

The Government's IR Laws – Hurting Working Australians



Martin talking with a small business owner at the Preston Market about industrial relations.

Labor's plan for fair, balanced and productive workplaces

Labor's plan for a productive, fair and flexible industrial relations system will put balance into Australian workplaces. Higher wages and real productivity growth can only be achieved when employers and employees treat each other with respect. Labor's industrial relations plan will deliver that and protect the interests of working families.

What are Labor's commitments?

Labor has already released more details of its industrial relations policy than the Howard Government did before the last election. These commitments for a fair and balanced industrial relations system include:

- Abolishing John Howard's unfair take it or leave it AWA's
- Promoting and supporting democracy in the workplace through collective bargaining and fair bargaining
- Providing flexibility upwards for employers, employees and their workplaces
- Re-instating a strong safety net and independent umpire
- Allowing for common law agreements which meet minimum standards
- Restoring unfair dismissal protections with simple and timely processes
- Supporting working families by encouraging flexible workplace arrangements and rostering protections so families can plan ahead and the right to request two years unpaid parental leave subject to the genuine business needs of the employer.

What's Labor's Plan?

Labor opposes the Government's industrial relations changes. Labor is committed to replacing the Government's IR Laws with a better system based on balance, flexibility and fairness. Labor's approach will allow Australia's economy to grow and protect our way of life for future generations.

Labor's plan for working Australians and their families

Labor is fighting for the rights of ordinary working Australians and their families and the right to a fair go for every Australian in the workplace. Labor wants working Australians and their families to have decent jobs with decent conditions, which allows them to balance work and family, something the Howard Government's IR changes do not deliver.

The Ferguson Report



Martin at the Darebin Creek during one of his many strolls along the waterway

Water – A National Crisis

Addressing Australia's national water crisis is an urgent task, requiring consistent long-term policy and leadership from all levels of Government, particularly from the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth has a leadership role in helping ensure every Australian – whether they are in rural or urban Australia – has a sustainable supply of water. That has been Labor's consistent approach.

The Murray

As a nation, our water supplies have been taken for granted: over-allocated, undervalued and misdirected. Over 65 percent of Australia's water run-off 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 percent of the national run-off occurs.

In February it was revealed that inflows to the Murray River had slumped further, falling to just 12 per cent of the long-term median inflow for January. This giant river that sustains the nation has been reduced to the point whereby it needs dredging more often than not just to leave the mouth of the river open.

Climate Change

Common sense tells you that the Murray River's problems, and water supply issues generally are linked to climate change. Of course, you can't solve the water crisis without tackling climate change. Practical immediate action and long term vision on both water security and climate change are on Labor's agenda. Our response to climate change will determine the quality of life of our children, their grandchildren and generations to come.

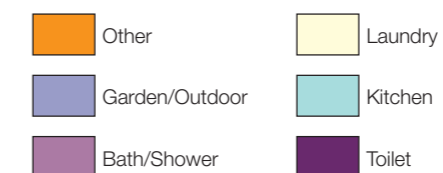
The National Water Plan

Federal Labor has consistently called for a national approach to water policy including:

- Commonwealth leadership on water;
- the appointment of a Minister for Water (Labor has a Shadow Minister for Water)
- the creation of a single Commonwealth water authority,
- the commitment of more funds for water management and efficiency programs right across Australia,
- the development of water trading and economic instruments to drive reform; and
- the existing \$2 billion Australian Water Fund to be used on practical projects.

Meeting the Urban Water Challenge

John Howard has made it quite clear he does not see a leadership role for the Commonwealth in urban water. Labor takes a different view. We believe that the Commonwealth has a responsibility to provide leadership and assist in securing water supply for the 17 million Australians who live in our capital cities and towns on the coast. Clean water is an investment in the future of Australia and is part of Labor's nation building agenda, including the roll out of broadband across Australia that will deliver broadband services 40 times faster than most current speeds.



