Membership Review Committee

Report to
Australian Labor Party
Queensland Branch
State Conference 2015

August 2015
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Introduction

With many reforms to Australian Labor Party Rules and systems having passed through the Queensland Branch State Conference in recent years, early in this term Membership Review Committee agreed to focus on making recommendations that facilitate improving the way Branches, in particular, and other local-level Party units as well, operate.

While the best Branches have much to teach the rest of us, every branch has opportunities to be more active, more engaging and more welcoming of new members – this is widely acknowledged by the office-bearers of Branches, and members.

Recent electoral experience has taught us that many of the old paradigms no longer apply and that political parties must operate in an environment where many of the old tribal loyalties have dissipated. Technology, particularly through social media, have changed the way in which people engage – including with political organizations. Membership no longer means what it used to, and the experience of members of any organization needs to reflect the emerging dynamic of interconnectivity at work in the broader community. For branches, it’s becoming a case of adapt or die, and recognizing that the old traditional ways of doing things may not present the best path forward.

And, while there are many changes needed, we must properly recognise and celebrate the enormous effort of so many members of the Party who take on local Branch office-bearer roles – without whom Branches and local campaigning capabilities would fail and collapse.

The ALP is a party that embraces its traditions, and there is a great deal to celebrate in our legacy and in the enormous effort that our branch members have put in to deliver to Australia the Labor Governments that have shaped it so profoundly for the better. The party owes a great debt to its members and the office bearers in its branches who have contributed so much to the success of local campaigns over the 125 year history of our party.

Many office-bearers struggle to find the information and resources they need, to meet the needs of the Branch, and as a consequence their Branch can struggle. Some branches have not adapted to meet new challenges, or have an over-rigid adherence to bureaucracy, or a focus on holding meetings to the exclusion of more valuable and effective activities. Many Branches, usually without noticing it, are insufficiently diverse in their recruitment or the officers and delegates they appoint.

Sometimes, our existing branch structures and operations, without locals realising it, are alienating for members new and old. If we are to ensure more members renew after their first year of membership, we must make Branches an engaging and welcoming experience for them. Branches need to operate so that ALL members feel respected, are empowered, and have incentives to be involved.
The approach in this report is entirely consistent with the findings of the Wright, Lee Tebbutt Review after the 2012 Queensland Election, and the Bracks/Faulkner/Carr Review Report, after Labor’s poor showing at the 2010 Federal Election which noted, inter alia

*Labor’s ability to form government and implement its reform program has always been based on the strength of its organisation ... Our local level organisation provides us with the eyes and ears to listen to the concerns of everyday Australians ... The electoral benefits have been great when Labor’s organisation works well. Such a strong win in the 2007 election would not have been achieved without the tens of thousands of branch members and hundreds of thousands of trade unionists campaigning in the community.*

*Today, the Labor Party struggles to staff polling booths, even in held seats. The 2010 election saw many important polling booths around Australia unstaffed or understaffed for the first time in living memory. Labor has always been proud of its ability to generate and rely on its membership for strong electoral organisation on the ground.*

... members are not participating in branch affairs, policy committees and conferences to the degree they previously have. The Review Committee was overwhelmed by the weight of opinion in the Party on this matter ...

“It’s about respect: respect the members and members will be there.”

*The Review Committee believes developing a modern and meaningful role for members within a democratic party is the fundamental challenge facing the modern Labor Party ... New ideas and approaches available to the Party must be utilised ...*

*The Review Committee believes that resources must be dedicated to party-building work and to community organising initiatives. This should start in a systematic way, including looking to boost the skills of existing members.*

*The Review Committee believes that the Party should also explicitly adopt an organising approach to growing the Party membership ... The experience internationally is that without a dedicated program of training and skills development, growth initiatives lack depth and often, after a burst of enthusiasm, fall by the wayside ...*

Reforms to our Party since 2012 have seen a significant increase in ALP membership here in Queensland. The enthusiasm and ideas of thousands of new members were a key part of our success in the 2015 State election.

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1 Party membership across Australia, and particularly in Queensland, has increased enormously since this report was written – the important challenge for all of us is to make sure we respect these newer members, empower them, involve them and retain them. As this extract from the Bracks/Faulkner/Carr Review Report notes “... The experience internationally is that without a dedicated program of training and skills development, growth initiatives lack depth and often, after a burst of enthusiasm, fall by the wayside ...”

2 Refer to recommendation 11, 2012 Review
While Queenslanders continue to join the ALP, there remains a persistent number of people who join but then do not continue their membership after the first year. It’s clear from analysis of membership turnover in Queensland that the two biggest factors in members failing to renew are

- whether or not they join a local Branch, and
- their feeling they get nothing worthwhile from Party membership.

