

### **Education**

Greater support for vocational training needed across the board.

The education system, primary to university, needs to be restructured at a federal level.

Without brainpower and an educated workforce the future for the country is bleak.

We need to ask ourselves some tough questions about where the future jobs for our children are going to come from and in turn put in place long-term educational programs and systems that are going to support these types of future industries.

### **Energy and Resources**

Energy productivity improvement is critical, but mainstream focus on fossil fuel growth is the opposite of what is needed.

While our economic continues to be underpinned by the resources sector, we will need to be wise how the profits from this sector are invested.

### **Gender equality**

Greater attention needs to be given by Australian governments, business and community to the fundamental issues of gender equality, valuing women's social and economic contribution, accessible early childhood education, care and protection. The increasing disparity in remuneration between CEOs/senior management (usually males) and their workers as well as the resources and attention to men's sport is becoming increasingly untenable and unsustainable.

### **Governance and leadership**

We should provide strong and supportive programs for small business and across educational institutions to enable innovation to blossom. The future is in creative industries and innovations in alternate energy sources, alternate crops etc. not the traditional areas of mining and manufacturing.

The single biggest issue facing this nation is leadership. Not just in politics but across the entire spectrum of our community at an individual level and within our organisations.

The critical public policy problem is the complete absence of long-term thinking: where do we want to be in 2050?

Government cannot do everything, but what it does do should be consistent with strategic policy goals. Economy-wide costs and benefits of policy changes should be taken into account.

Reducing the multiple layers of government across Australia would go a long way toward improving efficiency and cost competitiveness of government service delivery.

If governments of either persuasion want to build support for a reform agenda they need to describe their vision of the sort of Australian society they want to create. Only if this vision resonates with most people will they support a reform agenda that is well aligned with delivering that vision.

We need evidence based policy development and honest open public discussion and debate to move towards all sectors better understanding the challenges ahead for the whole economy.

We need to have a vision of what we want Australia to look like in 30-50 years. We need to ensure our population is well educated and well organised. We need to consider political reforms so our governments work better, including extending the duration of the term of office for federal and state governments.

Governments need to provide a clear view to both business and the community of what the strategies are, how they bring benefits and how long it should take for these to emerge.

### **Infrastructure**

Policy focus on maximising the use of existing and future infrastructure is required. Strategic planning policies and land use planning can support this.

Transport infrastructure isn't all about roads – it is the movement of people and goods and people first - let's encourage government to realise that infrastructure for walking and cycling is equally if not more important than roads.

A world class NBN will be critical for Australia's future success.

Spending on infrastructure to support the economy now and unlock future productivity should be the focus.

### **Innovation**

As a nation we need to be looking towards innovative solutions for our future economy with developments from the grass roots up. Too many politicians and academics continue to look at traditional industry solutions such as mining and manufacturing and therefore develop programs for big business or look at importing solutions from overseas via labour or skilled migration.

For a healthy economy jobs are the key. Innovation and education to enhance this is essential.

Australia is grossly inefficient in the system in place for tax, business development and innovation. Something has to be done to fix it.

Australia needs to be world leading in policy and innovation and accept that carries some risk.

Australia must become an innovation led, knowledge based economy which highly values and is willing to invest in good quality education and training and infrastructure to support economic activity and innovation.

Innovation needs to be redefined by governments to incentivise not just one off or even sustainable projects by a chosen few but rather a widespread movement capturing the creative spirit of our entire population of workers wherever they may be.

Investment now in R&D and innovation for aged care can put Australia at the front for capturing market share of a booming middle class in the Asian region.

Bring innovation and R&D to the international market - commercialisation.

## **Growth**

The unsustainable economic growth model we used needs changing.

