

Chapter Sixteen

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Supporting Australia's Arts, Culture and Heritage

Australia's distinct sense of national identity is sustained and strengthened through our arts, culture and heritage. At a time when our sources of information and entertainment are increasingly globalised, it is important that we support what is uniquely Australian. The Commonwealth Government plays an important role in supporting a vibrant arts and cultural sector, which contributes substantially to both employment and economic growth and to the well-being of all Australians.

Principles

- 1.** Australia's arts and cultural industries are mainstays of our national identity.
- 2.** Arts and culture give an immeasurable, sustaining dimension to the life of the nation and help shape Australia's place in the world.
- 3.** Lack of vision, unsustainable funding arrangements, bureaucratic mismanagement, government interference and political appointments are creating a climate of cultural despondency. Australia is missing out on the economic benefits of a thriving cultural sector and the global potential of art forms like music, film, television and new media.
- 4.** Labor is committed to fostering a vibrant, diverse and world-class arts and cultural sector in Australia. A confident and innovative cultural sector is the hallmark of a confident and innovative nation.
- 5.** The links between creativity, innovation and economic activity means the arts can make a huge contribution to the cultural and economic vitality of our cities and regions.
- 6.** The key elements of Labor's plan for a revitalised, invigorated cultural sector pervaded by excellence are:
 - a new wave of arts education;
 - the promotion and protection of Indigenous arts;
 - a national strategy for creative industry development;
 - fostering cultural entrepreneurs;
 - technological and businesses skills development; and
 - the protection of Australian content and intellectual property.
- 7.** Labor has a proud history of nurturing cultural expression and cultural opportunities for all Australians whatever their backgrounds and wherever they live. Labor will ensure that support for all cultural activities remains one of its highest priorities. Labor will encourage the development of creative talent and imagination through continued support to the cultural industries and groups and individuals within them.
- 8.** In a fair society, there needs to be a balance between government support for the development of excellence and giving everyone a chance to participate. Labor will ensure all forms of art and culture are accessible to all Australians.

Government Support for the Arts

- 9.** Labor, building on its tradition of support and enthusiasm for the arts, is strongly committed to a vibrant, diverse and well-supported arts sector in Australia.
- 10.** Labor believes access, equity, education, excellence and innovation are foundation principles for arts policy and that a healthy arts sector is indicative of a healthy democracy.
- 11.** Labor is committed to developing policies that provide greater opportunity and capacity for the community to discover, create and enjoy the arts at the local, regional, state and national level.
- 12.** Labor will continue to support the Australia Council to provide an independent voice in policy development, deliver funding for new and existing arts programs, act as an advocate for the arts and work closely with arts organisations and individual artists. The principles of merit based funding, peer assessment, arms length board appointments and equitable distribution within the Commonwealth should be emphasised.
- 13.** Labor recognises the importance of the performing arts to the cultural development and health of Australia. Labor will continue supporting performing arts companies through the Australia Council, ensuring that adequate attention is given to second and third tier companies and independent projects in dance, music and drama.
- 14.** A fundamental role for the Commonwealth is the maintenance and development of the great national collecting institutions. Australians in all regions must be able to access quality works, traditional and contemporary, of both local and international artists. National institutions should be encouraged to tour their collections to ensure access by all Australians.
- 15.** The role of the Commonwealth is to develop and support artistic expression across all art forms. Labor recognises the importance of supporting professional artists and fostering all forms of the arts and will encourage an increasing role for professional artists to teach in schools and universities.
- 16.** Labor recognises the crucial role the Australian film industry plays in the cultural life of the nation.
- 17.** Labor is committed to supporting and financing the film industry, encouraging increased private investment, including in digital Australian film and television production, training further talent and assisting market development through Australian local content requirements on free to air and pay television as well as diverse new technologies.
- 18.** Labor recognises the role of strong local markets in supporting the development of the Australian music sector. Governments should ensure that access to local markets, and support for independent and emerging artists building overseas careers, is maintained and strengthened.
- 19.** Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments should cooperate to ensure that regional and local libraries can provide effective and equitable access to literature and information, including through modern technology.
- 20.** Labor recognises that Australians are increasingly enthusiastic producers and consumers of the arts. Labor believes that arts education is vital and will continue to support high quality art, drama and music education programs.
- 21.** Labor recognises that technological change is a powerful driver of content responsible for growing new media, art forms and new creative industries. Labor will support new media forms which complement traditional ways of presenting our culture and art, and will pursue opportunities to enlarge their presentation in digital media.

- 22.** Labor supports a requirement for internet service providers to offer a filtered 'clean feed' internet service to all households, schools and other public internet points accessible by children.
- 23.** Labor will seek to restore priority to the provision of art works in major public buildings as part of a public works program.
- 24.** Labor will seek to initiate a wide range of measures aimed at harnessing substantial private investment in the arts sector.
- 25.** In addition to financial support, government needs to play a role in encouraging and coordinating the development of private and corporate patronage and sponsorship of arts and culture to maximise the social resources provided by this sector.
- 26.** As society and the economy change and develop, the economic and employment significance of the arts and culture industries must be recognised. Labor commits to developing industry and export assistance programs in ways which are appropriate for these industries.

