

Chapter Nine

9

Combating Climate Change and Building a Sustainable Environment

Climate change represents one of the greatest threats to the future prosperity and security of Australia and its region. It is critical for Australia to implement long-term measures to address the environmental and economic challenges of climate change, and to engage constructively with global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Labor believes it is a vital responsibility of the Commonwealth to protect the environment now and for future generations. The long-term prosperity and well-being of Australia depends on sustaining our environment and tackling critical challenges such as addressing water shortages, protecting threatened species and reducing carbon emissions.

Principles

1. Labor believes all Australians deserve to live in a healthy environment with clean air, clean water, safe food, abundant wildlife and plenty of green space for our children to play in.
2. Labor believes that Australia must take strong measures to avoid dangerous climate change and prepare for an environmentally sustainable future.
3. A healthy and sustainable environment will improve living standards, create jobs and encourage growth of sustainable industries.
4. Ecologically sustainable development represents a future for regional Australia, with regional delivery of natural resource management consistent with national priorities, sustainable agricultural practices and opportunities for new industries.
5. The international community increasingly recognises the need for sustainable development. Labor believes that early environmental action will position Australia to take advantage of growing global markets for sustainable products and services and deliver improved quality of life.
6. Labor supports the precautionary principle, which states that if there is a high risk of serious or irreversible adverse impacts resulting from resource use, use should only be permitted if those impacts can be mitigated or there are overwhelming grounds for proceeding in the national interest. The absence of scientific certainty should not be a reason for postponing measures to prevent or mitigate negative impacts.

Climate Change

7. Labor recognises there is overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions is making Australia hotter, the oceans warmer and our major cities and towns drier.
8. Labor believes climate change is the most serious environmental challenge facing the world today.
9. Labor notes the scientific evidence that climate change increases the intensity of cyclones and hurricanes, meaning Australia will have more Category 4 and Category 5 cyclones.

- 10.** Labor is concerned that Australia, with its long coastline and unique wildlife, is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- 11.** Labor is concerned that if climate change remains unchecked, it will severely damage Australia's agricultural and tourism industries while also impacting on many Australians through increases in tropical diseases and heat related stress, extreme weather events, coastal erosion and further water restrictions.
- 12.** Labor is concerned that climate change threatens Australian biodiversity and that biodiversity loss weakens our ecosystems' capacity to absorb and adjust to climate change.
- 13.** Labor recognises that climate change could have a dramatic impact on the lives of people living in low lying islands in the Torres Strait and the South Pacific, as well as those living near the coast of mainland Australia.
- 14.** Labor will develop a national climate change adaptation strategy that builds resilience in our tourism industry, our agricultural industry, our water supplies and our energy systems.
- 15.** Labor believes dangerous climate change can be avoided if governments, communities and businesses work together, and that national leadership is needed to map the path for Australia towards a sustainable, carbon-constrained economy and society.
- 16.** Labor believes that delaying effective action on climate change will significantly add to the costs for business and the wider Australian economy.
- 17.** Labor believes Australia must act as a responsible member of the world community and commit to greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Cutting Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- 18.** Labor will cut Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on year 2000 levels by 2050.
- 19.** Labor believes that establishing a long-term target for greenhouse gas emission reductions provides certainty for energy companies and helps industry make informed decisions about which technologies they should be investing in—allowing the economy and society to adjust in a reasonable timeframe.
- 20.** Labor will ratify the Kyoto Protocol and join with 167 other countries in the effort to avoid dangerous climate change.
- 21.** Labor believes the Kyoto Protocol is an important first step and that without ratifying Kyoto some of our businesses will continue to miss out on effective participation in international schemes that offer substantial financial rewards for greenhouse gas reductions.
- 22.** Labor will establish a National Emissions Trading Scheme to deliver a price signal for carbon.
- 23.** Labor believes a National Emissions Trading Scheme will provide a long-term incentive to cut emissions further and act as a mechanism for trading, so that energy is allocated efficiently in the economy and greater private investment in clean energy technology is encouraged.
- 24.** Labor will introduce a climate change trigger in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act so that major new projects are assessed for their climate change impact as part of any environmental assessment process.
- 25.** Labor will encourage industry to take up new and cleaner energy technology by reconfiguring the incentives and disincentives in our tax system to encourage investment in cleaner and renewable energy technologies.

