

Chapter Four

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Investing in Our Future: An Education Revolution

As a growing body of evidence shows, long-term social and economic outcomes are significantly influenced by the investment that nations make in the education and training of their people. On measures of pre-school, school, vocational and tertiary education and research, Australia has fallen well behind its competitors. Labor believes we need an education revolution. We must lift the quantity of investment in education and the quality of education outcomes. We cannot afford to waste the talent and potential of any Australian. We must set for ourselves a new national vision—for Australia to become the most educated country, the most skilled economy and the best trained workforce in the world.

Principles

1. All children have the right to high quality education so that they can live fulfilling and rewarding lives. It is the responsibility of government to protect that right.
2. This responsibility entails investment in raising standards at all levels of education. It includes guaranteeing that all Australians have access to the full range of learning outcomes so that students and trainees can fully develop their capabilities, as well as the intellectual and social skills they need to gain the maximum benefit from citizenship.
3. Government also has a responsibility to ensure that there is fairness in the allocation of education resources to monitor educational outcomes. This monitoring should identify where action may be needed to improve opportunities for particular student populations and to guard against unjustifiable forms of inequality and discrimination. Equity principles will guide Labor's priorities for the funding, planning and delivery of education for all our children and young people.
4. Much more needs to be done to improve participation and retention of Indigenous children in education at all levels. This must involve:
 - focusing on literacy and numeracy in Indigenous education;
 - working with communities to lift school attendance rates;
 - involving Indigenous families in schools and decision making processes;
 - employing more Indigenous teachers and other education workers;
 - encouraging greater participation by Indigenous children in pre-schooling; and
 - providing culturally appropriate and relevant learning experiences, including Indigenous languages.
5. Good teaching is at the heart of successful learning. Government has a clear responsibility to ensure that all students have access to quality teaching. Labor will give priority to this imperative in collaboration with State and Territory governments, education authorities and the teaching profession, to ensure that ongoing professional development for teachers will be enhanced.
6. Education systems need support so that they can meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. Labor will support the strategic development of information and communication technologies for the benefit of all, to avoid our education systems

contributing to the widening of the gap between the information rich and the information poor. Labor will develop a national strategy in cooperation with the States and Territories and with non-government authorities to ensure that all children and young people have access to information and communications technologies. We will also work with education professionals to develop effective and innovative strategies for the use of those technologies in education and training.

Early Childhood, Pre-School and Primary Learning

- 7.** Labor believes that all Australian children deserve the best start in life. Nowhere is the right of children to a high quality education more significant than in the pre-school and primary school years, which have a crucial influence on the life opportunities and directions of young Australians and their opportunities to realise the full benefits of citizenship.
- 8.** No child should be left behind because of inadequacies in the provision of services in their early years. This means that pre-school and early primary school years must be at the core of the education, health and childcare policies of government.
- 9.** Labor believes that learning and development must be at the centre of Australia's approach to early childhood education and care. Labor will enshrine in legislation a universal right for four year olds to access early learning programs. Early learning should be delivered flexibly so that it is accessible and convenient for parents, and more integrated for children. Labor believes that early learning programs should be delivered in a range of settings, such as pre-schools or kindergartens, or in childcare settings. Labor will develop policies and programs that enhance the quality of early childhood education and care. Children's learning in early childhood settings and at pre-school should be of the highest standard, so that our children have the necessary educational foundations for success in their more structured learning programs at school. Primary schools should also be supported to develop high quality educational programs that prepare for their incoming students and provide a seamless and constructive transition from early childhood education and care to primary schooling.
- 10.** Policies for raising educational standards in early childhood education and pre-school will be complemented by strategies and resources for providing high quality teaching in those settings.
- 11.** Labor will ensure that high quality teaching in childcare settings is supported by well-trained and resourced childcare professionals with qualifications in early childhood care and development.
- 12.** Labor believes that providing the best future for Australia's children must be responsibility of all levels of government. Labor will work with the States and Territories to develop an integrated system of childcare and early childhood education, to ensure that all Australian children under school age have access to early learning and other appropriate developmental and social activities, provided in a safe environment. In expanding services for universal access to early learning, priority will be given those communities where children are currently under-participating in early learning, including in Indigenous communities.
- 13.** Labor will work with the States and Territories to establish a nationally consistent, early years learning framework. This framework will be developed with a specific emphasis on play-based learning, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, focusing on how to bridge the gap between care and learning.