FIVE TIPS TO SAVE WATER IN YOUR KITCHEN

1. Install aerators on taps

Aerators reduce the water flow and limit your water use.

2. Choose water efficient appliances

Look for appliances with water and power efficiency labels.

3. Only turn the dishwasher on when it's full

Dishwasher powders are so effective these days that they can remove even dried on stains.

4. Tap the source

When you're running the taps waiting for water to cool down or heat up, collect the water in a jug for use on the garden and turn taps off when you're washing vegetables or your hands.

5. Conserve our water ways

In your kitchen and laundry, try to use environmentally friendly cleaning products and detergents that will limit any harm caused to our creeks, rivers and the ocean.

Contact Martin Ferguson's office at 159 High St, Preston or ph: 9416 8690 for information kits on how to help the environment, be waste wise when you shop and how to buy Australian made.

Do you need help with migration?

My office is able to assist any resident living within the electorate of Batman with immigration issues. Please ring the Preston office to make an appointment with our Immigration Officer, Mandy if you require information and assistance with immigration issues.

These two websites may also be of help to you.

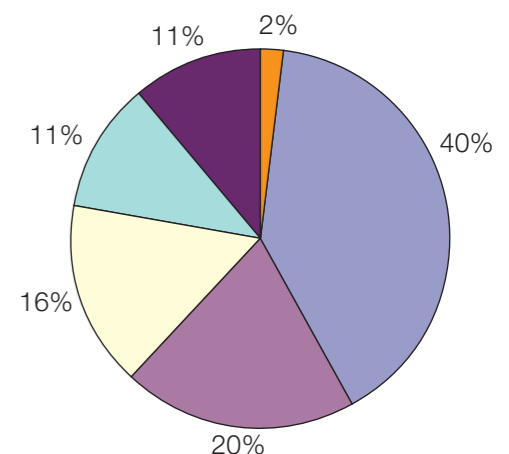
Migration Agents Registration Authority - www.themara.com.au

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs - www.immi.gov.au

The Migration Agents Registration Authority site is of particular use for those who wish to use a Migration Agent. It is my advice that you check on the "Register of Agents" listed on this site and search to see if your Migration Agent is registered. It is advisable to use a registered agent.

The Department website provides useful information on all visa requirements for people who want to visit, work, study or live in Australia. A range of online and printable applications, information forms and booklets is also listed.

WATER USE CONSUMPTION IN YOUR HOME



AN EDUCATION REVOLUTION – Investing In Our Future



Martin at Reservoir Primary School presenting the 2007 Martin Ferguson Book Award for the best all around achiever, Patrick Smith

The latest report into the numeracy and literacy skills of Australian kids showed one in 10 kids is struggling with the three “Rs” – a deeply concerning result that is simply not good enough.

For Australia to succeed in a highly competitive global economy our children need to have the best education possible. The current Government sometimes talks about the merits of a national curriculum, but after a decade in office has delivered little by way of real progress in achieving this.

What is even more concerning is the Howard Government’s attitude to the education of those who will be our future. Rather than acknowledging more needs to be done, the Minister for Education, Julie Bishop chooses instead to play the political blame game and point the finger at the states.

But it’s too important to simply blame someone else when it comes to our kid’s education. Labor supports parental choice in education. There will be no schools funding ‘hit list’. On the contrary, Labor believes a greater investment should be made at all levels of education.

This is critical not just for the future of individual children, but for our prosperity as a nation. Investing in education at every level is the key to national productivity and economic and social prosperity. Research shows that the best way to increase economic growth is to boost productivity and the best way to do that is to invest in the education, skills and training of our people and our work force.

Education is the pathway to both individual and national prosperity. That is why Labor has recently released positive policy proposals to address four key areas.

Invest in early childhood development

Federal Labor is committed to investing \$450 million to provide four year olds with 15 hours a week of high quality early childhood education. Overwhelming international evidence supports the view that government investment can provide crucial support to parents and communities, helping to ensure that children succeed in life. Investing in the early years of life delivers strong long-term benefits for children, and for the wider community.

