



# BACKING THE KIWI DREAM



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Labour

## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

State of the Nation speech  
Andrew Little, Leader of the Labour Party  
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Jacinda, thank you so much for that kind introduction. It's a pleasure to be introduced by the next MP for Auckland Central.

Can I also acknowledge our Labour Caucus, including our deputy Annette King and finance spokesperson Grant Robertson.

I'd also like to acknowledge Phil Goff.

It's funny, Phil seems to be at every gathering in Auckland with more than three people for some reason.

Phil, this is going to be a big year for Auckland, and I know you'll do a fantastic job as Mayor.

Right, I want to tell you a quick story about the Future of Work and I promise it's 100% true.

When I ran the EPMU, I got an incredible insurance claim form to sign off from one of our senior organisers.

He'd taken his union car into the carwash to have it cleaned.

He'd punched his code into the computer and had driven in.

The machine was running, the car was covered in soapy water and then he remembers he's left the cell phone aerial up on the back of the car.

He hops out, leaving the driver's door open, and runs around to the back to get the aerial.

The problem is, our man's a bit short.

He can't just reach up to grab the aerial, so he opens the back door and stands on it to boost himself up.

Now he's trying to reach the aerial, and he's slipping and sliding and the water's raining down and the big brushes are whirring, and he's fighting with the aerial as the brushes get to the back of the car.

Just as the brushes are about to go over the open door, the aerial suddenly comes loose, he slips backwards on the soap, bangs his head, and the brushes push over both open doors, snapping them back against their hinges and sending water all through the car.

So the poor guy has to run in to talk to the clerk. He's got his aerial in his hand, he's sopping wet – completely bedraggled – and he says

“Mate, can you stop the bloody machine?”

These days, our man owns a fish and chip shop in Fielding, where there's considerably less automation, but I like to think that was his first experience with the Future of Work.

The reason I wanted to open with that is our economy is a bit like that story – the machine's started, there's nothing we can do to stop it, it's coming towards us and we've got to decide what to do about it.

So today, I want to talk about the ways in which our world is changing, and what we need to do to take advantage of that change, and to ensure that no one is left out or left behind.

But before I start can I just say a big thank you to everyone for coming along to our picnic today.

This is a great time of year.

It's a time of renewal, where we are looking back on the year that's been and we're thinking about what we want to change for the future.

Children are starting school.

People are heading off to new jobs, some are even taking the plunge to leave their jobs and to start their own business.

All over the country, Kiwis are looking to the future and chasing their dreams.

It's part of what makes us who we are – our optimism, our sense of the future.

For Kiwis, our dreams are pretty simple.

A good job, a home of our own, a future for our families and the people we love.

That sense of security in our lives and in our future.

That's the Kiwi Dream.

And it's a dream we need to fight for.

The truth is: it's getting harder for most Kiwis to get ahead.

The economy is slowing. Unemployment's getting worse.

Our major trading partners are facing economic downturns which will only make it tougher for our exporters.

Our housing market is out of control and homeownership rates are at record lows. Auckland is now the fourth most expensive place in the world to buy a house.

\$1.7 billion has been cut from our health budget and Kiwis are missing out on the care they need.

And then we see that our environment is under threat. Climate change is accelerating and the rivers and waterways our kids swim in are becoming polluted and toxic.

So, we've got some big challenges.

Now, by themselves, these would be bad enough.

But taken together, one after another, year after year, it means that people are feeling a growing sense of insecurity. It seems like the Kiwi Dream is slipping away.

We're going to do something about that.

Because the reality is: if we don't do anything, that sense of insecurity will only get worse.

There is a tsunami of change headed our way and we're already starting to see the effects.

It's an age of disruption. Some are even calling it the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Whatever you call it, it's a big deal.

Technology is changing faster than at any time in world history.

This has huge implications for our lives and our work.

It's going to mean huge insecurity about employment, as new machines make more jobs obsolete.

