

# The Advertiser SA Election Coverage: Democracy is the Loser

**Submission to ACCC Digital Platforms Inquiry**

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This submission to the Digital Platforms Inquiry is a case study analysis of The Advertiser's coverage of the recent South Australian election. The Advertiser is owned by News Ltd and is South Australia's only major metropolitan newspaper.

This analysis relates to terms of reference topic ii: 'the impact of platform service providers on the level of choice and quality of news and journalistic content to consumers'.

The voting public rely on balanced and objective coverage of political news in order to make an informed decision when voting in elections. This analysis shows that The Advertiser is not providing this balanced and objective coverage of Labor election policy announcements, which means voters don't have all the information they need to make a reasonable judgement about the alternative policies they are voting for.

This analysis is of The Advertiser's print and digital political news coverage from January 31 to March 17 2018 and is an indicative case study of News Ltd newspapers (print and digital) treatment of Labor policies more generally.

## **Submission to Digital Platforms Inquiry**

# The Advertiser's SA election coverage

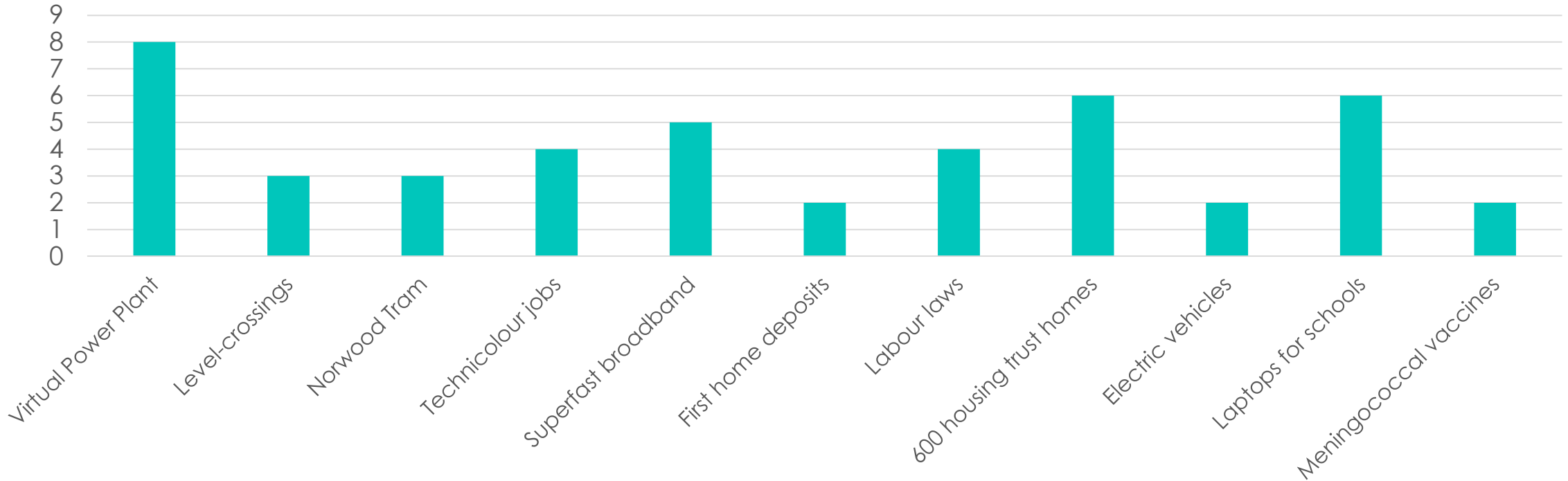
During the recent South Australian election, The Advertiser paid little attention to election announcements by the Labor government.

Traditional newspaper content is mirrored in The Advertiser's digital news website and social media platforms for [AdelaideNow.com.au](http://AdelaideNow.com.au)

# Major Election Announcements by Labor

- Renewable energy Virtual Power Plant consisting of solar panels for 50,000 low-income households
- The removal of seven level crossings
- Extending the tramline to the Norwood in the eastern suburbs
- The success of job creation policies to bring multinational companies to SA to which Labor attributes 9,000 new high skilled jobs, such as 500 new jobs at Technicolour
- Access to a superfast NBN for Adelaide households and businesses
- An interest-free loan scheme to help give first home-buyers access to a 25% deposit,
- Labour laws protecting workers' from unsafe workplaces and exploitation
- Investment in 600 new housing trust homes
- Waiving stamp duty and registration for 5 years for electric vehicles
- Laptops for high school students
- Free meningococcal vaccinations for all babies.