- 26.** Labor believes that adequate funding of research into the science of climate change, emission reduction technologies and adaptation management is vital if Australia is to meet the challenge of climate change.
- 27.** Labor will fund research into renewable energy and support research, development and demonstration aimed at technologies to reduce emissions from fossil fuels, including cleaner coal and gas, and technologies to capture and store carbon dioxide to prevent its release to the atmosphere.
- 28.** Labor is committed to the development of the renewable energy industry, which will play an important role in reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.
- 29.** Labor supports a Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) which will promote the growth of renewable energy industries such as solar and wind power. Labor will ensure a genuine and substantial increase in the percentage of Australia's energy generated from renewable sources.
- 30.** Labor recognises the enormous potential for improved energy efficiency is a largely untapped resource for improved business productivity and savings for households and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Labor will adopt an ambitious, national energy efficiency program and work in partnership with energy suppliers, regulators and State and local governments to ensure that every business and household in Australia has improved access to energy savings technologies and advice.
- 31.** Labor will work with State, Territory and local governments to ensure that five star energy efficiency provisions are mandatory for new homes.
- 32.** Labor supports the promotion of demand management and energy efficiency throughout the national electricity and gas systems, with programs targeting both domestic and industrial energy use. Labor will ensure the national electricity market delivers environmental outcomes by promoting renewable energy and cleaner fuels and removing barriers to sound demand management and cogeneration investments.
- 33.** Labor is committed to taking a leadership role in the efficient use of energy and will ensure all government departments and agencies adopt best practice energy efficiency.
- 34.** Labor supports the introduction of measures to promote consumer uptake of energy efficient technologies and renewable energy.
- 35.** Labor is committed to expanding national, mandatory energy efficiency design and performance standards, including those for domestic appliances, industrial equipment, residential and non-residential buildings and motor vehicles.
- 36.** Labor supports the promotion of less greenhouse-intensive forms of transport, including public transport, cycling and walking.
- 37.** Labor will promote more sustainable management of Australia's vegetation cover and an end to broad-scale clearing. Labor is committed to cooperation between States, Territories and landholders to achieve net expansion of vegetation cover and reduction in emissions related to land use change.

Water

- 38.** Labor notes that Australia is the world's driest inhabited continent, yet we are amongst its highest per capita users of water.
- 39.** Labor notes that while Australia has enough water it is a long way away from where most Australians live.

- 40.** Labor notes that Australia's water resources are highly variable and range from heavily regulated rivers and groundwater resources, to rivers and aquifers in almost pristine condition.
- 41.** Labor notes that over 65 per cent of Australia's water runoff is in the sparsely populated tropical north, but Australia's large urban areas are in southern Australia and irrigated agriculture is principally located in the Murray Darling Basin, where only 6.1 per cent of the national run-off occurs.
- 42.** Labor notes that by 2030 water supplies for Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and many rural towns could drop by 25 per cent, because climate change will cut rainfall and increase evaporation. Climate change means rainfall in the Murray Darling basin is expected to fall by 25 per cent and evaporation rates will also rise. This will hurt Australian agriculture, our domestic food supply and exports and directly threaten the supply of drinking water to Adelaide.
- 43.** Labor believes that ensuring sustainable supply and use of water is one of Australia's biggest environmental challenges.
- 44.** Labor believes there is no greater impetus for a thriving, healthy community and economy than healthy rivers and communities having a guaranteed water supply. Where there is water, there is life—and when the water dries up, a town closes and businesses leave.
- 45.** Water use and water supply in Australia is a national crisis and national leadership is needed to ensure Australia's towns and cities have a sustainable water supply.
- 46.** Labor is concerned that as a nation we have never really valued water and that our water supplies have been undervalued and over-allocated.
- 47.** Labor notes that, as Australia's population has grown, competition for water has also grown from the agricultural sector, from urban development and from industry and mining sectors. Labor is concerned that, as a consequence, the health of water supplies and their environments have suffered, and we have squandered the water resources of the nation.
- 48.** Labor believes Australia must stop its waste of water—in our cities and in agriculture, mining and industry.
- 49.** Labor believes Australia must establish economic frameworks that encourage water to be put to its most valuable use. We must recognise water is a finite resource.
- 50.** Labor supports a strong role for the Commonwealth in establishing water markets, supporting water recycling and encouraging innovation and new technological solutions to deliver a sustainable water supply for Australia.
- 51.** Labor will encourage the application of environmental infrastructure to Commonwealth property assets to capture rainfall and recycle waste water.
- 52.** Labor is concerned that unsustainable levels of extraction, and major alterations to the seasonal flow patterns of our rivers by dams and weirs have disturbed the natural balance in many river systems. Increasingly, algal blooms, pest species and salinity impact on our waterways. Without continued and concerted national effort, there is a real prospect of the economic as well as ecological collapse of major systems such as the Murray-Darling Basin. Labor will introduce mechanisms to encourage projects to address these issues.
- 53.** Labor is committed to providing science-based environmental flows to save the Murray River and repair the Murray-Darling Basin and other rivers facing similar degradation.