Making Branches more appealing, and ensuring Branches focus on registration and retention, addresses both factors.

We must build the systems that ensure our recent membership growth is reflected by Branch registration, retention, and ongoing recruitment. We must also ensure that our systems and activities build a diverse and representative membership, and promote a diverse and representative leadership.

Branches also need to be able to focus on recruitment, retention, registration, campaigning and fundraising.

All Branches, including those who feel they operate well, should set aside time to discuss how they can improve the way they do things, and which new things they can do – not to suit those who come along, but to draw in those members and supporters who never do.

As with all such changes, it will happen in a patchy way, with different Party units improving in different ways at different times: what is important to know, though, is that the changes we are pressing for at the local level must be matched and resourced and supported by the Australian Labor Party Queensland State office, and by the Organisers.

The purpose of this review is to proffer suggestions that branches might like to consider adopting in the ways they prosecute their own activities. We believe the imperative for change has been made irresistible by the changes in the social context in which our branches operate. The template for change we are suggesting here is designed to help us all reflect on how things could be done better. At every stage, the emphasis is on inclusion, participation, and local empowerment for branch members who, because of the reforms undertaken at both a national and state level, have a greater say than ever over the direction in which the party should head and those who will be steering it.
The Membership Review Committee

The Membership Review Committee is appointed by the Administrative Committee.

Current members of the Membership Review Committee were appointed by the Administrative Committee on xxxxx after the 2014 State Conference, with the exception of Suzie Riordan.

Members are

- Dick Williams, President, Australian Labor Party Queensland Branch (ex officio member)
- Evan Moorhead, Secretary, Australian Labor Party Queensland Branch (ex officio member)
- Toni Fulton (resigned xxxxx, replaced by Suzie Riordan)
- Michelle McJannett
- Reg Neill
- Sheridan Power
- Suzie Riordan (appointed xxxxx to replace Toni Fulton)
- Mike Smith
- Mitchell Watt

The brief of the Membership Review Committee is broad. Appendix 7 Part H in the Queensland Branch Rules says:

(23) The Membership Review Committee shall be responsible for developing strategies and making recommendations with respect to Party rules, structures, processes and/or procedures, directed at improving recruitment, retention, engagement, involvement and empowerment of members, or any other matter referred to it by the Administrative Committee or State Conference from time to time.

(24) Membership of the Membership Review Committee shall be appointed every two years by the Administrative Committee, but there shall be not less than six members.
Building Better Branches

With this report we are proposing a *Building Better Branches* initiative.

The building better branches initiative is in two parts:

- Branch Basics initiative; and
- Better Branches program

We propose the program be ultimately managed by the Administrative Committee, but informed by ongoing evaluation by, and recommendations from, the Membership Review Committee.

It is obvious that the *Building Better Branches* initiative cannot be implemented all at once, nor immediately – it calls for development of training, case studies, discussion materials, presentations, Organiser capabilities and many other things. It will require a phased approach commencing with building the capacity of the Party office and Organisers to implement such an initiative. The material presented to Members and Party units will also need to be phased, with some at an introductory level and some at a more complex best practice level.

**Branch Basics Initiative**

The challenge has been set for the Party to increase ALP Membership over the coming years and certainly one of the focuses of the Membership Review Committee is to investigate effective ways to help branches recruit membership.

With membership in Queensland doubling in recent years, the greater challenge right now for all Party units is retention. The recency of this growth has intensifed the urgency to find new ways to retain these new members – while recruiting more.

Experience has shown that new members who join a branch are much more likely to renew their membership and be retained as members. People join the Labor Party for all sorts of reasons and come to joining a branch through different avenues – some stay, some go, some transfer, some float in and out. Some stay more from good luck than from good management by the branch.

The Membership Review Committee believe that all feedback shows members and Branches need suitable tools for good management, as well as the support and training to help build better branches.
For example:

- At the last Labor Women’s Conference during workshops for rural and regional women, there was an appeal for an online ‘portal’ or ‘forum’ to access to information about the Party, meeting structure etc.

- At campaign training initiatives and when organisers visit branches there is often a call for support and training.

Whilst there is still a lot of work to be done to work with branches about membership recruitment and effective branch meetings, the Membership Review Committee have focused their energies on the most immediate and demanding need for branches – tools to help branch executives make meetings interesting and engaging, knowledge of how to run an effective meeting, guidelines to best practices and information about the Party structure.

To that end the Membership Review Committee have worked together to collate and develop tools and materials for branches.

We propose that these tools will be accessible to all members via the member-only section of the Party’s website.

It will become an invaluable resource for Branches and members.

**Local Party structure and development material (Branch Basics Initiative) & Local Party organising and growing tools (Better Branches Program).**

It is important that all online tools, materials and resources are kept up to date and that there is version control. Content of the repository must be the responsibility of the Party Office to check and keep updated, and we urge that Membership Review Committee be consulted and involved.

