

REBOOT CONFERENCE - TURNING THE TIDE

The 2025 Reboot one-day conference on Sunday 16th November was stimulating and informative and 'Food not Bombs' put on an excellent spread for lunch. I've been to a few of these mini-conferences in the past and they are always stimulating.

It was held in Newcastle, with acting Greens Lord Mayor Charlotte McCabe welcoming everyone and over the day Newcastle issues inevitably surfaced. The Port of Newcastle is the largest coal exporter in the world, large scale housing developments on public(crown) land with too little affordable housing and development planned to trash a valuable green area of regeneration close to the centre of the city.

David Shoebridge gave the opening address with the humble title 'How the World Works' – mainly on AUKUS and free Palestine – both linked of course, with troubling expansion of defence spending and manufacturing across the imperial western world. It is easy to 'blame' Israel for military aggression and war crimes in the Middle East, but it also implicates all the countries that manufacture weapons or materials for weapons, however they are funnelled through to Israel. And that includes Australia – up to our necks in provision of parts and expertise. The Australian government has a target of becoming the seventh largest weapons supplier in the world, and taxpayer money that could be used for social good is being deflected to military use. While a decline in coal mining in the Hunter area is welcome, the audience was unprepared to hear that these holes in the local economy are projected to be filled with weapons manufacturing. And less certain, but becoming more probable, Newcastle will be a home base for nuclear submarines. Good news for the South Coast, with Port Kembla falling off the high priority list, but just bad news, wherever it is.

A great plenary session included young Palestinian activist, Ahmed Abadla, co-founder of Palestine Justice Movement, Sydney, and Jasmine Stuart, a recently graduated renewable energy engineer who has quit her job to volunteer full time for Rising Tide. These speakers emphasised the importance of building community through grassroots involvement in movements and issues. It's not being a Green that matters, its being a Green connected to all the issues that matter. The third member of this panel, activist, journalist and academic, Wendy Bacon, critiqued the increasingly partisan mainstream media with telling examples of important stories that the media just ignores. She advocated for 'independent evidence-based journalism' which she said is on the rise. Not just stalwarts such as *Crikey* and *The Conversation*, but a lot of good material on u-tube. She that she singled out *Michael West Media* for special mention.

The day progressed through presentations on mental health, education (with Abigail Boyde on the crisis in early childhood sector), Treaty (with Dom Wy Kanak, long term Green's councillor, Waverley Council and Lynda -Jane Coe) and equality and law as it applies to support for the queer community. The housing crisis was addressed by Sylvie Ellsmore, Sydney City Council, Jenny Leong MP, and James Ryan, lawyer and Greens apparatchik, who knows a great deal about the anti-democratic and ecological implications of the Minns government planning legislation.

The day ended with a pretty fantastic panel presentation from Dr. Alison Broinowski on Australia – US relations, China and why we are getting foreign relations policy all wrong; Prof Roger Marwick with an entertaining but clear critique of fascism and David Shoebridge again, with a return to AUKUS and the need to resist it, and end it.

What a great line up of speakers. Likewise some really good discussion from the floor. As Greens we are really privileged to have access to politicians, academics and political activists with such a depth of knowledge. And while everyone in the room would be on board for saving native forests, reducing plastic usage, recycling, biodiversity and so on, these kinds of issues were not front and centre. It is not because these issues are not important. But that is not what the day was about. The heavy hitting stuff about defence, housing, educational crises and so on were the focus of a day that stressed the need to analyse and understand 'how the world works' and how to act as the world pivots to more violence, more inequality, more militarism and more destruction.

My personal favourite was Greg Jerricho, Chief Economist of the Australia Institute, on how neo-liberalism favours the wealthy. Who would have thought an economist would take the prize? This presentation was a crystal clear 'economics for dummies', brilliantly illustrated by images everyone could understand. It will be available for anyone who wants to use it, and I will make sure we get hold of this presentation to share with other Shoalhaven Greens.

Shirley Fitzgerald.

PS: Some on the committee have been organising these Reboots for years and they are asking for new blood to help out. Have a think about it – organising a day involves getting speakers, booking a venue, catering, I.T. support so the day can be accessed on -line – lots of varied skills are needed. This Reboot was held in Newcastle. Why not think about holding one on the South Coast?