Schools

- 14.** Labor believes that government should ensure that every Australian school student has access to the learning programs required to achieve the full range of learning outcomes set out in the National Goals of Schooling for the Twenty-First Century. Access to the teaching and learning resources that support the achievement of those goals should not depend on the financial capacities of individual school communities.
- 15.** Labor accepts the principle that all children and young people have an equal entitlement to the resources needed for a high quality education, without regard to differences in family background, educational or financial status. Such a principle is consistent with the need for governments to uphold the dignity of each child as a learner, and with the aspiration for an education system that contributes to our becoming a more just and open society.
- 16.** In developing its policy directions for schools, Labor endorses the framework of principles for the funding of schools that have been endorsed by State and Territory Labor governments through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). These principles are:
- the total level of resources available for schooling is adequate so that achievement of the National Goals of Schooling is a realistic objective for all students;
 - public funding across different schools and sectors is distributed fairly and equitably through a consistent approach to assessing student needs and with regard to the total level of resources available for students;
 - the total level of funding for government schooling is adequate to ensure access to high quality government schooling for all, and all governments' funding policies recognise this as a national priority;
 - resourcing for all students is adequate for meeting the National Goals, notwithstanding the school or sector they attend; and
 - public funding for schooling supports the right of families to choose non-government schooling and supports non-government schools on the basis of need, within the context of promoting a socially and culturally cohesive society and the effective use of public funds.
- 17.** Labor will negotiate a national compact with State and Territory governments and with non-government school authorities to achieve these principles on behalf of all students in all Australian schools. This compact will have respect for the distinctive and the shared purposes of schools in both the public and non-government sectors. It will also promote cooperation between the sectors and a complementary rather than competitive relationship between them.
- 18.** Labor recognises that government has a primary obligation for the provision of high quality public schooling that is accessible to all children and young people. Public schooling is a critical experience for future generations and their participation in the broader Australian community. Schooling is deeply immersed in our values which support our democratic principles, traditions and citizenry. Mindful of this broad social role and responsibility, public schooling must continue to be free and secular, to shape and be shaped by Australian society and culture, to keep pace with the times, to strive for educational and intellectual excellence, to contribute to the development of the shared values that sustain democratic life and to foster innovation, critical awareness, creativity and optimism towards a shared future. Consistent with the MCEETYA principles set out above, Labor will give priority for public schools through enhanced Commonwealth programs for schools.

- 19.** Labor continues to respect the right of parents to choose a non-government school for their children and, on the basis of educational and financial need, for these schools to receive public funding consistent with the MCEETYA principles outlined above.
- 20.** Labor will adopt new funding arrangements for non-government schools that reflect the following principles:
 - Commonwealth and State and Territory funding policies and arrangements will be aligned to provide a coherent national approach to funding conditions, mechanisms and accountabilities;
 - the resources available to non-government schools, including income from private sources, will be considered when assessing financial need; and
 - public funding should be subject to non-government schools meeting quality standards for curriculum and teaching, planning arrangements that promote the economic use of public resources and accountability and reporting conditions that are consistent with those required by government for schools in the public sector.
- 21.** Labor supports the right of parents and the community to be involved in schools and will ensure that schools reflect genuine community needs. Labor believes that all schools should have guidelines that give parents and staff the opportunity to make a contribution and which support the best interests of schools, parents, staff and the community.
- 22.** Labor also recognises the role of schools as sites for community building and for the development of partnerships and sharing of experience and expertise across different social and interest groups, strengthening the social fabric and enhancing the context in which schools work.
- 23.** Labor will support our schools and school systems to provide students with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to build Australia's social, cultural and economic life in the twenty-first century.
- 24.** All students should have access to valued learning in the key areas of the school curriculum, and through explicit and high quality standards in such key curriculum areas as English language and literature, mathematics, science and technologies, Australian history, Indigenous cultures and histories, the humanities and social sciences, music and the creative arts, physical education, vocational education and the study of languages and cultures across all communities in Australia and in the Asia Pacific region.
- 25.** School curriculum in Australia should also be a vehicle for teaching young Australians their civic rights and responsibilities, including learning about our Australian Constitution and the role of national, state and local governments.
- 26.** Labor supports national consistency in school curriculum in such core areas of learning as English, mathematics, science and information technologies, while recognising the value of local and regional perspectives in the delivery of curriculum in schools and classrooms. National consistency and collaboration have the potential to provide efficiency and effectiveness in the development of curriculum and related learning materials, especially in areas of national responsibility such as Indigenous education and migrant education.
- 27.** Labor also supports the further development of a national approach to the assessment and reporting of student achievements in an educationally responsible way. This should include both minimum benchmarks for literacy, numeracy and technological capabilities and the assessment of learning outcomes across the full range of student abilities and achievements. National reporting should inform parents and students of students' progress against national benchmarks and contribute to student learning and school improvement.

