

The Advertiser

Richard Blandy: Our post-industrial future is a rejection of bigness, centralisation and bureaucracy

- by: Richard Blandy
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11



Sandy Lay and Tori Goode ready to serve customers at Nook and Granny cafe in the Central Market, which has been helped by Renew Adelaide.

Source: News Limited

IF Steven Marshall is elected Premier on March 15, he could represent a historic turning point for South Australia: a political victory for small business and for small units in our society generally.

Big units in Australia are in meltdown. They are trying to reorganise themselves into less hierarchical organisational forms that can motivate their employees better.

A quarter of a century ago, John Ralph, head of CRA (forerunner of Rio Tinto), said at a conference in Canberra that unless big business can give the feel of small business it is finished.

The economic transformation that South Australia is facing is similar to that of all the developed Western countries - transiting from the industrial era to the post-industrial era.

The death of major secondary industries is a symptom of this transformation.

Our emerging economic base of electronically-networked small to medium businesses is in conflict with our inherited political and institutional superstructure of big firms, big unions and big government.

The post-industrial future into which we are moving is essentially a rejection of bigness, centralisation and bureaucracy. Its motto is "Small is beautiful".

It is not socialistic in the sense of "big government". It is small government, close to the people, where taxpayer-funded vouchers allow even the poorest to exercise their own free choices.

Its defining technology is electronics and the internet. It is organised in horizontal networks (like Facebook). No one is "in charge".

Its core activity is what has been termed "the creative industries", in which Adelaide is strong.

Networking among small-to-medium businesses is the main organisational framework for the post-industrial era. Networking is low-cost. It is built heavily around trust, supported by informal, but powerful, social sanctions rather than formal, legal systems.

The post-industrial revolution is not about peak-level dealings to frame a corporatist consensus between political interests, but about nurturing freedom and belonging at the grassroots, within each enterprise, within each neighbourhood, where people find the real meaning in their lives.

A brilliant example of this evolution is Adelaide's empty space revitalisation scheme, Renew Adelaide, which started in 2010 and is affiliated with a network of such schemes called Renew Australia.

The network now includes Renew Newcastle, Renew Townsville, Made in Geelong, Pop-up Parramatta, Stockland Spaces and Renew Sydney.

Renew Adelaide is an incorporated association led by its enterprising general manager, Lily Jacobs, with an energetic, part-time staff of three people plus volunteers, operating out of two rooms on the corner of Waymouth and Gray Streets.

Its varied and capable board is led by Steve Maras. Funding has been provided by the SA Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Adelaide City Council and Renewal SA. Renew Adelaide would like to form corporate partnerships with private sector businesses.

Its not-for-profit goal is to provide incubation space for young and emerging creative entrepreneurs by making available underused and empty buildings and shop fronts on a short-term basis.

Building regulations in Adelaide mean that many buildings are left empty because the rents that the buildings can normally command cannot justify bringing them up to current building standards.

By the same token, most start-up creative activities cannot afford a modern fit-out, either. This is a classic example of how regulations intended to do good have stifled economic activity in Adelaide.

Renew Adelaide undertakes 30-day "rolling" tenancies with building owners that put non-rent-paying tenants into their buildings, generating street activity and vibrancy of value to neighbouring businesses.

Renew Adelaide manages the tenants under a licence agreement with the property owner. If a paying tenant is found, Renew Adelaide makes good the property and moves out within 30 days.

It has assisted (or is assisting) 22 fledgling creative businesses and artists.

These small-time entrepreneurs have names like The Town Local, Not Lost Boutique, Filter Store, Littlest Vintage, Everything Coconut, The Forge Warehouse, My Modern Nest, Remake/Remodel, Mass and Velocity, TWaNG, Nook and Granny, I Met Hindley Street, West End Pop-Up Market, The Reading Room, Workshop, Film Buff Central, Rock and Royal, Tuxedo Cat, The Loft Upstairs, The Velvet Temple, The Mill: An Insight, and Tenth and Gibson. You get the picture.

Richard Blandy is an Adjunct Professor in the Business School at UniSA

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richard

5 days ago

When will labor's Treasurer/Premier appreciate the simple fact that jobs created by government cost the community money, whereas jobs created by business benefit the community?

3 Like Reply



Don Key

5 days ago

[@richard](#) What rubbish. Business isn't interested in most of the jobs government do because of profit for the business. How does profit for a business benefit the community over jobs done by government? I can hardly wait.

Like Reply



Jonty

5 days ago

Great article. Hope our leaders comprehend. Who would have thought that a state, which commenced life as an entrepreneurial experiment, would have strengths in being small, decentralised and enterprising. Makes you wonder what happened along the way ! Let's rid ourselves of the big egos, big ideas, big government and hand over to all those small entrepreneurs ... thousands and thousands of them ... please make us big again.

2 Like Reply



Don Key

5 days ago

[@Jonty](#) Yeah, like our water and electricity. Look how well they are doing.

Like Reply



alyson

5 days ago

last monday i voted early and happy to say i have become a first time liberal voter. good luck steven marshall on saturday i hope by about 7.00 you will be our new premier.

4 Like Reply



Chris

5 days ago

Hear Hear. And at the same time, deregister the militant unions who are screwing Australia.

2 Like Reply



Iorraine

5 days ago

We have been running our company for over 20 years and I have to say in the last 3 years things have gotten really bad, we have had to lay off many of the workers, we started with 15 we are now down to four in just those 3 years. Labour and all there taxes have sucked us dry. I can remember Rann sprouting on that he would create thousands of jobs those pollies who came after him said the same. Gillard made things even worse than they were and now the damage is done. In this industrial suburb there have been so many small business that have closed there doors, they have all said they can not afford to stay open. I really don't think Liberal will do any better than Labour both partys go on about all these things they want to do and change yet by past record to many of the small business things will stay the same or get much much worse.

1 Like Reply



Fred

5 days ago

Easy way to get a small business. Start a BIG business and then elect a labor government for 12 years.

10 Like Reply



Brad

5 days ago

If Labor are re-elected don't expect any jobs to be created in the private sector. In fact they will continue to disappear as they have under this ridiculously socialistic government that has run this state into massive debt.

8 Like Reply



Malcolm

5 days ago

There won't be any doubling of population if there are no jobs. It was an aspirational target, much like wanting to win the lottery. In fact, SA is bleeding jobs. It will be small units alright. Out of necessity. I was a big fan of Richard Florida and the 'creative industries' idea and promoted it in Melbourne/Carlton but I remain unconvinced about it's viability in Adelaide. Still, a hopeful take from the Prof here.

1 Like Reply



Michael

5 days ago

But Marshall wants a Big Adelaide and a Big Australia since he wants to double our rate of population growth. What are all those many thousands of extra people in Adelaide every year going to do for work?

1 Like Reply

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