

Chapter One

Enduring Labor Values

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Preamble

The Australian Labor Party has worked for more than a hundred years to build a better future for Australia.

Labor's enduring values, which were born in the collective struggle for better living and working conditions in the last century, are reflected in the progressive and reformist tradition which the Party embodies and in the continuing pursuit of a society which values our security; champions fairness and equality; believes in communities and families; promotes social justice and compassion; values environmental sustainability; supports freedom, liberty and enterprise; and strives for opportunity and aspiration.

- We value our nation's long-term prosperity—achieved through a modern, competitive economy and ensuring quality of life for all Australians.
- We value our security—security for our family, our community and our country. We are proud of our men and women who have served our nation and those who have died in the service of their nation.
- We value fairness and equality and believe in a fair go for all—we believe that a nation should be governed in the broader interests of all, not in the sectional interests of a few.
- We value our communities and our families. Our families are the bedrock of our communities which we need to nurture, protect and support.
- We value our democratic and public institutions, which have the power to address exclusion and disadvantage.
- We value compassion and dedicate ourselves to social justice. We believe that it is the Australian way to work together to help alleviate suffering and disadvantage when we can.
- We value the environment that sustains us all—and which we must now sustain with our country's united and urgent effort.
- We value liberty—the freedom to hold whatever beliefs we choose while respecting those of others; the freedom to express those beliefs without fear or favour; and the economic freedom to pursue our own employment and enterprise.
- We believe in opportunity, creativity and innovation as the basis for individual aspiration and being rewarded for hard work, achievement and success. These are the Labor Party's timeless values and they are fundamental Australian values.

These are the values that have given this great nation of ours its moral compass—not allowing us to just look after ourselves, but always prompting us to look beyond ourselves. Not just to ask what is in this for me and my immediate family, but also to ask what is in this for my community and my country. These are the values that must now guide Australia's future.

Australia's Future Challenges

1. Australia is a nation of remarkable achievements. We are the first people in history to have voted a nation into existence—a nation formed in peace, not in war. We are one of the oldest parliamentary democracies in the world. Our parliament has a proud history of leading the world in social reforms like reasonable working hours, the right of women to vote, a fair wage, an independent umpire for industrial disputes, compensation for injured workers, and provision of the age and widow's pensions. Since its early convict days, Australia has grown

with waves of arrivals from all corners of the globe, each making unique contributions to our national identity. Despite its small population, Australia has played a significant role for more than a century in fighting the forces of oppression, injustice and tyranny, supporting international efforts in favour of peace, freedom and the alleviation of suffering. And in more recent decades, Australia has begun to address the great injustices done to its Indigenous people.

- 2.** Australia now faces new challenges at home and abroad in seeking to sustain long-term security and prosperity. Climate change and the emergence of global terrorist movements are adding to uncertainty about the future. The global economy is undergoing tectonic changes with the rise of China and India creating enormous challenges as well as opportunities for industrialised economies such as Australia. At home, we face the challenges of declining productivity, an ageing population, water shortages, and the need to ensure that Australia can sustain its prosperity after the resources boom subsides. To be prepared for the future, we need new economic policies that restore productivity growth, increase workforce participation, tackle long-term challenges and help make Australia competitive again.
- 3.** Australia will be best placed to confront these challenges if we maintain the best values that have characterised our nation. Many of those values have been undermined since Labor was last in government. Now, we must restore the balance. We know that the truest measure of a society is the care it provides for those most in need, and the opportunity it provides for every person to realise his or her full potential. From the birth of the Australian nation, our character has been defined by our belief in the fair go for everyone—an egalitarian spirit that says all Australians are equal, no matter their background or their social standing. Since the founding of our nation, we have sought to make Australia the best place in the world for working people to raise a family.
- 4.** The Australian Labor Party has played a major role in building the modern Australian nation. Inspired by enduring Labor values, in government Labor has implemented great reforms throughout the nation's history—from the establishment of basic rights for working people in the early 20th century to the opening up of the Australian economy to the world in the late 20th century. The next Labor government will embrace this great tradition of reform and national renewal—to tackle the challenges of a new era, while holding steadfast to the enduring Labor values that have served the nation so well in the past.