- 28.** Labor recognises the importance of the middle school years and the need for specific encouragement, support and inspiration for young adolescents at school.
- 29.** Labor also recognises that students in the senior years of schooling should have access to high quality and specialised learning in areas that meet their personal needs and interests, while building on the foundations provided in the core areas of learning.
- 30.** Labor will support the development of a national system of senior secondary education that balances comprehensive and specialised education provision in the post-compulsory years of education.
- 31.** The Commonwealth government has a particular responsibility to promote the quality of teaching and educational leadership in Australian schools. Labor will work with the profession and the States and Territories to develop a national approach to improve the quality of teaching and the status of teachers, including issues of national concern such as remuneration levels, national consistency and portability of teachers' qualifications and teacher registration.
- 32.** This will require national strategies for the supply of quality teachers in all schools. This begins with the Commonwealth's responsibilities for an adequate supply of undergraduate and postgraduate places for teachers in the higher education sector. The large numbers of teachers who are approaching retirement age makes it critical to prepare for renewal of the teaching profession, to avoid decline and the subsequent need for crisis management. Provision should be made for the support and mentoring of teachers beginning their career to reduce the number of young teachers leaving the profession.
- 30** **33.** The Commonwealth's strategic role in developing nationally consistent standards for professional teaching practice and school leadership and for professional renewal is critical. Such standards should inform the directions and priorities for the Commonwealth's ongoing support for professional learning.
- 34.** Labor recognises the important role played by non-teaching staff such as Education Assistants and Aboriginal Islander Education Officers and other support staff in building a positive learning environment at all levels of the education system. Labor will ensure that these areas are adequately funded.
- 35.** Labor supports the provision of incentives and rewards for teaching excellence in schools, consistent with Labor's principles for industrial relations more generally. Such policies will encourage teachers to continue their professional learning throughout their careers and will foster professional collaboration and collegiality in schools, in the best interests of students' learning. Access to quality professional development for educators should be enhanced.
- 36.** Our children and young people are living with information and mobile technologies as part of their daily lives. Labor will enhance these skills and experiences through a fundamental investment in a national broadband network and through complementary educational policies and programs. Students, parents and teachers should have the skills to use educational technologies in schools and across the curriculum, to gain access to classroom resources and to obtain technical advice to maximise their educational benefits from interactive, audio, imaging and digital technologies.
- 37.** Labor will continue to give priority to equity in schooling, for students and groups of students who are currently not participating fully in schooling or who require additional support to reach their potential. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach to the planning and funding of schools, where targeted initiatives complement the base of adequate and appropriate resources needed in all schools.

- 38.** Poverty remains the greatest indicator of disadvantage and the single most important barrier to educational success. Schools that serve communities with many low income families need specialised support for teachers, student counselling and community liaison, and additional resources to provide that support. Labor will establish an innovative system of targeted resource provision to schools with concentrations of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their participation in schooling and their educational outcomes.
- 39.** Labor recognises the entitlement of students with disabilities to maximise opportunities to participate in schooling. Where students with disabilities require special support, and consistent with needs-based funding principles that apply to all schools, governments should share the responsibility to provide these additional resources to build the capacity for schools and teachers to accommodate these students.
- 40.** Labor is committed to working with State and Territory governments to enable schools to conform to agreed disability standards under the Disability Discrimination Act, which clarifies the rights of students with disabilities and the obligations of education providers.
- 41.** Labor also recognises the difficulties of providing access to quality teaching and learning programs and resources in rural and remote areas of Australia, and will support the further development of targeted programs for schools in these areas.

School to Work Transition

- 42.** Strong educational foundations are more important than ever to Australia's economic future and social well-being.
- 43.** Labor recognises that Australia's economic success depends on the education, skills and labour market participation of all our young people. Those young people who leave the formal education and training system without recognised skills are vulnerable to long-term unemployment.
- 44.** Labor's commitment to all young people and their families is to guarantee access to valued learning to Year 12 of schooling or its equivalent in other areas of education and training.
- 45.** For most young people, this will mean completing their secondary education at school. However, Labor recognises that this is not the best or the only way for everyone. Guidance and support needs to be there when it counts. This will require effective policies to encourage young people to stay at school, to develop alternative learning options within and alongside schools and to support students in the world outside school in a highly competitive labour market if they choose to leave.
- 46.** Labor will work with the States and Territories to deliver a national strategy to provide our young people with the foundation for lifelong learning, consisting of the following elements:
 - To achieve Year 12 or equivalent qualification at school or through TAFE, adult and community education or an apprenticeship or traineeship.
 - To re-engage early school leavers to achieve a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, at school or TAFE.
 - To provide tailored and informed advice and support to help students make a successful transition from school to employment and further education and training.
 - To support coordinated community partnerships to maximise the use of existing resources.

- To provide targeted labour market assistance, through employer subsidies, job creation and related training, for those young people remaining outside the formal education and training system.
- 47.** Labor will support the further development of opportunities for students to participate in quality vocational education and training programs while they are at school, which provide real pathways to employment and to further education and training.

