

# Framing the Role of Government and the Economy

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**this  
moment**

# Government shifted its frame...

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- We went from a focus on debt and deficit, lifters and leaners, individuals competing in the market, jobs and growth to... (*individualism, competition*)

**-TO-**

- ‘Team Australia’ - community, health, safety, care, no ‘red team’ or ‘blue team’, bosses or unions because ‘we’re all in this together’ (*community, cooperation*)

# Now they're trying (somewhat) to go back

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- *It's all about jobs.*
- *We've got to grow our way out of the crisis.*
- *We can't afford to keep up covid payments forever...*
- *\$\$\$ for services depend on a strong economy.*
  
- But they're still not overtly scaremongering over debt or austerity, so that's something! And there's still talk of working together across ideological divides.

**Our role in  
this  
moment**

1. KNOW OUR VALUES (OUR WHY)
2. TAKE UP SPACE, SOCIALISE OUR THINKING
3. TALK ABOUT WHAT WE DO WANT, NOT JUST WHAT WE DON'T. WE ARE HERE TO CREATE SOMETHING GOOD, NOT JUST AMELIORATE SOMETHING BAD.

AUSTRALIA REMADE HAS SOME GREAT RESOURCES ON

- VISION
- VALUES
- PUBLIC GOOD

# ELEVATE WHAT'S WORKED

1. **WORKING TOGETHER** ACROSS PARTY/IDEOLOGICAL LINES
2. **LISTENING TO THE EXPERTS** (HI, SCIENCE!)
3. **PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST**

# How to talk about the economy

# Our opponents' story vs our story

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**Raw economic growth is the measure of a successful economy/government.**

**We measure government and the economy by the good they create in people's lives, and their stewardship of nature.**

**How do  
people  
think about  
the  
economy?**

# (PRE-COVID RESEARCH FINDINGS, 2018)

MONEY IS A  
MEANS TO AN  
END

ECONOMY IS  
OUT OF OUR  
CONTROL

'MAKING  
ECONOMY  
BETTER' =  
'GROWING IT  
FASTER'

GOV'T IN  
CAHOOTS  
WITH CORPS,  
BIG MONEY

WEALTHY AND  
CORPORATIONS  
HAVE TOO  
MUCH POWER

PEOPLE LIKE  
AND WANT  
GOVERNMENT  
SERVICES, BUT....

UNIONS, ENVIRO  
GROUPS  
PLAYING THE  
GAME AS WELL

GOVERNMENT ISN'T  
AS CAPABLE AS  
BUSINESS

# What our research found: nutshell

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Most people defaulted to a very narrow vision of **the role of government in the economy**: taxing and spending, or making laws to regulate business... **'interfering'** with private sector people who usually have the best solutions to people's problems.

→ There is a real opportunity now especially to talk up what we can do through ***government to benefit people's lives.***

**How do we  
keep the  
debate on  
our turf?**

# 3 Bits of Advice from Research

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1. **Tell your own story**, not your opponents'.
2. Focus on **real outcomes for people and planet**, not dollars and cents.
3. Talk about **active, empowered government** and what it **can and should** do.

**1. Tell your  
own story**



	Our opponents' story	Our story
<b>Moral</b>	You earn what you <b>deserve</b> .	We're all in this <b>together</b> .
<b>Values</b>	<b>Competition, status</b> , hierarchy, extreme individualism couched as 'freedom', <b>markets, money, dominate nature</b> .	<b>Cooperation</b> , humility, equality, <b>community, connection</b> , equity, <b>respect nature</b> .
<b>Goal</b>	Every <b>individual</b> has the right to thrive by their own effort if we <b>keep government out of the way</b> and <b>let the market work its magic</b> .	<b>All people</b> can live <b>good lives</b> in a <b>flourishing</b> natural world if empowered <b>governments</b> act in the <b>public good</b> .
<b>Primary metaphors we use</b>	<b>Economy as natural/organic</b> (patient, body, gods to be appeased) and the <b>people as inorganic</b> (widgets, factory cogs, units of input and output).	<b>Economy as inorganic</b> human-made and maintained (machine). <b>People as organic</b> needing good conditions to grow, live and thrive.

**Our message, their story**  
**Example**

*The government says **we can't afford** to extend JobKeeper to everyone, or keep the rate of JobSeeker high, **because the budget will go broke.***

*But that's just not true. We **can't afford NOT** to look after everyone properly, as ultimately the **cost to the economy will be greater.***

**Our message, our story**

- *We **all need a strong social safety net** when times are tough.*
- *But right now the Prime Minister's **policy excludes** certain people from JobKeeper, and he's about to **send JobSeeker back to poverty rates.***
- *Good, responsible government should **expand JobKeeper and maintain JobSeeker** **because it's the right thing to do.***

vision!

