

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

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WHO IS TANYA PLIBERSEK, THE SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION ?

The tumult and the shouting is dying down. The election result was a relief if not a victory for public school supporters. It is difficult to tell how decisive the public school vote was, but the Greens increased vote and representation and the Morrison government's decimation indicates that it was far from negligible. There has been a change of government and public school supporters may be dealing with a new Minister for Education – Tanya Plibersek.

Who is she?

DOGS note that Tanya Plibersek, unlike most politicians, attended public schools in Jannali, Sydney. According to Wikipedia, she was born in Sydney, the youngest of three children born to Joseph and Rose Plibersek. Her elder brother Ray is a lawyer, and her eldest brother Phillip (d. 1997) was a geologist. Her parents were born in small Slovenian villages, arriving in Australia unknown to each other as part of the [post-war immigration scheme](#). Her mother (née *Rosalija Repič*) was born in [Podvinci](#), and came to Australia via Italy. Her father (né *Jože Pliberšek*) was born in [Kočno pri Polskavi](#), and came to Australia via Austria. He found work as a labourer on the [Snowy Mountains Scheme](#), and later spent 20 years working for [Qantas](#) as a plumber and gas fitter.

Plibersek grew up in the suburb of [Oyster Bay](#) in Sydney's Sutherland Shire. She attended Oyster Bay Public School and Jannali Girls High School, where she was the dux. She joined the Labor Party at the age of 15.^[1] Plibersek studied journalism at the [University of Technology Sydney](#), graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications. She then took a [Masters in Public Policy and Politics](#) at [Macquarie University](#). After a failed attempt to secure a cadetship with the [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) (ABC), she found work with the Domestic Violence Unit at the [New South Wales Government](#)'s Office for the Status and Advancement of Women.^[3] She found working with the state women's minister [Kerry Chikarovski](#) "demoralising" and later criticised her for focusing on the [glass ceiling](#) rather than other women's issues. Plibersek

subsequently joined the office of Senator [Bruce Childs](#), before switching to work for Senator [George Campbell](#) as a research officer.

She served as [Deputy Leader of the Labor Party](#) and [Deputy Leader of the Opposition](#) from [2013](#) to [2019](#). She has served as the [Member of Parliament](#) (MP) for [Sydney](#) since 1998. A member of the [Labor Party](#), Plibersek served as a [Cabinet Minister](#) in the [Rudd](#) and [Gillard Governments](#).

Plibersek was elected to the [Division of Sydney](#) at the [1998 federal election](#), aged 28. She joined the [Shadow Cabinet](#) in 2004, and when Labor won the [2007 election](#) was made [Minister for Housing](#) and [Minister for the Status of Women](#).

In a cabinet reshuffle in 2010, Plibersek was made [Minister for Human Services](#) and [Minister for Social Inclusion](#). She was promoted to [Minister for Health](#) the following year, and held that position until Labor's defeat at the [2013 election](#). Plibersek [was elected](#) Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party in the election's aftermath, but since the 2019 election has been replaced by Richard Marles.

As a result of the election, she is now Minister for Education and Minister for Women.

So far so good.

BUT

In 2018, Plibersek was promising to reinstate the Gonski Needs policy and provide \$14 billion for public education. In the 2022 election however, no mention was made of the \$14 billion, the Morrison's funding 'deal' was not questioned, and any education funding matters have been put off until 2023.

And, on March 24 Tanya Plibersek delivered the Archbishop Mannix Memorial lecture. This was reported in the Catholic Weekly by Adam Wesselinoff as follows:

A failure to explain Labor's values contributed to the party's loss at the 2019 election, Federal Labor MP [Tanya Plibersek](#) has said in her address at the 23rd Mannix Lecture, hosted by Newman College at the University of Melbourne.

"I think sometimes, in the Labor Party, we forget that good leadership includes explaining our values and using them to persuade," Ms Plibersek said on 23 March.

"Too often, including in the last federal election campaign, we go straight to the how: how will we fight climate change, how will we increase wages; how will we improve schools and hospitals

"Our instinct should be to always start with why. Why does it matter to us;

Ms Plibersek said that while "values come from many different places" in contemporary society, "it's clear to me that, even in our fractured world, the timeless lessons of Christ continue to inform progressive politics today."

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She spoke about her own Catholic upbringing by devout Slovenian parents who migrated to Australia, in part, to escape religious repression in Communist Yugoslavia.

"There is no doubt in my mind that growing up Catholic has influenced my politics, as it has for so many in the Labor Party and the labour movement," Ms Plibersek said.

"Economic justice has always been Labor's mission; and it's no coincidence that Catholic social teaching played an outsized role in our Party's history," she later added.

Ms Plibersek shied away from mentioning the Labor Split of the 1950s, brought on by Archbishop Daniel Mannix and B.A. Santamaria's opposition to Marxist influence in the Labor Party, instead stressing the "enduring and unbreakable" links between Labor and the Church.....

*The annual Mannix Lecture was established to honour Archbishop Daniel Mannix (1864-1963), who was installed as Archbishop of Melbourne in 1917 and quickly **became**—owing to his interventions on state aid for Catholic schools, conscription and Irish nationalism, and his support for workers— "arguably the most revered and reviled figure in Australian history".*

DOGS COMMENT:

DOGS note the crux of Tanya Plibersek's speech :

“Economic justice has always been Labor’s mission; and it’s no coincidence that Catholic social teaching played an outsized role in our Party’s history,”

DOGS are mystified by Plibersek's and the Catholic Church's commitment to social and economic justice. St Vincent de Paul aside, Catholic teaching and Catholic practice are poles apart. . More than 19 to 20 billions of dollars in direct grants alone are going to religious schools dedicated to dividing children on the basis of class, creed and in some cases, colour. Along with other sectarian schools in Australia the Catholic systems are diverting billions and billions of dollars from schools that are open to all children and are committed to social and economic justice – namely public schools.

DOGS hope that Tanya Plibersek will sit down and remember that it was the public system in this country which made her own education and rise to power possible.



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