Vocational Education and Training

- 48.** Labor believes that Australia's economic prosperity can only be guaranteed by training a highly-skilled workforce. Vocational education and training helps Australians develop skills to obtain and perform effectively in secure, sustainable and satisfying employment, and to use those skills to ensure our national economic prosperity. Labor will invest in those skills.
- 49.** Labor's vocational education and training policies will be directed towards:
- equipping Australians with relevant, valued and enduring qualifications;
 - ensuring the Australian economy has the qualified skills base it needs to grow, innovate and prosper;
 - expanding opportunities for more Australians to undertake vocational education and training, through apprenticeships or institutional based learning;
 - providing Australians with portable, nationally and mutually recognised and consistent vocational qualifications;
 - meeting the needs of people from educationally and vocationally disadvantaged backgrounds to gain qualifications and employable skills, including those who would benefit from second chance opportunities for education and training; and
 - maximising training opportunities for existing workers to continually update and raise their post-school qualifications and skill levels, in order to prevent workers being forced into low-skilled and precarious employment.
- 50.** Labor understands the emerging and ongoing skill shortages faced by business must be addressed. Australia's skills base can only be secured through a sustained commitment to providing training opportunities for more Australians. This task cannot be left to government alone. Labor will encourage more businesses to increase their local training programs, rather than turning to temporary skilled migration. Labor believes that Australia's skill needs will only be secured through lasting solutions, such as expanded education and training opportunities complemented by a balanced skilled migration program with an emphasis on permanent migration.
- 51.** To enable Australian industry to develop, innovate and grow requires support to undertake higher level training, and expand the qualification base of its workers. Labor will ensure that training strategies are linked to industry development policy.
- 52.** Labor supports the development of a genuinely national system of vocational education and training, with increased resources from government and employers for growth and for improved quality. This will include strategies to improve and modernise vocational education and training to provide contemporary programs that meet the changing needs of students, industry and the community.
- 53.** The ongoing development of a national system of vocational education and training, including related national industry standards, must be based on expert advice from those directly involved, both employers and employees. Labor supports a national network of Industry Skills Councils, with members from both employer associations and unions.

- 54.** Labor supports a cooperative approach between the Commonwealth, States and Territories to maintain and further develop a high quality, national vocational education and training system built upon nationally agreed objectives, strategies and planning processes.
- 55.** Labor will introduce new governance arrangements to support an effective, cooperative national training system with a leading role for government, employers and unions.
- 56.** Labor will work with the States and Territories to ensure that all providers of vocational education and training are subject to an efficient, comprehensive system of quality assurance including independent auditing. Private sector skills development should be fully integrated within national education and training goals and the national quality and mutual recognition processes.
- 57.** Labor supports a national training system underpinned by a national qualifications framework, with nationally recognised and portable qualifications, and interstate recognition of the registration of training providers consistent with national registration standards and auditing processes. Labor is committed to maintaining the integrity of Australian trade qualifications and ensuring that there is an effective and thorough system in place to recognise skills obtained both domestically and overseas, so that qualifications consistent with Australia's national training system are recognised, including through rigorous and effective trades recognition and skills assessment in the electrical and metal trades.
- 58.** Labor is committed to increasing existing workers' access to national vocational education and training qualifications. A key barrier to this is the cost of identifying the specific skills and knowledge workers have already acquired through their work and prior training, and using this information effectively. Labor will support measures to improve recognition of prior learning and current competencies, to develop and implement training plans for workers to complete the gap to higher, nationally recognised qualifications.
- 59.** Labor will also support initiatives that educate and empower workers about the benefits of ongoing learning and structured training in their workplaces to encourage increased investment by employers in further education and training of workers.
- 60.** Labor will make sure the vocational education and training system supports existing workers who are experiencing skill deficits in the course of their employment. Labor understands that many Australians who may have left school early or lack other formal qualifications often seek new opportunities to expand their education and training. Labor will ensure that pathways and programs exist for Australians to access education and training, to gain or build their skill base, whatever the stage of their working life.
- 61.** Labor will promote a work environment conducive to more training. Labour market insecurity discourages both individuals and employers from investing in gaining or updating necessary skills and qualifications. In addition, employees with recognised qualifications are more likely to find and retain secure employment. Labor will support employees to gain these qualifications.
- 62.** Labor will enable employees and their unions to be actively involved in increasing access to structured learning and training in their workplaces.
- 63.** In developing policies and programs for vocational education and training, Labor will give particular attention to its critical role in providing training and employment opportunities for Indigenous students and their communities. Labor will develop vocational education and training models that acknowledge the community, cultural and educational needs of Indigenous people, including those in isolated communities.