Support for Artists

- 27.** Government funding in arts and culture must include priority for the development of excellence. It must also maximise the opportunities for Australians to fully develop their talent and to display it to other Australians and the world.
- 28.** Labor recognises the need to support experienced artists and develop strategies which make it more attractive for artists to live and work in Australia, rather than overseas. Retaining talented and experienced artists is crucial for the ongoing development of Australia's cultural and artistic life.
- 29.** A fundamental part of industry development and equitable access is formulating policy to maximise employment in culture, arts and heritage, including training for employment in these areas and support which enables talent to be developed into a career. Labor will support the transition from education and training to work. Labor will also support programs for mentoring emerging artists.
- 30.** Training and retraining options for artists and arts workers in mid-career should be a high priority. Emphasis needs to be given to programs to facilitate the development of, and access to, such training programs and to special project support for artists who have an established career.
- 31.** Labor recognises that artists and arts workers earn their living through a range of mechanisms in any year, from casual work to entrepreneurial activity. Labor will support workers in the arts industry and protect and advance their individual rights, employment conditions and entitlements.
- 32.** The tax and welfare systems need to be responsive to the needs of students and workers in arts and culture. In particular, they should reflect the varied nature of artists' income generation within years and over different years.
- 33.** Labor will support the legal framework of copyright as a necessary part of a program to ensure that the income generated by arts, culture and heritage is fairly distributed between the creators and the institutions and entrepreneurs who make it available.

Equity and Access

- 34.** Labor recognises that equity of, and access to, participation in the arts, culture and heritage remains a central priority in arts policy.
- 35.** The development of the arts in regional Australia and the outlying suburbs of our cities should reflect the principles of equity and access to ensure the opportunity for Australians to participate in and enjoy the arts in communities is increased and sustained. Labor supports regional arts organisations and the touring of arts to cities in regional Australia. This requires a role for government in assisting regional touring and the development of regional facilities.
- 36.** Emphasis on access must include the development of effective opportunities for Australians with disabilities and Australians from disadvantaged groups to participate in the arts.
- 37.** Labor encourages women to seek careers in the arts and to hold positions at the highest level.
- 38.** There is a need for special emphasis on the participation of young people in the arts and the development of arts of interest to young Australians, and in grant-making and peer assessment processes.
- 39.** The arts must reflect our cultural diversity and give voice to all Australians including the long settled Anglo-Celtic communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the post-war migrant groups and more recent arrivals. Art that reflects Australia's diverse cultures will receive Labor's support and recognition.
- 40.** Labor is committed to developing and promoting the Indigenous art sector to its full social, cultural and economic potential.
- 41.** Labor will ensure that provision is made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in all aspects of the planning, decision making and implementation of policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts.
- 42.** Labor recognises that it is important to improve access and participation in cultural activities and experiences. Through art education programs young Australians gain access to the ideas, values and beliefs of others and nurture their own imaginations.

Heritage

- 43.** In placing emphasis on developing the best and newest, it is very important not to lose sight of the priority of preserving what is best in our history, tradition and heritage.
- 44.** It is not only important that this material is preserved but that it is made effectively available to Australians wherever they live. This requires institutional and individual activities at a local and national level, assistance to private owners of heritage properties and skills development and training.
- 45.** Labor will give special attention to the preservation of the heritage properties owned by the Commonwealth.
- 46.** Labor will ensure the identification and preservation of our industrial, built, environmental and cultural heritage, and look for opportunities to promote world heritage recognition of such sites.
- 47.** Labor will ensure that the National Trust and other government and community organisations are supported to identify priority projects for heritage protection.

Communications and Electronic Media

- 48.** The media, particularly broadcasting, are undergoing a process of major change, driven by digitisation, convergence of technology and the globalisation of broadcasting, communications and information technologies.
- 49.** Labor remains strongly committed to longstanding national and public interest objectives, including:
- high quality and informative media which contributes to the advancement of Australian society;
 - genuine diversity of sources of information, opinion, education and entertainment;
 - diversity of ownership, operation and control of Australia's media;
 - greater choice and accessibility for consumers;
 - the development and reflection of a distinctly Australian national identity;
 - a vibrant competitive industry of international standard; and
 - the development of, and equitable access to, new technologies.
- 50.** Labor will also strengthen legislation to meet the challenges of adult and other materials being made available to children and young people on mobile phones.

Diversity and Content

- 51.** Labor will pursue policies that ensure that Australians have access to a diverse range of information and opinion in Australia's media.
- 52.** Labor is committed to maintaining appropriate Australian content quotas in the broadcasting sector.
- 53.** Labor will ensure that television and radio advertising are properly regulated and that community standards are reflected in the regulatory approach.
- 54.** Labor will ensure that Australians will continue to enjoy coverage of premium sporting events on free-to-air television.
- 55.** Labor is committed to ensuring that the Australian Communications and Media Authority is adequately resourced and has sufficient regulatory powers to ensure the maintenance of appropriate community standards in broadcasting material.