In our view, additional material and updates from members should be welcomed, and will reduce the workload in Party office.

Initially content will focus on our most pressing and basic needs, and include:

- guidelines and procedures;
- administrative and meeting templates;
- meeting structure and formats;
- roles and responsibilities of executive members;
- checklist for handing over to new branch officers;
- information about the Party, its committees and contacts;
• alternative meeting format options;
• ideas for fundraising and a wide range of other activities;
• material relating to improving branch operations and expanding activities.

Future documents flagged for development will address:

• membership recruitment drives,
• ensuring diversity in recruitment, retention and internal elections,
• how to write a motion,
• rules of debate of motions,
• how to progress resolutions,
• opportunities for getting active in the Party.

**Recommendation One**

That a repository of Branch resources be implemented as proposed.

**New Member Welcome Kit/Member Information Kit**

We are also proposing to include in the repository the draft contents for a New Member Welcome Kit/Member Information Kit.

We are aware of Branches who welcome new members by presenting them personally with an impressive plastic ring binder Member Information Kit including

• A covering letter from the Premier welcoming the new member to the Qld branch and thanking them for their decision to get involved by registering. (Although Premier already does covering letter to new Labor members, this letter is about taking the next step, promoting branch registration);

• An electoral map and an overview about the voting patterns in the seat;

• A list of the branch executive with their contact details;

• A list of other branches in the area and their scheduled meeting times and key contacts to encourage cross attendance;
• A calendar of events, meetings, social outings, joint branch activities;
• Explanation about the key roles within a branch and how they are appointed;
• A brief description of Young Labor, how it operates and how to get involved;
• A brief summary of meeting rules, with some suggested variations to reduce formality;
• Glossary of key terms to explain some of the many acronyms that seem to characterize discussions around how our Party functions;
• Explanation of how to write a compliant motion, a template for the format of the motion;
• and the process the motion goes through after it is sent to Party Office (may also be presented as a flow chart);
• Copy of the Platform (since motions should correspond directly to the priorities in the platform ratified by State Conference);
• A list of ALP accomplishments, both generally at a Federal and State level, but also tailored to specific regions so that members have a clear and arguable perspective about what Labor has contributed to their local community;
• Some easy ways to participate in fund raising that supports branch activities such as those included in this document;
• how Regional, State, and National conferences work and the processes by which you may become a delegate;
• identifying which positions are now partially subjected to a vote by the membership and how these votes operate;
• An explanation of how recent reforms have enfranchised members.
• A reminder to branches that they must engage in fund raising activities to support their own administration and production of materials, such as Silver Circles. Directions on how to run Silver Circles are also included in the folder.

The contents of this kit will be available in the repository, for branches to download, customise and update with their local details, print off, place in the ring binder, and present to each new member.

Branches are encouraged to take up this initiative.
Recommendation Two

That the Secretary, once source material has been made available on the Party’s website, write to each Branch encouraging them to welcome new members with the New Member Welcome Kit/Member Information Kit.

Training

It has been noticeable that over the years, the Party’s commitment to training has been heavily focussed on election preparation, and somewhat dependent on the enthusiasm of individual officers or organisers.

We propose that the Party’s training needs to address both the basic party unit organisational needs discussed in this report above, and the more advanced organising and development skills discussed in this report below. It also needs to address recruitment of a more diverse membership, and targeted development of under-represented members of the community.

Recommendation Three

That in conjunction with the Membership Review Committee and a designated Organiser, the Secretary recommend to the regular June Administrative Committee meeting each year a training plan for the following financial year, based on a full evaluation of the Party’s training needs. Further, as well as campaign training needs, each annual plan is to address basic Party Unit operational skills training, as well as Party development skills training.

Updating the repository

Membership Review Committee propose to survey members to identify their needs beyond what we have already identified.

Better Branches Program

We are proposing a coordinated approach to improving the way branches and local Party units operate. Party office, Organisers, and local Party activists will all have a very important part to
play. Without each of these component parts fulfilling their role, the initiative will not work at the local level.

Appendices at the end of this report contain the detailed respective responsibilities for the State Office, Organisers and local Branch activists, in implementing the report, and a number of the proposals for the kind of changes that can be made.

Every successful program of delivering important cultural change or important changes in the way organisations operate has delivered change through multiple planned steps or components, and we have devised these five, having regard to the needs and resources of the Party, and recommended best practice change management:

a) creating a sense of urgency and necessity for change to occur, including providing clear reasons behind the need for change;

b) making clear what changes are necessary;

c) providing the tools that allow change to be implemented as easily as possible;

d) identifying first steps in the change process so that those who need to change, and those who need to help make the change, can see some improvements early on; and

e) finding a way to ensure

   o the changes that have been made become common practice and the accepted way to do things, and

   o identification and adoption of further positive change is seen as a necessary element of Party operation, at every level.