- 64.** Labor recognises the important role played by TAFE as the public provider of quality training to assist the government in achieving its policy goals for economic development and social justice, and in meeting the technical and further education needs of the Australian community.
- 65.** Access to vocational education and training is critical for many Australians. Labor will support increased public provision through a high quality TAFE system where costs are not a barrier to participation by students from low income backgrounds. A funding contribution to training should also be made by employers. Labor will support TAFE in its dual roles of training provider and as a key access point for community education.
- 66.** Labor acknowledges the contribution made by the TAFE workforce in developing the knowledge and skills of Australians. In cooperation with unions, industry and State and Territory governments, Labor will take a national approach to improving the professional skills and status of TAFE teachers, including through development of their contemporary and industry-relevant skills.
- 67.** Labor recognises the particular challenges TAFE faces recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teaching staff, and will introduce measures to address these issues. Labor will also support the professional development of other TAFE staff.
- 68.** Labor supports the right of TAFE staff to collectively bargain and be represented by their union. TAFE funding should be free from conditions such as a requirement to offer individual contracts.
- 69.** As well as training programs delivered through TAFE institutions, Labor believes that private sector employers have a responsibility to provide opportunities for comprehensive post-school vocational training for Australia's young people.
- 70.** While recognising the unique character of vocational education and training, Labor will facilitate maximum cooperation between the senior secondary years, TAFE and university sectors, especially in the establishment of course credits, articulation and, where appropriate, dual and co-located institutions. This recognises the growing connection between some university and TAFE courses and the growing number of students moving each way between these institutions to obtain their qualifications.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

- 71.** Labor recognises that the apprenticeship system is the backbone of our skilled trades and technical workforce. Labor will promote apprenticeships as a means towards a valuable and rewarding career for Australians.
- 72.** Labor understands that an effective apprenticeship system involves a partnership between government, business, unions, TAFE and other training providers, and the community. Australian businesses need to provide more apprenticeship opportunities, and Labor will support these businesses through appropriate incentive programs. Labor also recognises that governments at all levels have an obligation to provide apprentice training opportunities where possible.
- 73.** Labor believes that Australia's ability to meet its skills needs relies on the capacity of business to take on more apprentices. Unlike institutional based learning in TAFE, apprenticeships are employment based, training contracts, which require an apprentice, a TAFE and, most importantly, an employer. If companies are able to satisfy their training intake with apprentices from overseas, then opportunities for Australians will be lost. Labor

believes we must train Australians first, and opposes the overseas apprentice Trade Skills Training Visa.

- 74.** Labor will provide resources for the expansion of apprenticeships and traineeships to ensure that structured entry level training and work experience opportunities are available to those seeking these skills in demand.
- 75.** Labor will foster cooperative efforts between employers and unions to maximise and continually increase the take-up of apprenticeships and traineeships, especially in areas of skill shortage and in emerging industries. This structured training should focus on the development of both generic and industry-specific skills. Both government and industry have a responsibility to contribute to investment in workplace education and training.
- 76.** Labor supports maintaining the apprenticeship system as modern, flexible, adaptive and responsive to Australian industry's skill needs.
- 77.** Labor supports:
 - ongoing improvement in the form, structure and duration of apprenticeships and traineeships to reflect the changing structure of work and the needs of industry;
 - moves towards competency based training, accompanied by advanced salary progression for apprentices; and
 - the protection of the integrity of trade qualifications and rejects the dilution of the skills base through the fragmentation of apprenticeships.
- 78.** Labor will support apprentices and trainees during their structured training, and provide greater assistance to help them complete their training. Apprentices and trainees have the right to high quality training, both on and off the job, fair wages and conditions, respect from employers and co-workers, and training experiences that produce lasting and portable skills.
- 79.** Labor will establish and implement minimum national standards for the protection of apprentices and trainees. Labor will ensure that all training contracts or agreements meet minimum standards, including an explicit and clear training plan with agreed outcomes, which will be properly monitored and enforced.
- 80.** Labor will focus on quality apprenticeship and traineeship programs and on higher skill levels. Public funding should be more directly linked to the level of training effort, to the completion of quality outcomes and to the development of future skill needs. All apprenticeship and traineeship programs should be consistent with the national qualifications framework.
- 81.** Labor will ensure that there is sufficient funding made available for on and off-the-job training for apprentices, especially in rural and regional Australia.
- 82.** Labor acknowledges the particularly crucial and effective role of group training companies in providing rotated, structured training and other opportunities for apprentices who work in smaller companies that have a limited capacity to train in their own right. Labor will support group training companies' involvement with a wider range of small companies, and the formation of vocationally based employment pools based on similar principles.
- 83.** In addition to support for group training, Labor will examine ways to encourage public and private employers including contract maintenance, employers, labour hire and industry schemes, to directly employ more apprentices and trainees.

Adapting to New Jobs

- 84.** As well as direct job creation for older workers and unemployed people, governments also have a responsibility to invest in retraining workers to provide them with new skills in tune,

where possible, with national qualifications so that they can adapt to changing demands in the labour force.