Our Foundations

- 5.** Labor's commitment to a fair go for everyone is at the foundation of our approach to government. Fairness has been grafted into the Australian soul throughout the past century, in large part because of the sustained efforts of the Australian labour movement. Fairness is a guiding principle for Labor in government, whether we are dealing with Australians' rights at work, access to educational opportunities and health care, our tax and welfare systems, or many other aspects of government policy. Our nation's longstanding belief in the fair go is now under pressure from many directions. Some believe that it must now be sacrificed to other objectives. In contrast, Labor believes that sustaining our commitment to fairness will best ensure that Australia meets our future challenges successfully.
- 6.** Labor believes that one of the most important roles of government is to support Australian families. For most people, family is central to personal well-being. Families provide individuals with their most important and enduring relationships, fulfilling many of their deepest needs. Families need to be supported in their efforts to balance the pressures of work and family life. Restoring the balance in our industrial relations system will help working families to cope with

these pressures, such as by ensuring reasonable working hours, proper remuneration for their work and the opportunity for families to spend holiday time together. Family life will also be strengthened by ensuring universal access to first rate health services, educational opportunities, modern infrastructure and community services.

- 7.** Labor believes in the unique and positive role that can be played by government. Government can play an important role in supporting and complementing the contributions of individuals, families and communities. Our national government is the one institution that all Australians truly own and control through their right to vote. Government alone can ensure the universal provision of quality health care, education and a social safety net; implement national security measures and plan national infrastructure needs; and implement legislation to protect the natural environment and create a legal framework for competitive markets. In these and other areas, government involvement achieves better outcomes for all Australians. Labor believes that Australia's federal system of government must be reformed to establish cleaner lines of responsibility and accountability, end the blame game between different levels of government and to deliver better outcomes for all Australians and serve the common good.
- 8.** Labor is committed to its future partnership with the trade union movement. The Australian Labor Party was born out of the trade union movement and its struggle for a secure, decent and dignified life for working people. In partnership with the labour movement, Labor governments in the past have achieved great things for working Australians. Labor is committed to protecting and advancing the rights of working families, including their rights to join trade unions, to organise in the workplace, to bargain collectively and to exercise their right to strike. Our partnership with the trade union movement remains crucial for Australia's future. The trade union movement remains one of the largest and most representative community movements in Australia, representing millions of Australians and their families. The next Labor Government will restore the balance between the interests of different parts of the Australian community, and build a constructive partnership with the trade union movement to foster productive and harmonious workplaces in the interests of working families.

Enduring Values

- 9. Long-term prosperity.** Labor is committed to building a modern economy that competes successfully in global markets for agriculture, resources, manufactures and services. We believe that our long-term prosperity is at risk if we rely too heavily on one sector of the economy for our economic growth. Labor believes that in the long-term, building a modern, competitive economy is the best way of protecting the living standards of all Australians. We believe in ensuring that the benefits of prosperity are shared in all the regions of our nation through market-based initiatives and government action. By building long-term prosperity we can also ensure that our nation is able to sustain high quality public services and a generous safety net for those in need. Building long-term prosperity involves lifting growth and productivity through:
 - investing in an education revolution that lifts the quantum of investment and the quality of outcomes in our education system;
 - building advanced infrastructure such as transport and communications networks;
 - fostering innovation, research and creativity in Australian businesses; and
 - modern regulatory frameworks for business.

10. Fairness. Labor believes that all people are created equal in their entitlement to dignity and respect. We cannot afford to waste the talent or potential of any Australian. For Labor, government has a critical role in ensuring:

- respect for every person's rights at work;
- equal opportunity and protection from unfair discrimination;
- sufficient basic income and assets to provide quality of life for all Australians;
- special support for those with particular needs (including Indigenous Australians, women, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, the long-term unemployed, homeless, disabled, frail, aged and mentally ill);
- universal social rights including the opportunity for fulfilling employment, quality education, universal health care and access to affordable housing; and
- a more equitable distribution of wealth and income.

11. Fairness and flexibility at work. Labor believes in fairness at work as a fundamental Australian value. Work is one of the most important parts of our lives, which besides its contribution to economic output also contributes to personal financial security, identity and a sense of community. Fairness at work includes:

- the abolition of Australian Workplace Agreements and an industrial relations system in which there will be no statutory individual employment agreements;
- a strong safety net of minimum conditions;
- access to an independent industrial umpire which will ensure fair wages and conditions and settle disputes;
- the right to bargain collectively for decent wages and conditions;
- the right to join a union and be represented by a union;
- fair rights if employees are unfairly dismissed; and
- adherence by the Australian government to its international obligations particularly, as ratified, International Labour Organisation Conventions.

12. Security. Governments have a fundamental obligation to safeguard national security as well as protecting the security of individuals, communities and the environment. Past Labor governments led Australia through times of war and danger, successfully defending our security when even the survival of our democratic nation was at risk. Australia once again faces grave security threats, including from terrorism, regional instability and accelerating climate change. These threats must be confronted without resort to the manipulation of fear and political exploitation. In response to the national security threat Labor is committed to increased engagement in our region and ensuring that our defence forces, police and emergency services are equipped to meet the new challenges. Labor is opposed to the growth of unilateralism and the undermining of the United Nations. Labor is committed to promoting peace on an international and regional basis.