Australia's current policy priorities are all ensuring a low growth future with greater inequality, declining median income and therefore lower median quality of life. These are being sacrificed to address non-existent issues such as capital competitiveness (there is currently a capital glut) and industrial relations reform (our problem is too few spenders and too much concentration of discretionary wealth in too few hands to drive demand not inflexible workforces). Too much profit is too great a burden on our economy, so we need to decrease it and ensure more wealth is put in the hands of a greater number of spenders. This is basic economics which our political and fiscal decision makers appear to have forgotten (or never known).

Need to primarily focus on fundamentals — tax reform to increase efficiency of system and incentivise university/industry collaboration, improve economic infrastructure, improve flexibility of workplace relations including reducing penalty rates and ensuring reliable supply of essential services at lowest sustainable cost.

## **Manufacturing**

The main target must be to set a clear achievable agenda for how Australia is going to be competitive in value adding in an area of demand, move away from reliance on the primary sector. Australia must start focusing on value adding in some manufacturing or product sense to enable a wide as possible utilisation of resources and skills.

I think manufacturing (traditional) has limited potential for growth whereas smart manufacturing could be a significant economic contributor with the right leadership and investment.

## **Productivity**

Poor productivity is a major issue in Australia's uncompetitiveness and need considerable focus and priority.

A key priority should be to drive productivity per head of population.

Competitiveness and productivity need to be improved primarily through plant and equipment modernisation and through innovation.

## **Regional Development**

There needs to be a greater focus on developing the capability of regional centres.

The imperative is to adapt to an emerging digitised world and drawing on the unique intellectual and other capital that exists in Australia. Developing Australia's north is a transformative opportunity to drive productivity, sciences and technologies and connection to Asia and generational GDP growth whilst revitalising regional Australia.

There needs to be a greater investment in developing non-capital city population hubs to encourage growth of key regional centres. This will improve quality of living encourage greater value adding in agriculture and mining and also lead to improvements in transport and communication infrastructure

## Tax reform and the Budget

Any reform of the taxation system needs to remove/reduce subsidies for coal mining and high income superannuation and address multi-national tax avoidance.

Let's get tax income from those organisations that avoid/evade tax and then see how the budget looks.

The issue of cost cutting or increasing taxes fails to recognise in the options provided that the efficient use of existing resources would be a great way to make our dollars go further. Reducing waste and redundancy and having government departments operate with more accountability and significantly better and more meaningful performance indicators.

Without addressing the GST and ensuring that the lowest paid are protected, Australia will struggle into the future.

Addressing multinational corporate tax evasion should come before any increase in the GST. An increase in the GST will have broad impacts across retail and spending and while politicians will promise other taxes will be wound back there will be tax creep again. Using NZ to support increasing the GST in Australia is a weak argument — their economy suffered for many years with an increased GST and the turn-around was not a result of the GST increase. We need to ensure the lower and middle class in Australia is not worse off with any tax reform otherwise we risk becoming like the United States and will have a higher non-participation rate in the workforce.

Tax reform, innovation and opening up new markets are critical.

Often the debate on government revenue focuses on either increasing taxes or reducing expenditure, value or efficient yet effective service provision should be the focus as there is so much perceived and real waste through institutional poor practices in the public sector.

Simplification of the taxation system should be high priority to save unproductive administrative effort so that effort can be directed to productive work. The taxation system and measures to improve economic growth should be designed to incentivise productive effort not penalise it.

In reducing government expenditure, there was no option for the government to manage its expenditure more responsibly. East/West link in Victoria is a great example, public service productivity another.

Australia does not have a revenue collection problem it has a revenue spending problem — Government is too large and needs to be drastically reduced in size.

Tax reform needs to focus on reforming the whole system - not just one tax. It is not tax reform to change or increase GST or company tax.

Tax reform needs to be about improving the productivity, efficiency and simplicity of our tax base (and so economy).

Fixing up budgets isn't just either adding more to tax income or cutting expenditure – it's about better use of existing taxes and efficiency of use.

*Please note this is a selection of the additional comments CEDA received from 2015 Big Issues survey respondents.*