- 85.** Labor will invest in a range of new job preparation programs, including specially targeted labour adjustment programs for mature age workers displaced by industry restructuring, aimed at getting these workers back into paid jobs. These programs may include specifically targeted mature age apprenticeships. Labor will address the barriers to mature age apprenticeships faced by both workers and employers.

Adult and Community Education

- 86.** Adult and community education is an integral component of lifelong learning in Australia. Labor is committed to extending learning opportunities through adult and community education that is affordable, flexible and community-based, and that can adapt to the learning needs of both younger and older adults.
- 87.** Labor acknowledges the significant contribution to the education of new arrivals to Australia by adult migration education services and will direct appropriate public funding for this purpose.

Management Skills

- 88.** Labor is committed to raising the skills and standards of managers in Australia at all levels, as well as workers, through innovative new programs on leadership and management skills, and the continuing review of the performance of Australia's corporate managers. The Karpin Report raised serious concerns about the level of management skills and training in Australia, and attempted to raise the general level of business and community awareness of the relationship between management capability at all levels of the organisation and company performance. Recognising that the business skills and standards of managers in our workplaces have an important impact on our national economic competitiveness, Labor believes it is important for our long-term economic prosperity to revisit these issues.

Universities

- 89.** Labor will ensure that Australia's universities are institutions of high quality teaching and research, where intellectual rigour and excellence are supported by sustained public investment acting as the cornerstone of our nation's social and economic prosperity.
- 90.** Universities have a range of public purposes, intellectual and vocational, social and economic, and public access to these opportunities should be as broad as possible. Labor will support a culture of excellence in all our universities so that, as a nation, we can build a modern economy able to hold its own in the world.
- 91.** Commitment to free inquiry is fundamental. A university must not be fettered in the questions it seeks to advance, or the issues it decides to pursue. Labor reaffirms its commitment to academic freedom. Other nations have passed laws to protect academic freedom. Labor will assess this international experience to ensure that academic freedom in Australia underpins effective teaching and research.
- 92.** Labor believes that Australia's public universities make a special contribution to the life of our nation. They question what we take for granted, offer different ideas, discover new insights, invent new technologies and apply technologies in different ways, advancing Australia as a modern economy and vibrant democracy. Labor affirms its commitment to extensive public funding of this role, and to the principle that public universities will be given priority for public funding. Labor recognises that universities and private higher education providers fulfil

different roles. Labor will ensure the legislative framework reflects this through separate pieces of legislation. Labor believes this will enhance the domestic and international competitiveness and reputation of Australia's higher education sector

- 93.** Labor is committed to increasing public investment in higher education and research. Labor recognises the need to protect the value of the resources provided by public funding of universities through appropriate indexation arrangements, linked to quality improvement.
- 94.** Labor recognises the important role universities play in their communities, and will fund universities' outreach into their local and regional communities.
- 95.** Australia's universities must offer the highest standards of teaching and learning, and foster environments conducive for world-class research. Quality and standards must be referenced to appropriate expectations in fields and levels of learning and research. Any such assessment should be on the basis of a thorough peer or expert review system, including by periodic course reviews.
- 96.** Labor believes in a cooperative, national system, involving the Commonwealth, the States and Territories, for the accreditation and quality assurance of universities and all other higher education providers, consistent with nationally agreed protocols.
- 97.** Labor supports innovation and diversification in the provision of higher education. Labor recognises that universities should be supported to meet their distinct and divergent missions, within an overarching framework of high quality standards. This means building on the individual strengths of Australia's universities and encouraging collaboration to lead to greater public and international confidence in the quality and integrity of all our universities.
- 98.** Labor believes that it is the role of government to ensure quality of educational outcomes, rather than interfere in the internal management of universities with excessive controls on inputs and processes.
- 99.** Labor is committed to the autonomy of public universities. Punitive funding conditions, such as the imposition of individual contracts, will be abolished.
- 100.** Access to a university education should be open to all, available on the basis of merit and equity rather than wealth and privilege. Entry to university must be sufficiently flexible to allow both school leavers and mature aged applicants access a higher education.
- 101.** As in other areas of education and training, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in higher education. Labor will develop policies and strategies to improve their participation and success including students with disabilities, students from low income communities and students from rural and regional areas. Mindful of the particularly acute under-representation of Indigenous students in and graduates from universities and in line with Labor's commitment to bringing about permanent improvements to the lives of Indigenous people and their communities, Labor will develop particular policies and strategies and redress this situation.
- 102.** Labor acknowledges there is both a public and private benefit from an individual's university education. Funding contributions should reflect this balance of benefits. Labor introduced the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) as an equitable means of achieving this balance. However, Labor is concerned that changes to the HECS system have altered its original intent and shifted the cost and debt burden of a university degree further onto students at the same time as the Commonwealth contribution to universities per student has been reduced.

