

Barton Deakin Brief: South Australian Election Update

17 February 2014

The campaign period for the 15 March South Australian election officially began at 12:01am on Saturday. As the election is now less than four weeks away, television and other media advertising will be heavy until the electronic media blackout takes effect at midnight Wednesday 12 March.

The South Australian government is in caretaker mode, which by convention means that it won't make any binding decisions. However governments around Australia have in the past taken differing views of the scope of that convention.

Polling

A Galaxy Poll commissioned by the Advertiser and conducted last Wednesday night reveals that the Liberals, led by Steven Marshall MP, are in a strong position to win Government. The Galaxy Poll across 849 voters statewide places the Liberals with a two party preferred vote of 55-45.

However, the Liberals are not taking a win for granted. Despite polling 51.6% of the two party preferred vote at the 2010 election, the Liberals won just 18 of the 47 seats.

In metropolitan Adelaide, the Galaxy Poll picked up a swing of 5.3% to the Liberals from the 2010 results, giving them an overall 52-48 lead. This is crucial, as the election will be decided in the city and suburbs of Adelaide.

Steven Marshall is the "preferred Premier" over Jay Weatherill by three points. However, Marshall's performance is rated slightly below that of the Premier.

For more information on polling, margins and candidates [click here](#).

Policies

Whereas the 2010 election provided voters with some big ticket choices, for example between a new sports stadium in the city or a refurbished and renewed Adelaide Oval, this plebiscite currently lacks those headline projects.

The major project is the clogged North-South Corridor. The Government and the Opposition have made differing commitments to improve the Corridor. Labor promises an upgrade of the "Torrens to Torrens" section, while the Liberals back the Abbott Government plan on the Darlington Interchange, which is further to the south.

The Liberals have released a number of policies aimed at growing the South Australian economy primarily by cutting taxes and boosting exports.

Below is an overview of key policies released to date, with links to the full policy documents.

[Population growth](#)

The Liberals plan to achieve sustainable population growth in SA by:

- Reducing migration red tape. This will involve shortening visa processing times for businesses wanting to bring in skilled workers by devolving the application process from the State Government body, Immigration SA, to regional business associations acting as Regional Certification Bodies.
- Working to grow SA's share of Australian migrants. Currently, the strong economic growth in WA has attracted the bulk of new migrants. A Liberal Government will explore ways for SA to be given greater flexibility and support in attracting new workers.
- Working with the business sector to identify vocational skills shortages so the Government can provide employer sponsored visas in these areas.

[Productivity Commission](#)

A Liberal Government will establish a South Australian Productivity Commission which will report to the Treasurer. The Productivity Commission will be guided by the driving principles of reducing the cost of living, reducing the cost of business, making South Australia more productive and creating a higher standard of living for all South Australians.

The first task of the Productivity Commission will be a review of SA Government finances, to help guide a path back to budget surplus and the return of South Australia's AAA credit rating. Cabinet will have the final say on which recommendations it will implement to boost productivity.

[Infrastructure SA](#)

The Liberals plan to establish Infrastructure South Australia, an independent statutory body which will oversee and coordinate South Australia's major infrastructure projects. The aim is to provide stronger governance, increased coordination and greater accountability in the infrastructure sector. Infrastructure SA will liaise with Infrastructure Australia to ensure better coordination between the federal and state governments on infrastructure.

Infrastructure SA will develop a 25 year Strategy which will be tabled in Parliament and reviewed every 5 years. It will develop rolling 5 year plans which will be published publicly and will provide a pipeline of fully costed projects.

The body will be governed by a board of at least 2 members with industry experience, 2 senior public servants and an independent chair. It will be funded from within existing resources and will be fully operational by September 2014.

[Growing food exports](#)

A Liberal Government will increase funding to Food SA to \$1 million. The Liberals plan to work with Food SA to expand international food exports, especially regional opportunities in South-East Asia, China, the Americas, Europe, Middle East and North Africa, North Asia and South Asia.

[Competitive grants program](#)

A Liberal Government will establish a competitive grants program of \$6 million over four years to generate export sales. An industry-led group will be established to oversee the award of grants.

Grants will be provided on a matching basis with the government providing up to 50% of the total funds. They will be available to companies, sectors, brokers and chambers of commerce with a viable plan to generate export dollars for SA.

[Reinvigorating SA's international student market](#)

The Liberals will work with universities and vocational education providers to create a strategic plan to grow international student numbers from 28,000 in 2012 to 40,000 by 2022.

This plan includes increasing the funding of Education Adelaide to \$2 million per year from 2015-16, and working with Education Adelaide to expand the international market for VET courses. The Government will identify VET courses that specifically cater to the international market, and make these courses available for international students, and work with the Federal Government to ensure that visas granted for students studying vocational courses allows them some flexibility to stay and work in South Australia post-study.

[Community Infrastructure Fund](#)

A Liberal Government will establish a Community Infrastructure Fund to assist local government in financing important infrastructure such as roads, footpaths and recreational facilities.

Councils will submit eligible projects to be considered once Treasury has confirmed that the council has the financial capacity to borrow the funds required. Through the Community Infrastructure Fund the State Government will pay three percentage points of borrowing costs for up to a 10-year period for successful projects. The total cost to the State Government will be capped at \$5 million per year - \$50 million in total – and will commence on 1 July 2015.

[Payroll tax cut](#)

The Liberals plan to provide relief to South Australian businesses by raising the payroll tax threshold. The threshold will be raised from:

- \$600,000 to \$650,000 from 1 July 2014;
- \$650,000 to \$700,000 from 1 July 2015;
- \$700,000 to \$750,000 from 1 July 2016;
- \$750,000 to \$800,000 from 1 July 2017.

The Liberals estimate that the changes will ensure that more than 1,100 businesses no longer pay payroll tax, that businesses will save up to \$9,900 per year, and that the payroll tax regime for small businesses will be more competitive than the systems in place in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.

For more Liberal Party policies for South Australia, please [click here](#).

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