The role of Party office

The role of Party office will be principally to locate and distribute the resources that are necessary for Organisers and local branches to deliver change on the ground, and that promote the need and the value of change.

Included in the specific proposals for material that needs to be compiled are: case studies and stories about Best Branch performance; case studies of why people leave branches and the Party; establishing a forum about change at the branch level in the agenda at all regional and state conferences; and introducing an Annual Branch Awards program with clear criteria.
Party office will need to ensure that there is constant advocacy of branch change, and material facilitating those changes, in all newsletters, emails and bulletins; we should also publicise the qualitative and quantitative results of departing member surveys.

They will also need to commit times and resources to development of the training, tools, and resources that Organisers will need to assist them in their work.

Most importantly they will be responsible for compiling lists of possible changes such as going beyond the appended Active Branch Charter and the Collaboration Beyond Branches Appendix, below, and further documents relating to Party unit development, and Organising and Growing Local Party units, so that Party units looking for inspiration about how they might change and improve their operations have ready access to sources of information.

As needed they must also be ready to conduct local change forums, compile and provide information and resourcing kits, ensure Organisers are appropriately trained and resourced to facilitate change at the local level, identify and encourage branches to share their change stories in bulletins, provide presentations and handout for Organisers to take to Party unit meetings, run “change of the month” ideas and campaigns, and actively seek feedback from local Party units on what makes change adoption too hard, modifying training, activities and materials accordingly.

Party office will also need to facilitate branches accessing resources that they need to take the early first steps in change, for example implementing the Collaboration Beyond Branches initiative, appended below, compiling checklists on how branches can manage petitions at street stalls, get involved in union campaigns, manage joint activities with other branches, or invite guest speakers to meetings.

The Party office role in ensuring change is embedded in normal activities and ongoing, will come from them monitoring the changes branches and other Party units have been able to implement and modifying their advocacy, and provision of materials and advice. It goes without saying that the advocacy of positive change and case studies would run indefinitely, in order to ensure that better practices become the norm.

The role of Organisers

Organisers will need to identify and assist branches that are having trouble growing, fundraising and campaigning, and facilitate local level discussion of the need to change. Organisers will also be encouraged to identify additional incentives for branches to change, and case studies.

For this role, of course, they will need to be provided with quality and focussed training.
When dealing with local Party units, they will be expected to provide lists of change options and branch building activities, provide case studies, institute and run local change forums, and encourage Party units to nominate for annual Branch awards.

Party office will need to equip Organisers to run tutorials in change at the local Party unit level, and ensure that branches are positively discussing change options and needs. Organisers will be expected to encourage branch offices to discuss options and successes, if appropriate by pulling multiple branches together or conducting these discussions via Electorate Councils.

They will also be expected to ensure branch skills training is offered at a local level to the extent necessary.

It is proposed that at least one of the Organisers will become a specialist in helping other organisers adopt and encourage best-practice change processes, and will be responsible for facilitating the change management work of the other Organisers.

And of course, as one of the principal contacts between the Party machine and local Party units, Organisers should be constantly seeking and reporting feedback on what makes change adoption too hard, and which of the material provided by Party office is valuable, or needs modification.

They will need to encourage local Party units to decide on some of the first change steps, most likely by encouraging branches to decide on at least one activity that isn’t a meeting, such as petitions at street stalls, trialling alternative meeting formats, joining in union campaigns, or going to a movie.

**The role of Local Activists**

Active local members will be asked to facilitate debate about why branches must change, distribute the material that becomes available from Party office, encourage the uptake of better practices in their local branches\(^3\), and make sure Organisers are well informed about any potential case study opportunities.

They will also be asked to press local Party units to be involved in the Annual Branch Awards.

We will be asking local activists to be creative and positive about pressing for change and about the options are available for change. We’ll be asking them to make sure change options are put on the table and aren’t ruled out by excessive attachment to traditional modes of operating, and negativity. We hope that they will circulate case studies and good news stories, and proposed Party units become involved in change forums.

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\(^3\) State Conference delegates and Federal Electorate Council delegates, for example, could well be advocates for change in Branches across their Electorate.
Using materials provided by Party office we look to local Party activists to propose at their Branch or Electorate Council that a range of change options be taken up and implemented.

It will be very important that local Party activists encourage the involvement of the leadership of the Party unit, particularly branches in as much training as possible, and in the Branch awards system.

As local members are the ones who will be implementing changes, it is important that they are equipped and encouraged to ensure that their recruitment, retention and member development activities are suitably attentive to building diversity amongst the membership and local leadership.