- 54.** Labor believes that revitalising the water flow and eco-systems of the Murray River and the Murray-Darling Basin should be a first order priority for the Commonwealth Government.
- 55.** Labor believes that the Murray River needs 1,500 gigalitres more water per year to be a healthy working river.
- 56.** Labor supports adding 1,500 gigalitres in annual environmental flows into the Murray. To achieve this, Labor supports market based options such as purchasing water from willing sellers or acquiring options to access water entitlements.
- 57.** Labor recognises the responsibility of all governments to provide safe and adequate drinking water to communities and to maintain the ecological health of river systems.
- 58.** Labor is committed to a national rivers program, in cooperation with State, Territory and local governments, industry and communities that provides adequate environmental flows to rivers, addresses encroaching salinity and enables the restoration of river systems currently in crisis. Australia's approach to rivers in the past has been to take as much water as we possibly could and leave the rest. Our approach in the future must be to determine and provide the level of environmental flows necessary to maintain a healthy river system and make better use of the water we can safely extract.
- 59.** Labor supports the adoption of water efficiency technologies and urban planning measures that improve the quality and integration of urban water, sewerage and drainage and the adoption of whole of catchment approaches.
- 60.** Labor supports recycling wastewater and sets a goal of 30 per cent of Australia's wastewater being recycled by 2015.
- 61.** Labor believes greater use of recycled water by industry and agriculture will free up valuable drinking water and help increase environmental water flows.
- 62.** Labor is committed to the sustainable use of groundwater. Labor acknowledges that personal and domestic water is an essential service and must be available to everyone. Labor will work with the State, Territories and local government to achieve access for all.
- 63.** Labor supports Australia ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Water Courses to ensure the equitable, cooperative and sustainable management of the world's 263 rivers which are shared by two or more countries.

Land Clearing

- 64.** Land clearing is the single biggest cause of dryland salinity; it is one of the greatest threats to endangered species of birds, plants and animals and it is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.
- 65.** Labor is opposed to broad-scale and unregulated land clearing.
- 66.** Labor will stop the continuing decline in our native vegetation cover.
- 67.** Labor will insist that funding of State, Territory and landholder projects is conditional upon the States, Territories and local government introducing appropriate clearing controls.
- 68.** Labor supports the introduction of national standards to strictly regulate approvals for land clearing.
- 69.** Labor will prevent the clearing of endangered and vulnerable threatened ecological communities and critical habitats for threatened species, and work with private landholders to deliver threatened species and ecological community recovery measures.

Biodiversity and Endangered Species

- 70.** Australia is one of only 17 megadiverse nations on earth. We have one of the most diverse collections of species, habitats and ecosystems of any developed nation on earth. As such, we have an obligation to future generations, and a global responsibility, to protect our biodiversity.
- 71.** Australia is facing a biodiversity extinction crisis. Twenty per cent of our species are threatened with extinction by the end of this century and the number of terrestrial bird and animal species listed as extinct, endangered or vulnerable rose by 41 per cent from 1995 to 2005. Australia leads the world in mammal extinctions and half our woodland birds could disappear by 2100.
- 72.** Our biodiversity is under great threat from climate change, land clearing for urban development and agriculture, the loss of native forests, the introduction of exotic species and the inadequacy of our system of funding for national parks and reserves.
- 73.** No generation has the right to appropriate biodiversity for its exclusive use and no government should accept species decline as inevitable.
- 74.** Labor is committed to a national approach to the protection of rare, vulnerable and endangered species and ecological communities, through the development, resourcing and implementation in cooperation with State and Territory governments of threat abatement and recovery plans.
- 75.** Labor will ensure that the schedules of nationally threatened species and ecological communities are kept up to date, ensuring State and Territory listings are considered promptly for national listing under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.
- 76.** The health of breeding bird populations is a visible and reliable measure of ecosystem health. Labor will introduce regular monitoring of the health of breeding bird populations as one indicator of ecosystem health.
- 77.** Labor acknowledges the contributions made by zoological parks through their research and development into captive breeding.

Invasive Species and Weeds

- 78.** Introduced weeds and feral animals, whether it's cane toads in Kakadu or foxes in Tasmania, are wreaking havoc on our environment.
- 79.** Labor will promote research into invasive species and weeds with a view to finding environmentally responsible means of dealing with these problems.
- 80.** Labor will fund measures to ensure that both public land and private land are managed to effectively control invasive species and weeds.

