



30 June 2016

Sue McGrath
National Policy Manager
COTA Australia
smcgrath@cota.org.au

Dear Ms McGrath,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to COTA Australia's election priorities.

Our policies in the areas you outlined are attached.

Yours sincerely,

ALP Information Services Unit
Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters
www.alp.org.au



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Health Care for Healthy Ageing

A Shorten Labor Government will:

- Restore indexation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule from 1 January 2017.
- Scrap the Abbott-Turnbull Government's cuts to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), ensuring there will be no increase to the co-payments or safety net thresholds on top of regular indexation.
- Establish a permanent Australian Healthcare Reform Commission to assist all levels of government to continuously improve our healthcare system. Within the Commission, Labor will establish a new Centre for Medicare and Healthcare System Innovation to develop, trial, evaluate and implement new payment and service delivery models that aim to reduce health expenditure while improving the quality and safety of care.
- Invest an additional \$100 million over two years to help develop new models of integrated primary care including the development of a unique Australian model of patient-centred medical homes – Your Family Doctor. Labor will ensure an appropriate mix of launch sites in metropolitan, regional and rural areas, so that the models developed meet the needs of all Australians.
- Outline our priorities for implementation of the National Mental Health Commission's recommendations within the first 100 days of a Shorten Labor Government.
- Lead the negotiation on the development of the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. The Plan will be based on the principles of National Leadership and Regional Integration which has been recommended by the National Mental Health Commission's review. In recognition of the need for multi-departmental engagement and cross jurisdictional sign-off, Labor will seek agreement to the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Development of the Plan will take into consideration the Mental Health Services Planning Framework, an initiative established under Labor that will provide the most comprehensive analysis of need, available service types and costings.
- Use the existing Primary Health Network structure to extend the scope of regional health services to include regionally-tailored mental health services. Integrating regional services through the Primary Health Networks will support a model of place-based care which focuses on the needs of the individual, particularly where they have multiple conditions which require a multidisciplinary primary healthcare approach.
- Invest \$35 million over four years to roll out new models of palliative care, to ensure Australians have greater choice and control over where and how they live their final days.
- Partner with Alzheimer's Australia to improve the lives of those living with dementia and their families, through the development of a National Dementia Strategy and the creation of dementia-friendly communities across the country.

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PO BOX 6222, KINGSTON ACT 2604 ABN 38 318 251 221
T 03 8625 5000, Twitter: @AustralianLabor, facebook.com/LaborConnect, www.alp.org.au

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A Shorten Labor Government will invest \$300 million in a five-point plan to prevent chronic disease, which includes:

- Investing in 50 Healthy Communities nationwide, to help communities at the greatest risk of chronic disease to stay well.
- Tackling obesity through Australia's first National Physical Activity Strategy and a National Nutrition Framework.
- Continuing the push to reduce smoking rates, particularly in at-risk communities.
- Addressing the harmful use of alcohol through a National Alcohol Strategy.
- Expanding the successful Better Health Channel into a nationwide platform for health information.

The National Better Health Channel will be a national health information platform, providing the health information that all Australians need, and linking them to the services and supports available in their communities, to help Australians better manage their own health.

Aged Care Reform

In 2012, Labor delivered one of the biggest reforms to aged care and ageing in a generation – the \$3.7 billion, ten-year strategy known as the Living Longer, Living Better (LLLB) aged care package.

These reforms were designed to build a fairer, more sustainable and nationally consistent aged care system to meet the challenges of an ageing population.

Today, these reforms are delivering choice, easier access and better care for older Australians, their families and carers, while ensuring the aged care and services industry is equipped to deal with the dramatic growth in our ageing population.

But there is more to do.

A Shorten Labor Government will:

- Address ongoing problems in the My Aged Care gateway in the first 100 days of government, in consultation with the aged care sector, consumers and medical and allied health providers.
- Conduct an independent review of the LLLB reforms with a view to moving to greater flexibility, choice and consumer control by 1 July 2017, with a particular focus on the Aged Care Funding Instrument, following concerns raised by the sector and growing costs in this area.

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- Work with the aged care sector and unions to ensure we can meet the challenges of the increasing need for aged care workers, as well as career progression and conditions for this low paid and predominantly female workforce.
- Establish the Active Ageing Fund to support programs to reduce the risk of dementia, prevent falls, improve physical activities and healthy lifestyles – enabling older Australians to age well in their own communities, at home and at work.

Labor believes that longer lives are one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century, and that longevity will define the 21st century.

Labor is committed to ensuring that Australia becomes an age-friendly nation.

Adequate and Fair Retirement Incomes

Labor will scrap the Abbott-Turnbull Government's plans to:

- Raise the Age Pension qualifying age to 70.
- Reduce the period of time pensioners can spend overseas without losing their full pension.
- Abolish the Pensioner Education Supplement and Education Entry Payment.