Human-made barrier

specific solution

**2. Focus on  
outcomes  
(not dollars)**

## Talking about the process (the recipe)

- The **cost** of not acting on climate change outweighs the cost of taking action.
- We need **bigger investment** in early childhood education.
- Hard-working public sector employees deserve a **2% pay increase**.

## Talking about the outcome (the cake)

- We can have **more than enough** energy to **enjoy our lives in harmony with nature** when we tap the power of the sun and wind.
- **Every child** should be able to go to **preschool for free**, to be **nurtured, loved and taught**.
- The people who work for our state deserve **good lives** with **enough money to make ends meet**.

# “But how will we pay for it??”

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- **Budgets are about choices, priorities and values.** We have seen that what really matters is putting people first.
- Where there’s a **will**, there’s always a **way**.
- **We elect governments to serve us:** people, communities and the planet.
- **We can do so much more.** We have the heart, the brains, the imagination, the determination. Money is never an acceptable excuse.

**3. Talk about what  
active, empowered  
government can do**

# Critiquing government

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- **The research shows that when most people hear criticism of ‘the government’ or even politicians, they understand it as ‘our system of democratic government isn’t working.’**
- They are left to conclude that private corporations are the viable option for getting something done.

When we point out the shortcomings of political leadership, focusing on **what government should do** conveys what they have done wrong, **in a way that encourages people to think good government can do right.**

→ When criticising a government policy, program or project, or lack thereof, say '**government can/ should do x,**' not 'government has failed to y'.

## Government as the problem

- By excluding casuals from the JobKeeper payments, the **government has failed** to provide for some of the most vulnerable in our society.
- The **government has failed** to take climate change seriously and now they're pushing a gas-fired recovery.

## Government as the solution

- The **private sector has pushed** a million people onto casual contracts. The **government should expand JobKeeper** to make sure everyone in our society is taken care of.
- The next energy boom is going to be renewable. **Government can move us past fossil fuels to become the next global energy super power.**

**Metaphors  
be with you**

# Use journey metaphors

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*We've seen **how far we can go** when we listen to experts, work together and put people first. The **road ahead may have challenges**, but we can do anything when we put our minds to it. What once seemed impossible -- free childcare, homes for people who need them, raising the rate of income support -- now seems obvious. So **where do we want to end up on the other side** of this?*

# Use building metaphors

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*Let's **lock in and build on** the pollution reduction gains we've made during this time. Australia has **the tools** to become a green tech powerhouse. We know how to **design** green agriculture that draws carbon out of the air. We can **engineer** a sustainable transport revolution. We can **build** better lives and livelihoods in harmony with nature. We can take this opportunity to **build back better** than before.*

# Avoid war metaphors

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Covid-19 is not a 'battle' against an 'enemy' we must defeat at all costs. That implies pitting nations or people against each other, fanning flames of fear, paving way for authoritarian government crackdowns.

# Journey, not war

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## REPLACE

- *We can fight this virus*
- *'Frontline' workers*
- *Win the battle against covid-19*

## EMBRACE

- *We can navigate our way through this*
- *Essential workers, teachers, nurses, shop-keepers, etc*
- *Slow the spread, flatten the curve*

# Avoid ‘economy as a patient’

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It’s hard to do in this health + economic crisis, but primes people to think of economy as a natural body or entity we shouldn’t ‘interfere’ with. Try to use the word ‘recovery’ only holistically -- referring to people or society as a whole, not economy/budget/sharemarket.

# Machine, not body

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## REPLACE

- *Revitalise the economy*
- *Economic rescue package*
- *We need a stimulus*
- *Economy is on life support*
- *Resuscitation*

## EMBRACE

- *Get the economy back on track*
- *Supercharge the economy*
- *Flick of a switch, reset*
- *Steering us towards a better future*

**Questions?**





# Resources

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- **Advice and tools for leaders** - including Covid-19 Messaging Guide  
<https://www.australiaremade.org/remaker-u-practical>
- **Vision for Australia reMADE**  
<https://www.australiaremade.org/the-vision>
- **Introducing the Public Good with reMAKERU**  
<https://www.australiaremade.org/introducing-the-public-good>
- **Economic Messaging Project Full Report and Guide**  
[www.australianprogress.org/economics](http://www.australianprogress.org/economics)

# Thank you!

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