Public Broadcasting

- 56.** The ABC and SBS are two of Australia's most important public institutions. Labor is committed to ensuring adequate funding and support for Australia's public broadcasters, to enable them to continue to provide Australians with high quality broadcasting services, free from political and commercial interference.
- 57.** Labor will provide adequate funding on a triennial basis to the ABC and SBS to ensure they can deliver quality public broadcasting services. Labor will ensure that the national broadcasters are able to exploit the potential of new technology to deliver attractive and innovative content over digital television and the internet.
- 58.** The ABC is a cultural institution which reflects our national identity. Labor recognises the importance of the ABC being maintained as an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster, catering for a diversity of interests in the Australian community. Without committing the range of programs and services the ABC provides, Labor will ensure the ABC produces high levels of local content and has the capacity to:

- cater to the needs of regional and rural Australia, providing coverage of local news, current affairs and community activities;
 - provide programs and services relevant to young Australians;
 - work with Indigenous people to provide services and programs relevant to them and their communities; and
 - provide comprehensive coverage of a broad range of sporting and artistic activities.
- 59.** Labor will end political interference in the ABC by introducing a new ABC board appointment process in which board members are appointed on the basis of merit. Candidates will be considered by a panel established at arm's length from the minister who will appoint Board members from a shortlist prepared by the panel. SBS Board appointments will be dealt with in the same way. Labor will examine other options for further increasing the transparency and democratic accountability of the ABC and SBS Boards. Labor will also restore the staff-elected commissioner position on the ABC board which was abolished by the Howard Government.
- 60.** Labor will ensure that the ban on ABC advertising and sponsorship remains in place. Labor will also ensure that advertising is not permitted on ABC branded websites.
- 61.** Labor is committed to increasing access to public broadcasting services to those Australians in regional and rural areas who currently cannot access particular services.
- 62.** Labor believes it is important to engage young people on issues relevant to our community and make general current affairs accessible to them. In the interests of sustaining a vibrant democracy, Labor believes governments must continue to invest in youth-accessible current affairs, such as the Triple J youth radio station, with a view of establishing new services.
- 63.** Labor recognises that the SBS provides a unique national broadcasting service that promotes a multicultural Australia, and provides services to Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds which are not delivered by the ABC or the commercial broadcasting sector.
- 64.** Labor recognises the importance of Australia maintaining external broadcasting through Radio Australia and ABC's Australia Network Television Service, to encourage awareness of Australian values around the world and build closer ties with our Asian and South Pacific neighbours, as well as serving the needs of Australians abroad.

Community Broadcasting

- 65.** Labor regards community and Indigenous broadcasting, including radio and television, as an essential component of Australian broadcasting, and will continue to encourage its maintenance, growth and development. Community and Indigenous broadcasting provides important services to local communities, particularly in rural, regional and remote areas. Labor supports diversity in community and Indigenous broadcasting recognising that it meets the needs of many communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, ethnic communities, and Australians with a print disability; and addresses developing Australian media needs with services for youth, mature age, religious, specialist music and other emerging communities of interest.
- 66.** Labor will investigate the need for administrative arrangements to assist the training, support and regulatory compliance needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasters.
- 67.** Labor believes that adequate public funding must be provided to community and Indigenous radio and television for their effective ongoing operation. Labor seeks to improve the capacity of community and Indigenous stations to serve their communities by providing support to the

sector for content production, improving skills, technical infrastructure, and sector coordination and planning. Labor accepts that appropriate funding must be provided to the community and Indigenous broadcasting sector.

- 68.** Labor will ensure that the community broadcasting sector receives appropriate support to make the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting.

Resolutions

Community and Public Broadcasting

The state of public and community broadcasting in Australia has been seriously undermined by the Howard Government.

The Howard Government has diminished public confidence in our public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, by stacking the boards of these taxpayer funded agencies with political appointments. SBS is drifting away from its multicultural charter to the detriment of the communities it is bound to serve. Conference applauds Labor for pledging to restore the balance on the ABC and SBS boards with a proper and transparent board appointment process.

The Howard Government has also failed to adequately support the community broadcasting sector and has overseen a decline in real funding to the sector. Labor notes the huge importance of the community broadcasting sector to Australian democratic culture, media diversity, building local communities, settling migrants, supporting heritage and development, and Indigenous rights and aspirations.

Community broadcasting is an innovative, flexible and highly cost-effective, not-for-profit media sector based on principles of access, participation, diversity, localism and independence. Community broadcasting continues to foster services that meet the emerging media needs of Australians, with recent communities of interest developing in youth, mature age, religious, specialist music and other areas.

The lack of funding for community television and decline in radio funding is threatening standards in the sector and in some cases will have consequences for the delivery of services, the adoption of new and emerging technologies and the contribution of community broadcasting to Australian life.

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Conference calls on a future ALP Government to:

- develop policies to ensure community broadcasting continues to grow and realise its potential
- improve support for community television, radio and television infrastructure, sector coordination, training and content development
- ensure that the community broadcasting sector has equal access to, and can appropriately implement, digital platforms and new technologies (including maintenance of community television channel allocation following analogue switch-off)
- liaise with the community broadcasting sector and its consumers on policy development
- include community broadcasting in government information strategies