Sustainable Agriculture and Nature Conservation on Private Land

- 81.** Labor recognises the critical role of the rural community in the ongoing stewardship of our land. Labor is committed to working with rural communities and landholders in the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and whole-farm planning consistent with bio-regional strategies.
- 82.** Labor recognises that the good work of private landholders and volunteers in programs such as Landcare has been damaged by uncertainty and the short-term approach associated with funding through vehicles such as the Natural Heritage Trust.

- 83.** Labor is committed to building on the achievements of Landcare, encouraging the uptake of sustainable farming practices and maintaining support for the repair of our rural landscapes. Sustainable agriculture requires that the integrity of land, water and landscapes is not unnecessarily risked by man-made technologies and products without rigorous scientific assessment and community support.
- 84.** Genetically Modified (GM) crops will not be released unless they are safe to health, safe to the environment and beneficial to the economy. Safe and beneficial standards must be established beyond reasonable doubt. Standards must be met to the satisfaction of the government and also of the scientific community, the consumer community and, in the case of GM crops, to the satisfaction of the farming community. Accurate information on GM products must be provided to consumers and the community. The onus of proof that a product is 'safe and beneficial' lies with its developers. GM crops should not be introduced unless there is whole of community consensus. Labor will preserve the right of the States to implement and manage moratoria on the commercial production of GM crops.
- 85.** Labor will explore models that provide suitable financial recognition for landholders who have engaged in good environmental practice.
- 86.** Labor is committed to conservation and regeneration of our native plant communities outside our national reserve system through partnerships with landholders. Significant proportions of Australia's arid and rangeland ecosystems are suffering from serious degradation and are in need of urgent government attention to ensure their conservation values are restored and maintained.
- 87.** Labor is committed to halting the loss of vegetation, reducing soil erosion and rehabilitating degraded land, particularly those lands affected by soil salinity.
- 88.** Labor supports the adoption of integrated catchment management plans, property management plans, voluntary conservation agreements, community based revegetation programs and appropriate regulatory and fiscal policies to promote the conservation ethic.

Wetlands

- 89.** Australia's wetlands are critical to the ongoing health of Australia's rivers, estuaries and coastal waters. These vital environments are under increasing threat from human settlement, jeopardising the habitat and survival of many species of fish and crustaceans that use wetlands as a nursery ground, and migratory birds that depend on wetlands as feeding and resting areas.
- 90.** Labor is committed to ensuring proper management and protection of our wetlands and will promote and honour Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention.

Forests

- 91.** Labor is committed to the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system that is consistent with the agreed Janis criteria and aims to protect at least 60 per cent of existing old growth forest (increasing to 100 per cent for rare and depleted old growth), and 90 per cent or more of high quality wilderness, as part of a broad objective of preserving 15 per cent of pre-1750 distribution of each forest ecosystem. This goal will be achieved through the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process. RFA outcomes will vary from region to region in response to variations in community expectations and environmental concerns.

- 92.** Labor is committed to the ongoing monitoring of compliance with RFA outcomes and full implementation of the National Forests Policy Statement, the Wood and Paper Industry Strategy and Plantation 2020 Vision.
- 93.** Labor recognises the potential for development of plantations and integrated farm forestry, particularly on existing cleared agricultural land and the additional benefit in addressing dryland salinity and greenhouse emission abatement.
- 94.** Labor recognises that large-scale plantations need to be managed to minimise possible adverse effects and supports research and development, particularly in relation to improved technology and processes, tree breeding, species selection and land capability assessment.
- 95.** Much of our remaining native vegetation is fragmented, leaving it vulnerable to further decline and limiting its habitat values. Labor will build and promote corridors to link native vegetation where appropriate, including enhancing roadside remnant vegetation to better enable wildlife species to survive.
- 96.** Labor supports the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.
- 97.** Labor is committed to sustainable economic, environmental and community outcomes for Tasmania's forests, based on the principles of:
 - a sustainable forestry industry plan, developed in consultation with unions, industry and the Tasmanian Government and based on the use of plantation timber, selective use of native timber, value-adding, and downstream processing;
 - no overall loss of jobs in the forestry industry; and
 - further protection of identified Tasmanian high-conservation-value, old growth forests, rainforests, and other ecosystems.