**Recommendation Four**

That the proposed Building Better Branches initiative be endorsed, and Conference instructs Administrative Committee to proceed with its appropriately phased implementation, with advice from Membership Review Committee as to content and timing.
Appendix – Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation One

That a repository of Branch resources be implemented as proposed.

Recommendation Two

That the Secretary, once source material has been made available on the Party’s website, write to each Branch encouraging them to welcome new members with the New Member Welcome Kit.

Recommendation Three

That in conjunction with the Membership Review Committee and a designated Organiser, the Secretary recommend to the regular June Administrative Committee meeting each year a training plan for the following financial year, based on a full evaluation of the Party’s training needs. Further, as well as campaign training needs, each annual plan is to address basic Party Unit operational skills training, as well as Party development skills training.

Recommendation Four

That the proposed Building Better Branches initiative be endorsed, and instructs Administrative Committee to proceed with its appropriately phased implementation, with advice from Membership Review Committee as to content and timing.
## Appendix – Better Branches Initiative – Activities and Responsibilities Proposed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How we change</th>
<th>State Office Responsibilities</th>
<th>Organiser Responsibilities</th>
<th>Branch Activist Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **How do we persuade members it’s urgent for Branches to change?** | • Compile & distribute case studies & stories about best branch performance  
• Ditto case studies of why people leave branches and the Party  
• Statistics about branch failure & survey results from departing members  
• Excerpts from Bracks/ Carr/ Faulkner Review  
• Branch change forum part of the agenda at all Regional and State Conferences  
• Introduce Annual Branch Awards (e.g. recognising successful initiatives, events, fundraising, local campaigns, profile raising, recruitment and retention rates, implementing change) & clear criteria  
• Development of a Branch Revitalisation Toolbox for Organisers | • Identify and assist Branches in danger of collapse, and then others  
• Facilitate Branch discussion of the need to change  
• Identify additional incentives  
• Identify case study opportunities  
• Use the Branch Revitalisation Toolbox and contribute to its improvement | • Facilitate debate about why Branches must change  
• Distribute material  
• Identify case study opportunities  
• Propose involvement in Annual Branch Awards |
| **How can Branches be persuaded what to change to?** | • As above re compilation, distribution and publicising of case studies and stories, but focussed on what branches have achieved with small changes  
• Branch change forum part of the agenda at all Regional and State Conferences  
• Constant “Active Branch” or “Branch Change” material in all newsletters, emails etc  
• Publicise the qualitative results of departing member surveys  
• Ensure development of material relevant to isolated and rural party units as well as those in cities and suburbs  
• Ensure development of materials that address diversity – recruitment, retention and development | • Providing lists of change options and branch building activities e.g. organising speakers & resources  
• Provide case studies  
• Local “change” forums  
• Distribute and advocate an “Active Branch Charter” – draft below  
• Identify additional local case studies  
• Encourage them to nominate for annual branch awards | • Be creative and positive about change options  
• Put options on the table and don’t let them be ruled out by mere negativity  
• Circulate case studies and good news stories  
• Propose Party unit involvement in change forums |
<table>
<thead>
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</table>
| What tools do we give Branches to make change easy? | • Generically, materials that facilitate change: Local Party development, organising and growing  
• Lists of change options – e.g. see Active Branch Charter and Collaboration Beyond Branches options below  
• Simple step by step processes for change  
• Local “change” forums  
• Information and resourcing kits  
• Branch change forum part of the agenda at Regional Conference  
• Campaigning training and kits  
• Change training and kits for Organisers  
• Facilitate good branches sharing their stories e.g. in Branch bulletins  
• Develop short online change tutorials that can be screened in Branch meetings  
• Provide presentations and handouts for Organisers to take to Branches  
• Compile short training session curriculums that can substitute for Branch meetings  
• Compile skilled trainer lists  
• “Change of the month” ideas and campaigns  
• Seek feedback on what makes change adoption too hard, and respond  
• Ensuring materials address diversity – recruitment, retention and development | • Provide “change” tutorials in person  
• Ensure branches are positively discussing change options and needs  
• Change forums⁴ for branch officers to discuss options and successes, maybe a few branches together  
• Organise workshops with successful change agents who can present case studies.  
• Ensure basic branch skills training is offered locally, say 2 branches at a time  
• Specialist “change advisor” Organiser to empower and resource other Organisers  
• Encourage presentations about branch change options, at Party unit meetings  
• Seek feedback on what makes change adoption too hard & feed into Party office discussions | • Be creative and positive about change options  
• Don’t let discussion be ruled by negativity  
• Propose Party unit involvement in change forums  
• Propose discussion on change options  
• Circulate materials produced by Party office |