- 103.** Labor understands financial costs can act as an impediment to participation in education. Labor will ensure that HECS does not act as a financial barrier to Australians seeking to study in a public university. Labor believes the HECS repayment threshold should be consistent with the average graduate starting salary.
- 104.** Labor opposes full fees for Australian undergraduate students in our public universities. Labor will increase public investment in our universities and phase out fee-paying places for Australian undergraduate students in our public universities.
- 105.** Labor is committed to legislating to ensure that student amenities and services like childcare, health services, counselling, advocacy, and sporting facilities are maintained and accessible at our universities, with formal student involvement in decision-making structures. Labor will require all universities to have an independent, democratic and securely funded student representative body. Students need independent advocacy and representation services, and democratic bodies to present their opinions and concerns to the university, government and the community.
- 106.** Labor recognises that financial disadvantage presents a barrier to student access to, and participation in, a university education. Labor believes that all members of our society should have the opportunity to access a university education if academically qualified.
- 107.** Labor will ensure government-assisted income support is available to students who do not have the financial means to be able to study at university. Labor believes that an adequate level of payment should not discourage students from taking on some part-time work. Labor will identify ways of improving the current income support system to better meet students' needs, including in particular the needs of indigenous students.
- 108.** Labor believes that it is a fundamental requirement for the accreditation of a university that it undertakes teaching and research. Undergraduate and postgraduate coursework education cannot occur without quality research activity.
- 109.** Labor understands that high quality education and research cannot occur without the support of general and ancillary staff, whose important role must be valued and appropriately rewarded.
- 110.** Labor recognises that despite the efforts of many dedicated staff, the quality of university teaching and research has been undermined by Howard Government policy. The quality of university staff and their remuneration are matters of national interest. Adequate funding of our universities is necessary to ensure they are able to attract, retain and develop high quality staff.
- 111.** Labor supports the right of university staff to collectively bargain and be represented by their union.
- 112.** Labor supports the right of staff and students to participate in the governance of higher education institutions, in recognition of the knowledge, experience and commitment they bring.
- 113.** Labor will take action to reverse the 'brain drain' of talented Australian researchers and academics overseas.
- 114.** Labor will provide incentives for postgraduate research and coursework studies, especially in such priority areas as science, health, teaching and nursing.
- 115.** The sustainability of Australia's significant education exports industry relies on the quality, integrity and reputation of our universities, which Labor will enhance. Labor will ensure strong

protection for overseas students studying in Australia, through requiring high educational standards and corporate integrity and viability from education and training providers.

- 116.** Universities in Australia should be supported to reap the benefits of global developments in knowledge, research and teaching; and to shape and respond to the challenges of the future. Labor will encourage universities to play a leadership role in the internationalisation of higher education, including through the development of global networks and by promoting capacity building in host countries within our region.

Labor recognises that the international higher education market is leading to some overseas operations being provided by contracted third parties. Labor will ensure appropriate and rigorous compliance arrangements within international guidelines for the quality provision of higher education services.

- 117.** Labor notes the developing role of public universities as commercial suppliers of education and training services tailored to the needs of corporate clients. Labor will ensure that there are proper accounting and auditing processes to prevent the inappropriate transfer of public funds for commercial purposes.
- 118.** Labor recognises the role that private providers play in extending choices for individual learners and meeting particular needs for higher education qualifications. Private providers are an important complement to public universities, and can be a source of innovation for the system generally.
- 119.** Labor believes that all providers of higher education qualifications must offer their students the teaching and resources necessary to enable their acquisition of the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the qualification in which they are enrolled. Labor believes that private providers should be subject to the same processes of regular evaluation of quality standards that apply to universities.

Research

- 120.** Labor believes that research and development is a key driver of productivity and economic growth. Our prosperity relies upon the creation of new knowledge and its applications to:
- produce high-skill, high-wage jobs and high-value exports, and
 - achieve our social, environmental and cultural goals.
- 121.** Labor supports increased and strategic public investment in research. Australia must have:
- strong and independent universities;
 - well-funded public sector research agencies; and
 - robust industry sectors with strong and effective investment in research and development.
- 122.** Labor understands that Australia must build world-class, world-scale research capabilities in areas where we have the potential to compete globally.
- 123.** Labor recognises that all research and research education must be conducted at high standards of excellence so Australia can compete with the world's best universities and economies.
- 124.** Labor understands that research excellence is central to Australia's ability to attract and retain highly talented researchers and research students to our universities and research institutes.

