.30pm
CIS | 131 Macquarie St Sydney



Scan here for our upcoming events or visit cis.org.au/events/upcoming-events

Listen up! Podcasts



The Stutchbury sessions with Michael Stutchbury

The Bondi terror attack

Shortly before 7pm on Sunday, December 14 last year, a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach was attacked by two gunman, alleged to be a father and son. Fifteen innocent people aged between 10 and 87 were killed and more than 40 others treated in hospital for their injuries.

In this episode of The Stutchbury Sessions, **Michael Stutchbury** talks with **Peter Kurti** about the tragedy at Bondi, the political leadership failures and rising antisemitism in Australia.

Relevant writings

Australia's complacency and the Bondi beach shooting
cis.org.au/commentary/opinion/australias-complacency-and-the-bondi-beach-shooting

Reframing an Ancient Hatred: the intersection of left-wing antisemitism and anti-Zionism
cis.org.au/publication/reframing-an-ancient-hatred-the-intersection-of-left-wing-antisemitism-and-anti-zionism

The Darkest Path: The Puzzling Resilience of Antisemitism. Acton Lecture 2025
cis.org.au/publication/the-darkest-path-the-puzzling-resilience-of-antisemitism-acton-lecture-2025

Listen now on *The Stutchbury Sessions*.



Liberalism in question with Rob Forsyth

Jennifer Buckingham on education reform

Join Senior Fellow, **Rob Forsyth** for an enlightening discussion with Dr **Jennifer Buckingham**, former Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies and a leading voice in Australian education policy.

From critiquing barriers in public schooling to advocating for phonics-based reading instruction and greater parental choice, this episode examines the role of liberalism in fostering equitable opportunities and innovation in Australian education.

Further reading

Why Jaydon Can't Read: A Forum on Fixing Literacy
cis.org.au/publication/why-jaydon-cant-read-a-forum-on-fixing-literacy

Knowledge is power: What do teachers believe about learning?
cis.org.au/publication/knowledge-is-power-what-do-teachers-believe-about-learning

Childcare in Australia: A new approach
cis.org.au/publication/childcare-in-australia-a-new-approach

Listen now on *Liberalism in Question*.

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The RBA had no choice but to tighten the screws

Michael Stutchbury and Robert Carling on why the government has been rightly blamed for fuelling the inflation flames with too rapid growth of its own spending.

OECD data for the year to December shows only a handful of comparable economies recorded inflation above Australia's 3.8 per cent rate. Most advanced economies are now below that, many under 3 per cent. Yet the RBA has become the first significant central bank to reverse a recent easing cycle and lift interest rates.

The government has been content to let Martin Place carry the blame. But inflation in Australia is not simply a monetary policy story.

Why monetary policy isn't the whole story

The RBA controls monetary policy. Any inflation outbreak can ultimately be extinguished by tight money and can persist only if policy allows it. The 1980s proved that disciplined monetary settings can squeeze inflation out and restore credibility.

However, non-monetary forces can make that task harder and increase the economic cost of restoring price stability. These include global shocks, as well as domestic policy decisions, especially those made by governments.

CIS has long argued that inflation control works best when fiscal and structural policies reinforce, rather than undermine, monetary restraint.

Spending growth and fiscal pressure

The Albanese government has been criticised for driving inflation with rapid public spending.

Although public demand growth eased in 2025 after strong increases in 2023 and 2024, spending is projected to stay high.

Sustained government demand in an economy near full capacity intensifies price pressures and forces the RBA to tighten policy further.

Wages without productivity

The Albanese government is the first since Whitlam to win office promising to force up wages. While

wage growth is positive when matched by productivity, weak productivity means higher wages risk fuelling inflation.

Sustainable wage increases must follow productivity gain, otherwise rising labour costs are passed on as higher prices, entrenching inflation.

Inflation expectations compound the risk. When businesses and workers assume inflation will remain high, they build that into wage claims and pricing decisions, making inflation more persistent.

Energy, housing and supply constraints

Government policy has added to supply-side pressures. The rapid push to renewables, combined with constraints on new onshore gas supply, has lifted energy costs for households and businesses. Higher electricity and gas bills flow through the economy.

Planning and regulatory barriers have also restricted housing supply. CIS research has repeatedly highlighted the need for supply-side reform in energy and housing.

Shared responsibility

Monetary policy is the ultimate tool against inflation, but it does not operate in isolation. Fiscal expansion, wage interventions and supply constraints have made inflation harder and more costly to defeat.

The RBA's latest rate rise was necessary. Treasurer Jim Chalmers should acknowledge that inflation control is a shared responsibility. Rates are rising because years of elevated public spending and policy missteps have pushed demand beyond the economy's capacity to supply.

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