13. Sustainability. Labor believes that our commitment to social justice extends to those of future generations. As a matter of intergenerational justice, we must consider how the decisions we make today will impact on future generations. Labor's approach to the economy, the environment, international relations and our communities will reflect this responsibility. In particular, the interests of future generations must be taken into account in our response to the threat of climate change—this is the greatest moral challenge of our age, and it demands decisive action. Labor also understands that our custodianship of this country, and its unique plants and animals, entails special obligations. Labor recognises the intrinsic value of biodiversity, alongside its economic, recreational and spiritual value. Labor

will manage our natural heritage so future generations can experience the rich diversity we have inherited, in particular acting to halt the devastating and permanent impacts of extinction.

- 14. Opportunity.** Labor is committed to giving all Australians the opportunity to achieve their potential and contribute to their community:
- to give every Australian the best educational opportunities, from early childhood education through school to vocational and technical education, and to university and beyond;
 - to help individuals build family life and advance their living standards and quality of life;
 - to gain access to employment, education, housing, health care, welfare services, information technology, culture and recreation, and to exercise their legal rights; and
 - to participate constructively in the life of the nation and the communities within it.
- 15. Compassion.** Labor believes in social justice. As a nation, our greatness lies in our treatment of those among us who are most marginalised. We believe in a society that protects and supports those who face difficulties and disadvantage whether because of disability, illness, old age, misfortune or other factors that are make it hard for a person to cope. Labor holds to its tradition of reaching out, embracing, protecting and supporting those in need—as well as supporting those who help people in need.
- 16. Human Rights.** Labor is committed to a just and tolerant society which fully protects the rights and freedoms of all Australians. Labor supports the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international treaties to which Australia is a party. This includes the fundamental political and civil rights of everyone to freedom of conscience, expression and association, and to due process of law. We respect basic human rights such as access to tertiary education on the basis of merit, access to adequate health care and the right to reasonable working conditions. Labor supports the introduction into Australian domestic law of the rights that are recognised and protected in the international treaties, conventions and protocols to which Australia is a party. In introducing these rights, Labor will ensure that existing rights are also protected.
- 17. Responsibility.** Labor believes that for all Australian citizens, rights must be accompanied by responsibilities. Those responsibilities must be exercised:
- by individuals, toward each other and the community which supports them;
 - by social and economic groups and organisations, toward each other and the wider community;
 - by governments, toward their own people, other governments and the wider international community; and
 - by all of us, towards our environment and future generations.
- 18. Democracy.** Labor is committed to the essential democratic principle that every person should have the right to a say, directly or indirectly, in the decisions that affect his or her life. That right includes:
- democratic participation in the choice of governments;
 - the opportunity for representation in the workplace; and
 - the opportunity for a voice in planning, the environment, the delivery of public services and other aspects of community life.
- 19. Community.** As a nation we are at our best when we are working together for the common good. Labor believes that governments can play an important role in building stronger relationships at each level of our society.

- Within Australia, Labor is committed to a society in which every person is able to actively and productively participate in the life of the community, and the whole community responds sensitively to individual needs.
- Labor is committed to the strong role played by community organisations in both helping individuals in need and in building a sense of community.
- Labor is committed to a community that embraces cultural diversity—a society that celebrates diversity and respects both the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizenship.
- Labor is committed to genuine reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We believe that reconciliation is crucial to our capacity to face the world as a united, peaceful and just nation.

20. International engagement. Labor believes that Australia's national interests are best protected and advanced by promoting peace and cooperation rather than confrontation and conflict. This includes a commitment to:

- international forums such as the United Nations;
- our historic alliance with the United States;
- our role in ensuring peace and stability in our own region; and
- our support of international efforts to confront major global challenges such as climate change and extreme poverty.

Australia's Future

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21. Labor embraces the future with optimism. Our enduring values will help set our course for the future as we confront major global and domestic challenges. Whatever our past achievements, our future can be better. We reject the pessimistic views of some who say that to be competitive we must sacrifice fairness and compassion, or that our national security requires us to sacrifice basic democratic principles. These are false choices. Indeed, the competitiveness of our economy and action by Labor in government will help build a fairer society. So too, a principled response to security threats at home and abroad will strengthen Australia's long-term security.

22. Now is the time for a reforming Australian Labor Government—to confront long-term challenges that have been neglected; to restore the balance; to ensure fairness in our workplaces; to invest in our future; to set a vision for ourselves to become the best educated country, the most skilled economy, and the best trained workforce in the world; to build the modern infrastructure that lays a platform for future growth; to make Australia competitive again, laying the foundations for long-term prosperity. Only a Labor Government can reclaim Australia's identity as a diverse and united multicultural nation, with the foundation of our enduring values, and united with a common hope for our future.