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⁴ “Forum” is very generic and would include role plays and any other kind of appropriate teaching method.
### How we change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Office Responsibilities</th>
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<th>Branch Activist Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the best first steps to change, so that Branches get some wins and enthusiasm under their belts?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Facilitate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Propose simple options to the Branch e.g.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage Branches to discuss change</td>
<td>- Branches implementing the <em>Collaboration Beyond Branches</em> proposal below</td>
<td>- Meeting notices to all members every month</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage Branches to decide on at least one activity that isn’t a meeting e.g. all members go to a movie together (not a fundraiser!)</td>
<td>- Branches taking well-resourced petitions to street stalls</td>
<td>- Guest speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage Branches to take small steps that are within reach</td>
<td>- Branch involvement in appropriate union campaigns</td>
<td>- “Social meeting” at local club</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage Branches to discuss change</td>
<td>- Branch joint activities with stronger Branches</td>
<td>- Branch officers to Branch officer training</td>
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| - Devise criteria for “best first step” changes e.g. | - Such simple Branch activities as guest speakers and debates, or going to a movie or restaurant | |}

### How do we ensure changes become accepted practice and ongoing improvement becomes normal?

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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase in performance indicators, both election campaign and non-campaign (membership growth, street stalls, public functions, petitions, etc)</strong></td>
<td><strong>A regular, planned program of training and forums addressed at changing Branches</strong></td>
<td><strong>Encourage branch leadership involvement in all training</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phase in reporting and monitoring that covers performance indicators</strong></td>
<td><strong>Encouraging participation in Branch award system</strong></td>
<td><strong>Encourage branch involvement in Branch award system</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Branch Awards system – make the rewards worthwhile and linked to further performance improvement – see details above</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>An item about options and techniques in every newsletter</strong></td>
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**Explanatory notes:**

- The Branch change forum at Regional and State Conferences is envisaged as a planned-out and formal session including information about flexibilities available to Party units, presentations about innovative Branch activities and ways to engage members, and so on. They would be a regular component of the meeting agendas, for the foreseeable future.

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5 Bearing in mind the special circumstances of rural, regional and remote members where travel can be quite a different consideration.
• Local “change” forums would be similar, but organised on an ad-hoc and local level: perhaps via the State Electorate Council or Federal Electorate Council, or a couple of Electorate Councils or Branches in combination.
• “Best first steps” will be very simple
• The Membership Review Committee recommend that once Branch Basics Initiatives and Better Branch Programs have been made available across the state, that a set of organised and coherent measures of success (i.e. key performance indicators) be developed in consultation with Organisers of the Party and Party Units.

Key performance indicators can be used as a guides of a Branch’s ability to improve and grow is developed; how and where Organisers and Party Office can assist in ensuring standards are being met, appropriate training is being provided. On the one hand, performance indicators are seen as potentially alienating and bureaucratic, with Party units structuring their activities to deliver numbers that make them look good, rather than being more broadly effective; they might also be used negatively to compare one Branch with another. On the other hand, if we don’t apply some such organised and coherent measures of success, then either there are no standards against which we measure whether a Branch is doing well, or Organisers use their own inconsistent, anecdotal systems which are ultimately wrong and meaningless. If developed and used, performance indicators should be few, simple and easy to measure e.g. perhaps only four, as suggested below. They are also definitely not to be applied inflexibly to Branches that are struggling or in the early stages of implementing changes

  o Performance indicator 1: What proportion of the Branch’s fundraising target was achieved?
  o Performance indicator 2: How many non-meeting activities did the Branch conduct?
  o Performance indicator 3: How many new members or transferring members registered with the Branch?
  o Performance indicator 4: What percentage of members renewed?
Appendix – Collaboration Beyond Branches

At present, there is no formal opportunity for branch members to participate in forums that bring members from different branches together, other than Regional Conferences. MEC, SEC and FEC meetings have only a limited number of elected delegates and are generally focussed on campaign organisation.

The capacity of branches to engage with members, particularly new members, varies greatly. The resources needed to support each branch to engage with new members is significant, and for the most part, beyond the current resources of the ALP.

Our proposal was to trial a local joint branch meeting every three months. The meeting would be based on local government areas, which are often more relevant than electorate boundaries. The trial would be in one South-east Queensland area, and one Regional area.

At each meeting, the State Office would organise a State Official, a Federal MP or Senator and a State MP. Each would provide a report and be available for questions. The meeting would have time for policy debate and a guest speaker.

The meeting would run for 2-3 hours and be held at a family friendly time, such as a Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon, and be accompanied by a social event. If possible, childcare would be made available.