- 125.** Labor will replace the Howard Government's Research Quality Framework for university research funding with an internationally recognised, metrics-based research quality assurance system that will:
- be rigorous, transparent and equitable;
 - incorporate international peer review;
 - apply and weight the metrics used to ensure results are verifiable;
 - encourage research collaboration, both within the public research sector and between the public and private sectors;
 - distribute funds in a way that, for each discipline, reflects research quality and achievement; and
 - build research and development capacity and maximises the application of research results.
- 126.** Labor will ensure that the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) fund the best quality and most nationally significant research projects, without fear of political manipulation. The ARC and NHMRC's decision making processes should be transparent, robust and free from political interference.
- 127.** Labor is committed to ensuring that Australia sustains appropriate breadth and depth of research capability across the nation's range of universities and research institutes. Australia must have, within its overall research capability, a spectrum of research strengths and approaches—ranging from pure basic, long-term research to applied and short-term research.
- 40** **128.** Labor will ensure that a strong culture of collaboration, networking and clustering, including at the international level, underpins our universities, research institutes and private research programs in order to maximise our capabilities.
- 129.** Labor will strengthen national research agencies, including the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), and ensure they continue to contribute appropriately to national goals. Labor will reverse the current trend of under-funding of the national research agencies, and protect their scientific integrity and independence. Labor will encourage enhanced collaboration between the national research agencies, universities, TAFE and the private sector.
- 130.** Labor will address the major skills gap in Australia caused by our inability to retain and replace researchers. Labor will ensure that young and mid-career researchers have opportunities to build their research careers and contribute to the creation and application of knowledge.
- 131.** Labor understands the need for a strong culture of innovation and knowledge transfer in Australia. We must have effective channels for transferring knowledge and technology between universities, research institutes, TAFEs, business and the community sector. We cannot lift the capacity of business to innovate, to find and absorb knowledge in order to create new and improved products, services and processes, without linking people and ideas in business with researchers and universities.
- 132.** Labor is committed to lifting business expenditure on research and development. Labor is also committed to lifting the capacity of business to absorb and adapt the results of research. Labor believes it is incumbent on government to deliver a policy framework that will encourage the private sector to invest in research. Labor will promote effective linkages between Australian industry and public research infrastructure, academics and graduates.

- 133.** Labor will make sure that research and development initiatives provide an effective incentive to lift Australian research and development and build an innovative Australian economy.
- 134.** Labor will encourage the commercialisation of research so that Australia can reap the full benefits of its research and maximise the contribution of Australian research to economic development and competitiveness.
- 135.** Labor recognises that the key role of universities, in relation to research, is to undertake quality basic research and to disseminate the findings of this research to the community. While it is important to ensure the successful commercialisation of research, Labor believes that government policies should not be aimed at narrow commercialisation objectives to the detriment of basic research.
- 136.** Labor recognises that Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) are important forums for industry, researchers, universities and government to collaborate and innovate in key research and industry areas. Labor will strengthen the cooperative research process and ensure that it encompasses broad economic, social and environmental goals as well as commercial objectives.
- 137.** Labor believes that research in the sciences, engineering and technology is critical for national economic development and meeting our environment, security, public health and social challenges. Labor will ensure that Australian investment in the sciences, engineering and technology builds national prosperity and lifts our capacity to innovate and compete in the world.
- 138.** Labor acknowledges the contribution of the humanities and social sciences to Australia's knowledge base and will expand opportunities for humanities and social science to further the economic, environmental and social development of Australia.

Indigenous Education

- 139.** Labor believes that education and training is fundamental to reducing Indigenous disadvantage and enabling greater Indigenous self governance, determination and responsibility in the future. Labor accepts that the national government should play a particular role in supporting and promoting education and training rights and opportunities for Indigenous people. Labor will work to reduce the appalling gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous education and training access, attendance, and standards. This will mean addressing the needs and requirements of Indigenous people and families as they relate to both mainstream and Indigenous-specific education and training goals and opportunities. Labor will develop goals specific to the different needs of urban, regional and remote areas. In particular, Labor is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous communities, families and people of all ages in order to develop and implement these education and training goals and opportunities.
- 140.** Central to Indigenous education policy is the valuing of the diversity of cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their contribution to Australia's social, economic, cultural and environmental development. Indigenous people and their communities must shape and influence decisions about educational priorities and strategies. Labor will develop alternative education structures that acknowledge the community, cultural and educational needs of Indigenous students.
- 141.** The content of what is learnt in Australia's education systems, whether school or university or vocational training, should be inclusive of Indigenous cultures and perspectives. This is as important for non-Indigenous Australians as it is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- 142.** Labor supports a mandatory Aboriginal Studies component as part of all teachers' pre-service training. This will prepare teachers to be able to:
- work effectively in Aboriginal communities and teach Aboriginal children;
 - teach Aboriginal studies competently and confidently; and
 - incorporate Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching programs for all children.
- 143.** Labor understands the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and teachers play in achieving successful education outcomes for students. This includes, in particular, the need to increase Indigenous participation in education and training and in employment. Labor will work with State and Territory governments to develop effective incentives, support and strategies for Indigenous education worker enrolments, recruitment, remuneration, career pathways and professional development strategies. As well, Labor will work with teacher educators and with the teaching profession to ensure that all teachers enter the profession with a good understanding of Indigenous education issues and perspectives.