A Shorten Labor Government will undertake an independent review into the pension assets test, which will examine:

- The current interaction between the pension and superannuation systems, and how the pension system might be improved to more effectively encourage superannuation and other savings now and into the future.
- Current means testing arrangements, including the impact of recent changes to the pension assets test, and how those arrangements might be improved to ensure an adequate retirement income for existing and future retirees.
- Current disincentives to save for retirement and how those disincentives might be mitigated now and into the future.

The review will also examine:

- The most effective way to support employment of people in receipt of the age pension where they want to work, and ways to address disincentives and barriers to employment.
- The most effective way to improve housing options for people in receipt of a pension.
- The most effective way to support people in manual occupations who find it hard to keep working until they reach the current pension age.

This review will be undertaken by an independent panel of advisers.

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A Shorten Labor Government will put the retirement income system on a sustainable footing by targeting superannuation tax concessions to those that need them the most, including:

- Reforming the tax exemption for earnings on superannuation balances that exceed \$1.5 million.
- Reducing the Higher Income Superannuation Charge (HISC) threshold from \$300,000 to \$250,000.

In government, Labor introduced the Low Income Superannuation Contribution (LISC), to help low income earners save for retirement. The majority of those who benefited were women – 2.1 million women, or one in two working women.

The Abbott-Turnbull Government sought to abolish the LISC, but failed due to a determined campaign by Labor and community groups, and has now backed away from those plans.

Labor will also amend the Sex Discrimination Act to ensure companies are able to make higher superannuation payments for their female employees when they wish to do so. As part of this process, we will ask the Australian Human Rights Commission to advise on the most appropriate legislative approach.

Mature Age Employment

Under Labor's New Jobs Tax Cut, small businesses will be able to claim a tax deduction of up to \$20,000 per worker to offset the wages of up to five new employees.

Priority workers for the New Jobs Tax Cut include unemployed people over the age of 55, as well as carers returning to the workforce. It will help up to 30,000 Australians into new jobs each year.

A Shorten Labor Government will introduce an anonymous CV application process for new graduates and entry-level applicants for roles in the Australian Public Service. New applications will be de-identified to remove references to a person's gender, ethnicity and age when it progresses through the assessment and evaluation process for new roles.

A Shorten Labor Government will undertake a comprehensive review into the adequacy of the Newstart Allowance and other related payments.

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Affordable, Appropriate and Secure Housing

Labor will develop a national affordable housing strategy to drive the development of an agreed, coordinated approach to addressing housing affordability in Australia.

A Shorten Labor Government will:

- Appoint a Minister for Housing and Homelessness.
- Make housing affordability a standing item on the COAG agenda.
- Include a more comprehensive coverage of housing as part of the Closing the Gap report.
- Develop an Affordable Housing Industry Plan to ensure the long-term development of a sustainable affordable housing sector.
- Re-establish the National Housing Supply Council.
- Investigate the development of national rental standards.

A Shorten Labor Government, in partnership with the State and Territories, will:

- Aim to halve homelessness by 2025.
- Agree on national targets to increase the supply of affordable housing dwellings.
- Report annually through COAG on progress towards the targets.

Establish a Comprehensive, Coordinated, Plan of Action on Climate Change:

Labor has a clear plan to combat climate change by getting Australia's pollution levels back under control. Our plan will ensure that Australian business and workers are in the best position possible to benefit from the huge investment and job opportunities that come from a renewable energy and clean technology future.

This policy is underpinned by Labor's fundamental commitment to fairness, ensuring that Australians are supported through this transition and no one is left behind. That's why we have taken an approach that allows us to appropriately respond to economic circumstances, while also meeting long term environmental goals.

Labor's Climate Change Action Plan provides a pathway for an orderly transition to a low pollution economy through six key elements:

- Making Australia a Leading Renewable Energy Economy by ensuring that 50 per cent of the nation's electricity is sourced from renewable energy by 2030, providing the Clean Energy Finance Corporation with more certainty and more flexibility, with less red tape and more technology options, and developing new community power projects.
- Cleaner Power Generation to ensure the transition in Australia's electricity generation from old, heavy-polluting coal fired power stations to modern, clean energy is an orderly transition, with concrete support for workers and communities.

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- Building Jobs and Industry to maximise the job opportunities from clean energy and clean technology, while also securing the future of critical Australian industries through a Strategic Industries Taskforce. This will be supported by a Strategic Industries Reserve Fund of \$300 million to support the transition of key industries through to 2020.
- Cutting Pollution through an Emissions Trading Scheme, placing a legal cap on pollution from large polluters through a cap and offsets scheme, while supporting industry by ensuring access to international carbon offsets.
- Capturing Carbon on the Land by reinvigorating the Carbon Farming Initiative to encourage carbon storage on the land and in agriculture, and taking decisive action to deal with broad scale land clearing.
- Increasing Energy Efficiency to double Australia's national energy productivity by 2030 and implementing new emissions standards for motor vehicles to cut pollution on our roads.

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