Re-focusing on maths and science

Federal Labor will provide \$110 million to encourage young Australians to both study and teach maths and science. We are currently being left behind by other nations. Australia has a declining proportion of students who complete Year 12 studies in physics, biology and advanced mathematics. By the time they reach university, only 0.4 per cent of Australian university students graduate with maths and statistics qualifications compared with an OECD average of around one per cent. At the same time, nearly half of all senior physics teachers do not have a major in physics and around 25 per cent of senior chemistry teachers do not have a major in chemistry. This is why Labor is committed to reducing the HECS contribution for new maths and science students by over \$3000.

A rigorous, quality national curriculum

As a relatively small country in a globalised economy, it makes sense to have a national curriculum that lifts the standards of all students across our nation. The fact that each year around 340,000 families, including 80,000 school age students, relocate across State and Territory borders underlines the need for a national curriculum. It also reflects the needs of our children in being able to read with accuracy and confidence and write and speak articulately and fluently. They should also be able to manage the mathematics that underpins effective participation in adult life and the workforce. Labor believes the starting point for a national curriculum is the core areas of maths, the sciences, English and history. It will cover our children’s entire school career from Kindergarten to Year 12 and make sure our educational standards improve.

Complementing education with technological advancements

Federal Labor’s commitment to more strongly invest in education will be complemented by the delivery from the ALP of a new National Broadband Network through partnerships with the private sector. It will connect 98 per cent of Australians to high speed broadband internet services – at speeds over 40 times faster than most current speeds. This includes not only our homes and businesses but our schools and universities as well. The National Broadband Network will help position Australia as a competitive, innovative, knowledge-based economy that can compete and win in global markets.



Martin with the team at the Northern Community Healthcare Centre in Preston.

Australians missing out on vital dental treatment

When the Howard Government abolished the Commonwealth Dental Health Program in 1996, there was an average six month wait for public dental care. Now there are over 650,000 people in the queue and many are waiting years for treatment.

A recent report released earlier this year showed that one in five Australians were foregoing recommended dental treatment because they couldn’t afford it. Over 20 percent of the Australian population aged 15 years or more have forgone recommended dental treatment due to cost in the last twelve months.

Over 40 percent of the Australian population aged 15 or over have not visited a dentist in the last twelve months and uninsured people were 1.6 times more likely to have untreated dental decay than insured people, and three times more likely to have not visited their dentist in the last 5 years.

Working families are suffering, Australians are missing out on treatment they need and the Howard Government stands idle. Federal Labor has committed to ensuring that all Australians get the care they need, when they need it.

Tips on Dental Care

1. Regular dental check-ups are important. See your dentists at least once a year
2. Clean your teeth at least twice a day after meals.
3. Low fluoride toothpaste is best for children under six years of age. Introduce a low fluoride toothpaste from approximately 18 months of age.
4. Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods and if you eat sugary foods and snacks, limit their intake – especially between meals.
5. Drink plenty of tap water – especially if fluoridated.
6. Milk and flavoured milks are preferable to other sugary drinks. If you do drink acidic and sugary drinks such as soft drinks, sports drinks, cordials and fruit juices, limit how often and how much of these you drink.

Contact Martin Ferguson’s office at 159 High St, Preston or ph: 9416 8690 for information kits on food and nutrition as well as brochures on mental illness, eating disorders, sexual health and how to save costs when purchasing medicines.

EIGHT TIPS TO HELP YOUR KIDS TO READ

1. Read aloud to your child every day
2. Discuss the books with your child
3. Buy or borrow books that you know will interest your child
4. Create a comfortable reading space for your child
5. Buy a good dictionary for your child and use it together regularly
6. Introduce books on other topics
7. Visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au and get down to the local library
8. Visit the websites of favourite authors and illustrators

Contact Martin Ferguson’s office at 159 High St, Preston or ph: 9416 8690 for student resources about Australia and our Parliamentary system and information kits on youth assistance and drug awareness.