World Heritage Areas and National Parks

- 98.** In government, Labor earned an international reputation for providing a high standard of properly funded protection, management, monitoring and presentation of World Heritage Areas.
- 99.** A Labor Government will continue this standard of protection, and will support the investigation of areas identified as suitable for future listing.
- 100.** Labor strongly opposes any moves to reduce protection of World Heritage Areas, the listing of which protects areas of outstanding universal value.
- 101.** Labor recognises the fragile and diverse nature of Australia's natural environment and its unique array of species and habitats, wilderness areas, old growth forests, rivers, native grasslands, coastlines and oceans. Labor is committed to the protection of Australia's biological diversity through the establishment of a national system of comprehensive, adequate and representative national parks and reserves (including a representative range of terrestrial and marine ecosystems), while continuing to promote the ecologically sustainable use of all our natural resources.
- 102.** Labor will ensure that the Commonwealth retains responsibility for the protection of forests located in listed world heritage areas. Labor will progress further World Heritage nominations in cooperation with State and Territory Governments.
- 103.** Labor will seek World Heritage listing for Ningaloo Reef, based on the boundaries proposed by the West Australian Labor Government.

- 104.** Labor does not support mining or other resource extraction in national parks and world heritage areas.
- 105.** Labor will ban oil and gas exploration and mining both on and near to the Great Barrier Reef, in order to ensure that the reef is not threatened by oil spills.
- 106.** Labor supports World Heritage listing of suitable areas of Cape York and environmental buyback of suitable areas of Cape York and the Daintree.

Northern Australia

- 107.** Labor recognises the cultural expertise and wide understanding and knowledge of landscapes held by Indigenous people in Northern Australia. Sustainable practices maintained for millennia provide important tools and a foundation for ongoing conservation, land management and sustainable practices. Labor recognises Indigenous people will be involved in land management through various means, including national parks and tourism.
- 108.** Northern Australia contains some of the most outstanding environmental assets in the world. The Great Barrier Reef, Daintree, Cape York Peninsula, Kakadu and the Kimberley are regions which are known throughout the world.
- 109.** Climate change presents a significant threat to the biodiversity of northern Australia. Within 25 years, the Great Barrier Reef could be devastated by the regular coral bleaching caused by rising water temperatures. Half of North Queensland's highland tropical forests could disappear over this century.
- 110.** If global temperatures rise by a further two degrees, half of Kakadu's majestic wetlands will be flooded and will disappear.
- 111.** Labor's approach to northern Australia will focus on avoiding dangerous climate change, promoting sustainable development, protecting heritage rivers, focusing on eco-tourism as a source of wealth for the north, and a concerted attack on invasive species of weeds and feral animals.

Marine and Coastal Protection

- 112.** More than five and a half million Australians live in coastal communities outside our capital cities. People are choosing to live near the coast and governments need to respond to that choice by addressing the economic, environmental and social challenges that this change brings.
- 113.** Our coastal environment is under pressure. Unsustainable coastal growth is leading to habitat loss, damage to wetlands, the introduction of pests and weeds and coastal erosion and damage to dunes.
- 114.** Labor is committed to promoting the conservation and sustainable use of our marine and coastal environment. Labor will work with State, Territory and local authorities and agencies to ensure Australia's biologically diverse and fragile marine environment is monitored and sustainably managed.
- 115.** The Commonwealth should provide leadership, policies and resources to ensure integrated regional ecosystem-based management across jurisdictions and maintain marine biodiversity.
- 116.** Labor will protect our coasts and beaches by investing in high conservation value areas as well as meeting international obligations, continuing legislative reform and opposing inappropriate development.

- 117.** Labor will develop a national coastal policy to deliver strategic responses to population growth in coastal regions and support coastal planning initiatives.
- 118.** Labor will ensure that all relevant national coastal planning processes address the potential impact of climate change and will inform local councils about national research and its implications for them.
- 119.** Labor will work towards the reduction of the serious threat to water quality from coastal shipping practices, sewage and stormwater disposal and thermal pollution, nutrient sedimentation and the introduction of exotic pests and diseases via ship ballast water.
- 120.** Labor will work to mitigate noise pollution in the marine environment and sonar and seismic activities harmful to cetaceans and other vulnerable marine species.
- 121.** Planning imperatives include the need to address unsuitable coastal development including all future canal developments, agricultural practices, pollution of estuary and coastal water, ship transport regulation, rig and pipeline developments and industry accountability for pollution.
- 122.** Labor will promote the efficient and sustainable use of Australia's marine resources and will address unsustainable fishing practices.
- 123.** Labor supports the creation of marine national parks and 'no take' or 'green zones' in the Great Barrier Reef to sustain ecosystem health and sustain fish stocks. Labor is committed to maintaining the existing boundaries of the Great Barrier Reef Representative Areas Program.
- 124.** Labor will prohibit mineral, oil and gas exploration in Australian waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 125.** Labor will promote the conservation of key ecosystem health indicator species such as whales, dugong and turtles both in Australian waters and across the world's oceans.
- 126.** Labor will support technological advances in fisheries to minimise bycatch of non-target species in fisheries and ensure this serious threat to a number of marine threatened species is eliminated.
- 127.** Labor will develop strategies to mitigate the impact of marine debris that poses a threat to many marine species.
- 128.** Labor will work through international forums to address unsustainable fishing practices worldwide.
- 129.** Labor will work with Indigenous communities and recreational fishermen to ensure hunting of marine animals is sustainable and humane and that threatened species are protected.
- 130.** Labor will pursue a permanent end to all commercial and scientific whaling and the establishment of a global whale sanctuary.
- 131.** Labor will pursue legal action against whaling nations before international courts and tribunals to end the slaughter of whales for all time.
- 132.** Labor will pursue high seas, marine protected areas to protect biodiversity and work to address the increasing problem of unregulated, unreported and illegal fishing through all appropriate legal instruments.