## Articles mentioning Labor policy



**All these major announcements were mentioned in eight or less articles in The Advertiser during the election.**

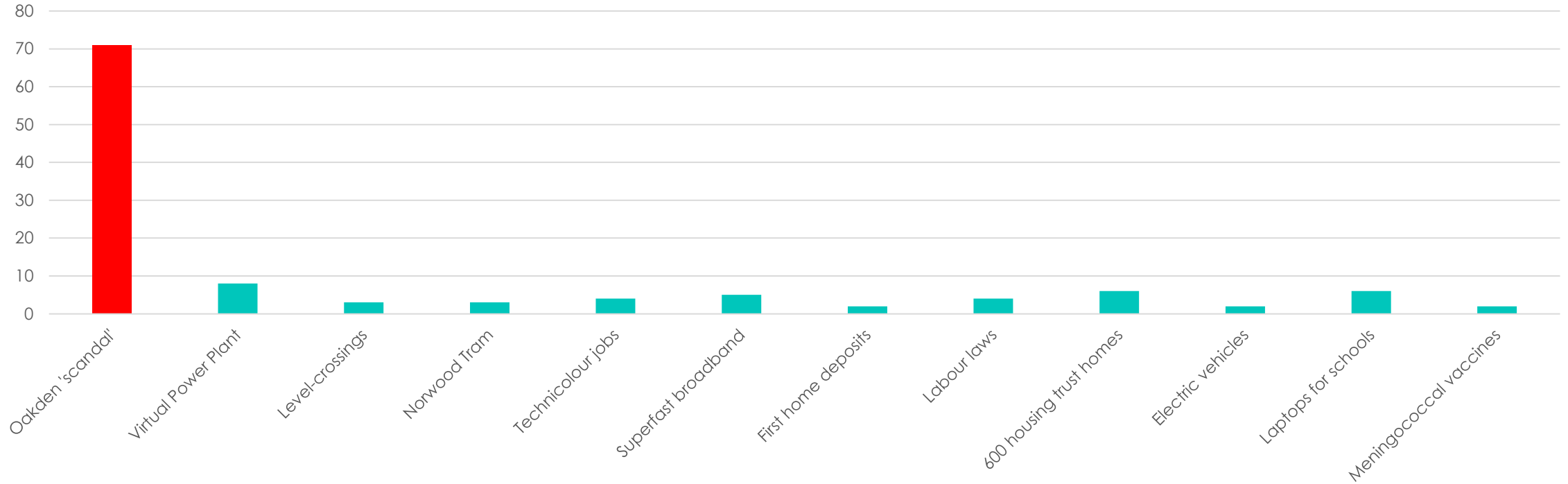
**Note:** these article numbers are not discrete - one article listed all policies. These mentions also include letters to the editor. It is also noteworthy that the policies were often mentioned in negative coverage, particularly in letters to the editor. *Source: Proquest Australia & New Zealand Newsstream*

# The Oakden 'Scandal'

The Oakden aged-care facility 'scandal' was the number one Labor related election story, with 71 articles mentioning, or solely about the scandal, including 5 front page articles.



## Comparing Oakden coverage to Labor policy coverage



**This graph shows the stark imbalance between Labor policy coverage, and the Oakden 'scandal'**

# Positive story about Labor tucked away



- This positive story about a Labor policy, reporting the Tesla battery had reduced South Australian power bills by \$37 million in just 3 months, was tucked away on page 17 of the printed newspaper, with similarly scant coverage on the online edition.



South Australian voters have a right to know what policies each party is promising to implement before they go into a polling booth.

When The Advertiser doesn't give the Labor Party the opportunity to put their electoral case forward, democracy is the loser.

