

Prepare to fight privatisation in 2011

It appears that the people of NSW are shaping up to elect a Coalition government come March next year.

It is not impossible for NSW Labor to be re-elected but it seems highly unlikely after 16 years of ALP government.

The ETU has been looking at what a change in government could mean for the union, our members and public services across our state.

You only need to look at the recent election of conservative governments in the UK and Western Australia to see what will happen in NSW.

In Britain the recent election returned a hung parliament that saw a change in government with the Conservative Party negotiating a deal with the minor parties. Unions and their members across the UK have since come under fire from this new wave of conservatism. The new Government has announced massive cuts to public services including the jobs of the people that deliver these services. The UK is set to experience the biggest cuts to public services since World War II.

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With a likely O'Farrell victory only four months away, the ETU will be fighting to ensure our public assets and public sector jobs are protected from a Jeff Kennett-style assault which will hand NSW over to big business and the private sector.

The ETU have already written to the NSW Opposition seeking clarification on their energy policy following comments made by Brad Hazzard the Shadow Minister for Infrastructure on ABC Radio.

Mr Hazzard said that the Opposition will open up the electricity sector to 'private sector involvement'. The ETU recently wrote to Mr Hazard requesting a copy of the Coalitions energy policy only to be told that their policy will be released closer to the election.

It would appear that the NSW Coalition has something to hide and this assumption would complement commitments already made by the Coalition, including the full



Cuts of 40% to some departments have been reported. This equates to 400,000 public service jobs, however it is expected that job cuts could reach as high as 700,000. This first round of public service cuts equates to over \$A10 billion and will be achieved through direct cuts as well as a number of privatisations. The UK Government intends to deliver public sector cuts of \$A150 billion by 2014.

Closer to home, the West Australian Liberal Government has hired a former Howard Government IR advocate to advise on reforms to WA's industrial relations system.

WA Premier Colin Barnett was a supporter of WorkChoices. Workers fear he will introduce similar changes that will hit hard around 30% of WA employees who are still employed under state awards.

During the 1990s, the previous WA Liberal State Government introduced individual contracts and slashed minimum standards that protected pay and conditions.

The Liberal WA Government also plans to privatise ownership and services at three major new Perth hospitals. This threatens the jobs and working conditions of thousands of health workers.

The NSW Government has also announced a 3% across the board cut to staff numbers in the public sector. In NSW we have successfully held back the tide with failed attempts by government to sell off the electricity network, gaols and Sydney Ferries.

When it comes to the sale of public assets it's fair to say the track record of both Labor and the Coalition over the past 20 years has not been impressive. The time has come for the Labor Party to start representing their traditional support base – the workers of NSW.

privatisation of Sydney Ferries and the desalination plant.

This being the case ETU members must prepare themselves now for yet another battle. This time the outcome will be highly unpredictable against a much more determined enemy.

Seventeen public sector unions will resist cuts to services. We will be collectively lobbying politicians from all political parties to support the Better Services for a Better State campaign in the lead up to the next election and we will hold the government to account over the next four years.

In the interest of members, the ETU will support candidates in the upcoming election but only if they support us.

We will not be taking a political approach but rather support individual candidates in individual seats that pledge to protect the working rights of members. These candidates will include members from all political persuasions – including Labor, Liberal, Nationals, Greens and Independents.