Sustainable Industries and Cleaner Production

- 133.** Modern clean industries that minimise resource consumption, waste and pollution generation, together with new agricultural techniques that reduce land and water degradation, are the key to a sustainable economy. Labor will work with State and Territory governments to consider extended producer responsibility schemes for priority waste. Labor recognises that schemes to manage white goods, televisions, computers, tyres, batteries and mobile phones (including advanced deposit and refund schemes) at the end of the life cycle have been highly successful overseas and will consider their suitability to Australia's unique economic and environmental conditions.
- 134.** Labor supports the phase-out of plastic shopping bags, with a legislated ban if necessary.
- 135.** A Labor Government will promote more efficient and cleaner production practices and the 'reduce, reuse, recycle and recover' approach to waste management through the adoption of voluntary economic, fiscal and regulatory measures.
- 136.** Labor will encourage the adoption of life cycle analysis, green purchasing arrangements and voluntary corporate environmental reporting.
- 137.** New global markets are developing as the demand for sustainable goods and services grows. New industries are emerging with new jobs and domestic and export opportunities. These opportunities range across industry sectors and geographic areas. Labor is committed to supporting the development of these new industries.

Chemicals, Toxins and Pollutants

- 146** **138.** Labor recognises the important role of chemicals in both industrial processes and everyday life. However, many pollutants are produced as a result of the use of chemicals and it is the responsibility of government to ensure that the production, release and disposal of these substances is adequately managed to ensure that individuals and the environment are not exposed to harmful concentrations.
- 139.** Labor is committed to the strict control of pollutants and toxins in the environment, including the minimisation of the production, import and use of harmful substances, the development of alternative technologies and, where possible, the elimination of harmful substances.
- 140.** Labor believes nations have a responsibility for the appropriate disposal of hazardous wastes generated within their boundaries. Labor is committed to the aims of the Basel Convention and to fulfilling Australia's obligations in the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste.
- 141.** Labor remains strongly opposed to the importation and storage of nuclear waste in Australia, that is sourced from overseas. Labor does, however, acknowledge that Australia has a responsibility to manage nuclear waste material that has been produced in Australia.

Clean Air

- 142.** Labor is committed to improving air quality and averting the serious health risks that air pollution represents.
- 143.** Cutting Australia's greenhouse pollution and taking action to avoid dangerous climate change, will deliver cleaner air for all Australians.
- 144.** A comprehensive system of monitoring and reporting of air pollution will be an integral part of Labor's air quality initiatives, including dissemination of information regarding health risks.
- 145.** Labor will introduce national air quality standards commensurate with international standards.

- 146.** Labor will recognise the environmental and health impacts of vehicle emissions and will seek to strengthen emission regulations. Labor recognises the need to promote greater transport choice and will pursue strategies to encourage alternative modes of transport, alternative fuels, greater fuel efficiency and lower average vehicle age.
- 147.** Labor believes careful and integrated urban planning offers a powerful tool for reducing transport demand.

Built and Cultural Heritage

- 148.** Thousands of years of Indigenous settlement and more recent waves of migration have left Australia with a rich and diverse heritage. This heritage is a link between the past and present and is both a national asset and a source of national pride.
- 149.** Labor is committed to the identification, preservation, restoration and promotion of significant and representative built and cultural heritage, whether material or not. Labor recognises the imminent threat of the loss of Indigenous knowledge systems and will fund the recording of Indigenous oral histories, stories and languages. Labor recognises that Indigenous knowledge is a critical part of the knowledge capital of Australia and is a key to an environmentally and socially sustainable Australia.
- 150.** It is important that we preserve what is best of our history, tradition and heritage. Where culturally appropriate, Labor is committed to the promotion of and access to our built and cultural heritage, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- 151.** The identification and listing of properties of heritage significance should be carried out by an independent expert body.
- 152.** Labor believes that the Commonwealth government has a responsibility to provide adequate heritage protection for Commonwealth properties of heritage significance.
- 153.** Labor would pay special attention to ensuring that the heritage significance of existing defence properties is properly ascertained, protected and conserved.