**Democracy is the loser**

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

ZACK THE BRAVE FIND YOUR DREAM HOME PORT TEAM POSTER 2018

FESTIVALS FOOTY MUSIC RACING

OUR MEGA WEEKEND

SA Health official in crime probe

Seven days before state poll, business says:

## TIME TO LIFT

STREAM EVERY ROUND OF THE AFL LIVE

ACCESS ALL AREAS

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

## THE BIG RACING FIX

MELBOURNE CUP TARGETED (PAGE 4 SPORT)

Marine park leaves proud fisherman high and dry

Josh pumps up hydro

Controversial bid for 75pc renewable power

## GREEN LAND

THE GREAT FRINGE TASTE TEST STARTS PAGE 33

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

GREAT NEW BOOK TODAY Naughty Amelia Jane THE CLASSIC MUSIC COLLECTION

MISSION TO MARS Why Elon Musk is going there in a car (PAGE 1)

Power cut in surgery

EXCLUSIVE \$26m hub to give soccer a kick along

GRIDLOCK Why commuters are ditching their cars (P2)

Joyce: 'I'm not proud'

## 60 KIDS IN A CLASSROOM

EXCLUSIVE Crowded school has lessons in library and staffroom

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

LABOR'S PLAN TO RUN TRAMS TO NORWOOD (REPORT PAGE 7)

HOT WHEELS FINDON SKID KIDS CELEBRATE 60 YEARS OF STUNTS (SEE PAGE 5)

RACHEL DIVES INTO HER NEW LIFE (SEE PAGE 8)

Councils face audit

## LEFT IN LIMBO

EXCLUSIVE Four days in Emergency as mental health patients stuck in 'bed block' crisis

PETER COSGROVE RETURNS TO BAGHDAD (PAGE 8)

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

PRIDE OF AUSTRALIA AWARDS HOW HARRIETTE MADE A DIFFERENCE (SEE PAGE 3)

Mad on AFL? Get the full story with the Full-On Footy Pass From \$9.99 per week. Sign up TODAY. \$24.99 PER MONTH.

OUR DAY OF SHAME

ICAC report slams staff at aged-care ombudsman

Former labelled 'bully'

Grieving families demand more answers

New call for open corruption hearings

ADLAIDE 500 OF AUSTRALIAN

Holden heroes are ready to roar (P8-9 + SPORT)

CAR RECALL WARNING ON 'RUSSIAN ROULETTE' AIRBAGS (P9)

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

IT'S THE STATE ELECTION RAP BATTLE! (COLUMN PAGE 1)

EMBATTLED BARNARDY JOYCE LABELS COMPLAINT 'SPURIOUS' (P8)

HERE COMES ALEX TO SAVE THE DAY (P8)

## DRUG DATA SHOCK

EXCLUSIVE One newborn a week suffers withdrawals

LIVE FUEL PRICES WIN FOR DRIVERS

SA BEST DEMANDS ROYAL COMMISSION

HEALTH CONDITION

D-DAY FOR BEAUMONT MYSTERY

FOLLOW THE STORY ONLINE FROM 7AM TODAY AT ONLINESTORY.COM.AU

Don't just have an opinion. Vote with it.

Take your opinion to the 2018 State Election this March and use it to vote for the South Australia you want. Email or update your details by 12 noon, Friday 23 February.

ECSA SA.GOV.AU

WEATHER FORECAST TODAY SUNNY 28°C TOMORROW SUNNY 31°C

# The Advertiser

WE'VE GOT YOU

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON The Adelaide Strikers' men's and women's teams both play tonight for a spot in their Big Bash finals (SEE SPORT)

HEALTH CONDITION

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Example front pages showing negative Labor coverage

According to the terms of reference for the Digital Platforms Inquiry, submissions were invited on the topic of 'the impact of platform service providers on the level of choice and quality of news and journalistic content to consumers'. This submission relates specifically to the limited amount of choice the South Australians have in political news sources, and the quality and objective standard of that limited news source.

As this analysis shows, South Australian voters who rely on their political news from The Advertiser would have had to scour the paper every single day to find news of Labor policy announcements. The information that was useful to them in the election booth just wasn't provided, and there is no other major metropolitan newspaper in the state to fill this void.

**Victoria Fielding**

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## Conclusion