This proposal would:

- Provide all branch members with direct contact with State Office and a Member of Parliament
- Ensure that branch members are able to meet members of other branches more frequently
- Ensure that all branch members are engaged in an interesting activity, even if their own branch may struggle
- Provide a simple and interesting way for new branch members to engage, particularly members with family responsibilities (that we have been unsuccessful in retaining as members).
Other matters:

In our discussion about cooperation beyond branches, we discussed how cooperation might open up the current branch structure in places where branches have not been welcoming of new members. Other ideas we considered in this area were:

- Limiting the period a person can hold one position, or encouraging Executive members to change roles more frequently
- Providing for affirmative action in the election of branch executive positions to encourage gender diversity amongst branch executive
- Training and mentoring of new members by more experienced branch members.

These are all matters which can be considered in the course of moving Branches to change the way they operate, as per the Better Branches Initiative proposed in this Report.
Appendix - Active Branch Charter

DRAFT ONLY

PREAMBLE

This Charter is voluntary, and Branches can adopt as much of it as suits their capabilities, and also time the implementation of any elements, to suit their local needs. It is, however, recommended that Branches find ways to implement these and other reforms, over time, where practicable: they are intended to improve the capacity of Branches to demonstrate their respect for members, empower members, and build their involvement.

Branch meetings, and non-meeting activities, should be designed to attract participation, and active involvement. ALP meetings do not have to follow a standard meeting layout or agenda, where members feel it is productive to depart from the normal format;

Branches should develop activities that will improve the local profile and image of the ALP, in non-election periods, in the context of building a genuinely influential Party organisation both locally and throughout the State;

Branches must dramatically raise the levels of political skills among the membership;

An intra-Party environment must be established which is genuinely supportive of these moves, and that environment will include:

- matching support from the Administrative Committee; and
- the best resourcing available from the Administrative Committee and MPs.

This Branch resolves to consider the following points, any other initiatives that arise from the Party’s Better Branches Program, and any other improvements we identify in the future, according to a schedule we will attach to each item.

CHARTER

1. Minutes of meetings will be circulated with the next meeting's notice, typed or emailed.
2. A meeting notice will be sent to every member one week prior to every Branch meeting. Where notices are sent more than a week before the meeting, a reminder should be sent within a week before the meeting.

3. Branch members are strongly encouraged to forward to the Branch Secretary any significant item or resolution they want discuss so it can be sent out with the meeting notice and so other members know it is coming up.

4. Chairing must ensure single issues or speakers do not dominate business, unless so resolved by the meeting.

5. A typed digest of correspondence received and sent will be distributed at each meeting, or emailed before the meeting.

6. Meetings should be held every month, although not necessarily to conduct all normal business in the usual format.

7. At every second meeting, bureaucracy will be minimised, and the meeting will hear a guest speaker, or watch a film or video, or set time aside for a discussion of some particular topic, of which notice has been given, or conduct some other educational, or involving, activity.

8. Meetings should not be seen as the major Branch activity. As often as possible, and at least between two and four times a year, non-meeting, non-election activities shall be conducted. These may be in lieu of, or as well as, monthly meetings, and these activities shall consist of a mix of political and non-political activities.

9. In branches that have a sufficiently large membership base, consideration should be given to sharing tasks, involving members, and giving members experience in the roles within the Branch. The following suggestions are effective options for ‘Succession Planning’ and building better branches. (It is appreciated that in small branches, there may not be enough members that have either the skill set or interest in taking on executive roles – but small membership must not become an excuse for failure to develop members and share roles).

Suggested options:

   a. The Chairperson should be rotated at every second or third meeting. No member is to have more than one meeting at which they Chair in a year, except for the Branch President. If there are no volunteers, a name shall be drawn from a hat.

   b. The Minute Secretary should be rotated at every second or third meeting. No member is to have more than one meeting at which they take minutes in a year, except for the Secretary or Assistant Secretary.
10. A local Member of Parliament should be identified who will be responsible (or in the case of non-held seats, the duty Member of Parliament) for assisting where appropriate, in providing an organisational focus for the Branch.

11. Members of Parliament (or, in the case of non-held seats, the duty Member of Parliament) are to provide Parliamentary reports to the Branch, no less frequently than four times a year.

12. Meetings should seek, and can be expected to receive, reports from Conference delegates, Administrative Committee members, and State and Federal MPs.

13. Reports from MPs should be typed, and of no more than three pages in length. A verbal supplement of no more than 10 minutes may be given. Longer discussions must be reserved either for the last item of General Business, or for a specific-topic discussion as discussed at point 6. Reports shall preferably be prepared in time to mail out with meeting notices.

14. At the Branch meeting after the AGM, the Branch Executive should report to the Branch with recommendations for targeted objectives and activities for the year (for example, increasing membership by 30%, recruitment 10 more women, recruiting 5 more members under 30, holding two social functions, etc.).

15. A Branch Development or Branch Membership Officer (which in small Branches could be a Vice President) should be appointed to be responsible for reporting to the next AGM on the success of the year’s targeting, and reviewing point by point the success or otherwise of the Branch in meeting the requirements of this charter.