Building Sustainable Cities

- 154.** Patterns of human settlement and the size and rate of growth of the population are critical to our ongoing impact on our ancient and fragile environment.
- 155.** Labor believes that Australian cities must be ecologically sustainable and incorporate a sound understanding of environmental principles in their planning. Labor recognises that the Commonwealth government has a role in long-term strategic planning for demographic change and local government priority setting.
- 156.** The daily lives of most Australians are spent in and around urban areas. Our quality of life and our physical and mental health is increasingly at risk from degradation of urban environments. Labor is committed to appropriate demographic policies and to ensuring that any population increase is sustainable and does not come at the cost of the environment. As our population increases, it is essential that our collective 'ecological footprint' is contained.
- 157.** Climate change will have a profound impact on the health of our cities.
- 158.** Labor is committed to protecting and enhancing our urban environment through long-term integrated urban planning for all major cities, major industries and rural communities. Planning must be supported by the provision of information, the development and implementation of practical solutions and the right policy framework to ensure our cities are

healthy and sustainable. We should seek to contain the area of our cities and guard against urban sprawl.

- 159.** For any planned increase in the population of a particular urban area, Labor supports infrastructure investment (especially transport investment) that is evaluated on the basis of its contribution to improvements in that urban environment, including air and water quality. It is important that remnant vegetation and catchment health is protected from urban encroachment.

Greening Our Institutions

- 160.** Labor will lead by example with national leadership on environmental matters through an integrated, whole of government approach. Labor supports the incorporation of environmental values and sustainability into all areas of government decision making, both in terms of the government's direct environmental impacts and the environmental consequences of all legislation and regulation.
- 161.** Labor recognises the essential role played by local government in environmental protection and repair and natural resource management. Labor is committed to full involving local government in environmental protection and repair efforts and making use of its substantial capacity to deliver outcomes and promote change for the better.
- 162.** Labor will develop, with State and Territory Governments, a National Sustainability Charter that sets key national targets across a number of areas which impact on Australia's environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- 148 163.** Labor will establish an independent National Sustainability Commissioner and Council to monitor Australia's performance against sustainability targets and to evaluate Commonwealth government policies in terms of their impact on sustainability and agreed national targets, particularly on climate change.
- 164.** Labor will establish an independent statutory authority, Infrastructure Australia, to analyse, monitor, report and assess the delivery and operation of major infrastructure projects, and to develop a coordinated and objective approach to longer-term planning and development of nationally significant infrastructure.
- 165.** Labor supports the development of a genuine progress or sustainability indicator which recognises social and environmental capital and complements monitoring of economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product.
- 166.** Labor supports the incorporation of environmental reporting into the budget process through the development of a federal Green Budget. A Green Budget will enable progress on environmental performance to be tracked and achievement against milestones to be monitored.
- 167.** Labor is committed to open and transparent environmental decision making and effective monitoring, assessment and reporting of environmental performance. This will be achieved through a combination of state of the environment reporting, environmental audits and impact assessments, and initiatives such as the National Pollutant Inventory and corporate environmental reporting.
- 168.** Labor is committed to post-approval monitoring of major projects to ensure that measures and targets agreed during environmental impact assessment processes achieve the desired environmental outcomes.

- 169.** Labor supports a life cycle approach to the evaluation of environmental impacts of goods and services. Where there is a significant variation in environmental impact between comparable products, Labor supports eco-labelling to provide the consumer with the necessary information to make informed purchasing and lifestyle decisions.
- 170.** Labor will implement environmental best practice to Commonwealth government operations.
- 171.** Labor recognises that existing international environmental protection regimes need to be strengthened and new arrangements developed to address emerging issues. Labor will take a leadership role in multilateral forums that consider issues of environmental protection and sustainable development, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process, the Convention for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species and the International Whaling Commission.
- 172.** Labor will assess all trade agreements to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and will work to prevent any conflict arising between trade agreements and multilateral environmental agreements and domestic legislation to protect the environment.
- 173.** Labor will ensure that specific environmental programs will be targeted at nations in the region that are also recognised global biodiversity hotspot regions.