It's happening already.

- Auckland airport is replacing its cleaners with machines
- Law clerks being replaced by computer searches and algorithms.
- Some people even invented an algorithm to write political speeches. So if you think we all sound like robots now, just you wait.

Just down the road, you'll have seen the straddle carriers at the Port of Auckland, the big vehicles that move containers around.

This year, the Port is looking at replacing those with machines that drive themselves.

Now, just for a moment, imagine that you're one of those workers being replaced.

It's a good job. It pays well. You can pay the mortgage and take the kids to the movies once in a while.

And then one day, that job is gone.

It's not your fault, there's nothing you could have done. But you get replaced by a machine just the same.

So, there has to be a transition, and it must be a just transition.

We often talk about just transition in relation to climate change, and the same is true of the future of work.

And having spoken to both the company and the union representing the port workers, it's pleasing to see they are working on just that.

But we can't just sit back and hope that's going to happen in every instance.

As President Obama said recently, changing technology has the power to broaden opportunity or widen inequality.

And that's the big question.

If we don't work together to address this issue, poverty and inequality will only get worse as people get left behind.

The Kiwi Dream will fade away and life will be so much harder for the next generation.

Well I'm telling you today, I'm not going to let that happen.

Because we do have a choice in this. We don't have to give up on a decent future for all.

I'm not going to accept a world where thousands of Kiwis are told "I'm sorry, there's just no place for you anymore."

That's not who I am. That's not what I believe in. My life's mission is to make sure there is decent work for all.

We can do better.

If we plan ahead and act now, we can seize on the opportunities that come from new technology and we can do it in a way that brings people with us, instead of leaving them behind.

That's why I'm so proud that it has been Labour, through our Future of Work Commission, that has been leading the thinking on this issue.

Thinking that will let us harness this change for the good of everyone, not just a few.

That's the choice I want our country to make.

To create opportunity instead of watching it slip away.

Today, I want to talk about the changes we can make to ensure that our economy and our education system are giving people the tools to adapt and to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I want to tell you how we will build a better future for New Zealand, together.

But before I do, I want to make one thing very clear.

We'll never get there with the current mob in the Beehive.

They're not thinking about these opportunities. They like to say that the people who do are scaremongering.

They're obsessed with the political day to day.

To them, it's more important to win the day than to win the future.

More important to score points than to solve problems.

That's why they avoid big ideas, or big changes, or anything that looks remotely like political risk, even if it would actually help people.

The truth is, this government has given up on the future.

They've been selling us short.

There's no better example of this than the TPP agreement the government will sign next week at Sky City.

You know, over the summer, I managed to work my way through large parts of that agreement.

It wasn't the breeziest of summer reading, I'll say that much.

But what the text of the TPP makes very clear is that this Government has traded away our democratic rights.

Under the TPP, our democracy is under threat. New Zealand's parliament will be constrained in its ability to pass laws in our - your, mine, our kids' interests.

In fact, on issues like labour laws, and environmental laws, our government is now obliged to give the governments of eleven other countries - and their big corporate players - a say on the laws we make.

New Zealand MPs will no longer be solely responsible to the people who elect them.

And I cannot accept that.

Labour has been a champion of free trade for decades. But we have never been asked to pay the price of the erosion of our democratic institutions.

Binding future parliaments, making our government accountable to politicians and corporations overseas instead of voters here at home?

That's not free trade.

That's special rules for the powerful and privileged at the expense of the voters of New Zealand.

We have to stand up for New Zealand.

So it's clear: if we want a better future, we need to change the government.

New Zealanders are an optimistic and ambitious people, and I want to lead a Government that lives up to that spirit.

I've already talked about some of the ways we go about securing our future.

We're going to fix the housing crisis by building the thousands of new homes that we need.

We're going to end the scourge of child poverty in this country once and for all because it has no place in a nation like ours.