16. In Branches where the Secretary has a substantive role recruiting or inducting new members, or organising functions or fundraising, for example, a report on their activities should be provided to the Annual General Meeting, as well as the President’s and Treasurer’s report.

17. A Branch Labor Women’s spokesperson and Rainbow Labor spokesperson should be appointed annually and report at the AGM.

18. A Fundraising Officer should be appointed annually, propose a yearly plan, and report on its implementation
19. A member of the Executive should be appointed to be responsible for devising a Branch training programme, proposing a yearly plan, and reporting on its implementation. Every two years, at a minimum, there shall be at least one session (either as part of a monthly meeting, or additional) on campaigning, and at least one session on how to make the Branch function better.

20. At least once per year the Branch should conduct some form of highly visible activity in the community (for example, stalls, leaflets, recruitment drive, fundraising activities, community consultations, campaigns on particular issues, etc.).

21. A 'Sister Branch' relationship should be established with a Branch from another area, with a view to occasional joint meetings, joint social functions and fundraisers, and pooling help for marginal seats where possible. The relationship could be reviewed after each election.

22. At least twice in each year the Branch should invite a guest speaker from a local, active community group, to speak on their interests, objectives and activities.

23. The Branch should ensure that their meeting place is comfortable, and accessible to all members and potential members (e.g., members under 18 must be able to get in, as must members with mobility problems, and so on)

24. Meetings should be located so that members who wish to do so can socialise immediately afterwards, and in the immediate vicinity (e.g., a cup of tea or a beer).

25. As often as possible, meetings shall not consist of a head table facing rows of chairs. At every opportunity a circular or alternative layout shall be adopted – meeting setup is to facilitate open discussion and interactions.

26. Without reducing the responsibility of the entire Branch Executive for the successful running and monitoring of all Branch activity, and involving members in these activities, one member of the Branch Executive should be designated responsible for monitoring the performance of the Branch, and reporting annually on at least the following performance indicators:

- the number of quorate and inquorate meetings;
- the number of each of ‘financial members’, ‘members’, ‘women members’, and listed ‘supporters’ in the Branch or in the case of supporters, listed with the Branch;
• for each activity conducted by the Branch, what the objective was, whether it was achieved, and how many participated.
Appendix – Activity Opportunities for Local Party Units

Can’t think of anything for your Branch to do? Take your pick!

- ‘100’ Clubs
- Active Branch Charter - adoption
- Address Local Groups
- Address Workplaces
- Adopt a local community organisation e.g. Landcare
- Auctions
- Balls/Dances
- Billy Cart Race
- Bingo Talent/Karaoke Night
- Book Promotions
- Breakfast Function
- Cabaret/Variety
- Campaign: hot button local issues petition, letterboxing, join up with union campaigns eg Clean Start, Big Steps
- Candidate Shopping Centre ‘Walk Throughs’
- Car Rally
- Christmas in July
- Christmas Party
- Cocktail Evening
- Community Forum
- Debate (vs single guest speaker)
- Dinner
- Dog/Cat/Baby Show
- Doorknocking
- Dutch Auction
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Enrolment Drive
- Fete Stalls
- Film Night / Play Night
- Film/Video Night
- Fundraiser “Thermometer” With Specific Targets E.G. Coreflutes
- Funny $$ Card Nights
- Golf Days
- Harbour / River Cruise
- Helping/Welfare e.g. SOWN
- High Tea
- Hold Functions
- Invite Local Groups To Address Your Branch
- Karaoke Nights
- Labor Saving Devices
- Lawn Sales
- Letterbox Material
- Local Stunts
- Locate Issues
- Masked Ball
- Media Opportunities
- Meet the Candidate
- Morning Teas
- Movie Nights
- Mulch Day
- New Enrolee Visits
- Newsletters
- Participate In Local Groups
- Party for Gough Whitlam’s Birthday. Or Paul Keating’s.
- Performers
- Petitions
- Phone Canvassing
- Phone Polling
- Play Night / Film Night
- Potting Day Followed By Plant Sales
- Progressive Dinners
- Pub Crawls
- Public Holiday connections ie ANZAC Day and Australia Day functions/support of local events
- Quiz Night
- Raffles
- Recruitment Drive
- Returnable Questionnaires
- River / Harbour Cruise
- Sausage Sizzles
- Shopping Centre Walks
- Silver Circles
- Speakers: one off, or debates
- Stage Sporting Events
- Stalls - Markets, Street
- Start Community Groups
- Street Meetings
- Street Party
- Street Stalls
- Talent/Karaoke Night
- Targeted Donations
- Trivia Nights
- Visit Attractions
- Visit To Parliament
- Walk-A-Thon