Resolutions

Sustainability in Transport

Conference notes:

That much of current transport planning and investment is predicated on the availability and use of private motor vehicles. Unrestrained car use is a significant contributor to global warming.

The Conference is concerned that investment in transport infrastructure and services should aim to be sustainable, by minimising the impact on the environment and providing equitably for future generations. The primary criteria for decision making about transport investment should include energy, greenhouse gas and other emissions and impacts on the physical, built and social environment.

There are at least three broad aspects of transport sustainability of interest:

- Efficient use of energy—more fuel efficient vehicles, greater use of rail, efficient use of fossil fuel by transport to reduce energy and global (GHG) emissions and increased use of renewable energy;
- Cleaner air and quieter environment through reductions in emissions from mobile sources and more efficient transport (higher occupancy), such as enhanced public transport and rail, walking and cycling; and
- A transport system integrated into the built and natural environment with minimal associated impact including on water quality and open space through sound planning, design, construction and operations.

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Rail is certainly more efficient than road in terms of energy or fuel use for both mass passenger transport and bulk, long distance freight transport movements. Rail freight produces significantly lower levels of greenhouse gas emissions than road freight. Transport policy considerations must take into account the fact that fossil fuel is a non-renewable resource and there are real concerns about diminishing oil reserves, and other environmental and social impacts.

With the aforementioned issues considered this conference recommends that the next Federal Labor Government consider adopting following sustainable transport principles.

- **Principle 1** People have a right of access to other people, places, goods, services and opportunities.
- **Principle 2** Transport services that enable access should meet the community's expectation of a high standard of reliability and quality.
- **Principle 3** Governments, transport planners and developers should be bound by a framework that ensures the equitable distribution of basic transportation resources to meet the needs of all people including men and women, young and old, the poor, the disabled and those living in outer suburban or rural areas.
- **Principle 4** Transportation systems should be designed and operated in a way that protects and promotes the health (physical, mental and social well-being) and safety of all people, and enhances the quality of life in communities.
- **Principle 5** Transport decision-makers have a responsibility to ensure that the transportation systems allow the opportunity for individuals to act to reduce their impacts on the natural environment.
- **Principle 6** Transportation decision-makers have a responsibility to pursue more integrated approaches to planning, delivery and use of public transport.

- **Principle 7** Transport decision-making processes should support, encourage and provide resources for public participation.
- **Principle 8** Transportation needs must be met within a framework which minimises the use of natural resources and land, and reduces emissions that threaten public health and essential ecological processes.
- **Principle 9** Transportation systems must maximise the use of, and return on, transport assets and resources through better planning and accountability measures while maintaining their long-term sustainability.
- **Principle 10** Transportation systems should be cost effective, now and in the future, and transportation decision-makers must move as expeditiously as possible towards fuller cost accounting, reflecting the true social, economic and environmental costs, in order to ensure that users pay an equitable share of costs.

Further this Conference calls on the next Federal Labor Government to consider implementing these principles as part of a whole of government approach to sustainable transport, along with the adoption of performance measure to meet these sustainable transport principles.

Water

That conference commends the Rudd opposition for its clear policy direction on tackling climate change and urges the Rudd opposition to give further commitments that will secure Australia's water supply.

That Labor will respect the natural integrity of the northern rivers and will not support the proposal of the Howard Government to dam the Clarence River.

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Macquarie Island

National Conference notes that time is running out for Macquarie Island and calls on the Howard Government to end the blame game and properly fund the eradication of feral animals in this nationally and internationally significant World Heritage Area before it is too late.

Macquarie Island was listed as a World Heritage Area in 1997. National Conference notes that the Tasmanian government has day-to-day management responsibilities for Macquarie Island and is already implementing interim control measures, including rabbit-proof fencing and a shooting program that will reduce the rabbit population by between 30,000 and 40,000.

National Conference recognises the need for the Australian Government to properly fund World Heritage Areas of national and international significance and calls on the Howard Government to meet its obligations in this regard.

National Conference notes that the Australian Government's funding to Tasmania's World Heritage Areas was slashed from \$6.6 million to \$3.4 million this year despite the fact that over 20 per cent of Tasmania's land area has World Heritage status, far above the national and international average.

National Conference recognises:

- The international significance of Macquarie Island as a breeding ground for about four million seabirds each year;
- The clear and present danger posed to the breeding ground by an explosion of rats and rabbits;
- The urgent need for the Howard Government to end the blame game and properly fund a feral animal eradication program on Macquarie Island before it is too late; and

- The need for the Tasmanian Government to ensure that effective quarantine procedures are in place to prevent reinfestation of the Island once eradication is achieved.