We'll be adding more policies to back the Kiwi Dream this year.

And today, I want to add the first of these:

Restoring security for people in a changing world.

It starts with building an education system that's fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Our party, the Labour Party, has always believed in the power of education.

We know that education changes lives.

It liberates people. It unleashes new ideas.

It levels the playing field between rich and poor.

Our party has always believed in a free education system that gives Kiwis the tools they need to succeed.

Think back to the amazing vision that Peter Fraser had for our education system, when he said that every New Zealander has a right to a free education of the kind for which they are best fitted and to the fullest extent of their powers.

We need that approach now more than ever.

Generations of Kiwis have built a world class education system here in New Zealand.

We've got some great teachers and great educators, and we should be proud of them.

Because we back our education system, our party has always been about expanding opportunity.



And now, in this new era, we need to do it again.

Because at every step of the way in the Future of Work project, we have heard the call for life-long learning.

We are going to build an education system that fits the new realities of our economy.

A free education system that doesn't stop once you leave high school.

We are entering an age where education throughout your life is more necessary than ever.

Skills, knowledge, training and retraining - they are the currency of the future of work.

We have big challenges, that's for sure.

But that means it's a time for big ideas. Time to be brave.

If we want to win the future, we have to be bold.

So I say the days of small ideas are over, it's time to do better, to go further.

Today, I am recommitting our party to the principle of free education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am announcing that the next Labour government will invest in three years of free training and education after high school throughout a person's life.

That's right.

Three years of free skills training, of apprenticeships or higher education right across your working life.

Everything you need to train and retrain as the world changes.

That's the future we need.

That's the ambition we need.

Just think about what this means for the worker who's been on the job for twenty years only to find out that their job is being automated.

With this policy, they can retrain for a new industry, with new skills for a new job. Their families will have that security.

Think of the doors that we can open for our young people if we make it easier to get the skills they need without taking on huge debt.

Think how much easier it will be to start a family, or buy a home, or launch a business.

If we do this right, our children won't have to become Generation Rent or Generation Debt.

Think of the people from less affluent backgrounds, who never dreamed they would be able to afford higher education.

Think of all they can achieve if they are given the right opportunity.

And think of what this will mean for our economy.

With Labour, Kiwi businesses will have some of the best educated, most productive workers in the world.

Our Working Futures Plan will be available to everyone going into education after high school from 2019. It'll also be available to everyone who's never studied past high school before.

The big changes are starting now, but it is New Zealanders at school today who will face this new reality from day one of their working lives.

We'll start with one year of coverage, with the second and third years following in our subsequent terms in office. Offering the first year of this plan will cost \$265 million a year.

This is a big, long term investment. It is the opposite of what the current government is doing.

It's an upfront investment for a long term return. We are being responsible, and we are phasing this in over time.

The money is there – the Government just has it earmarked for tax cuts. We will use that money instead to invest in New Zealand's future.

We can afford to do this. Because there is no better investment than our people and their futures.

New Zealand, for too long we've been held back by a government that's tried to make a virtue out of its lack of ambition.

But we can do better.

We are on the edge of one of the most exciting times in our history.

The future of work is creating incredible opportunities that we've never had before.

Opportunities to remake our economy, expand opportunity and end poverty and inequality.

To set every Kiwi up for a better future – for themselves and for their families.

We've got the chance in front of us.

All we have to do is seize it.

If we've got the courage to make the big changes.

To remake our education system and transform our economy.

To grab big ideas and seize big opportunities.

If we can do that, there's nothing we can't achieve.

I am so optimistic about our future.

I'm so excited about the incredible things we can achieve together.

If you agree – if you see the opportunities I see,

If you feel the excitement I feel,

If you want the better future I've spoken of today, then I'm asking all of you to join us. To join our campaign. To spread our message.

New Zealand, together, we can do this.

Together, we can seize these opportunities.

Together, we can win the future.

Thank you.