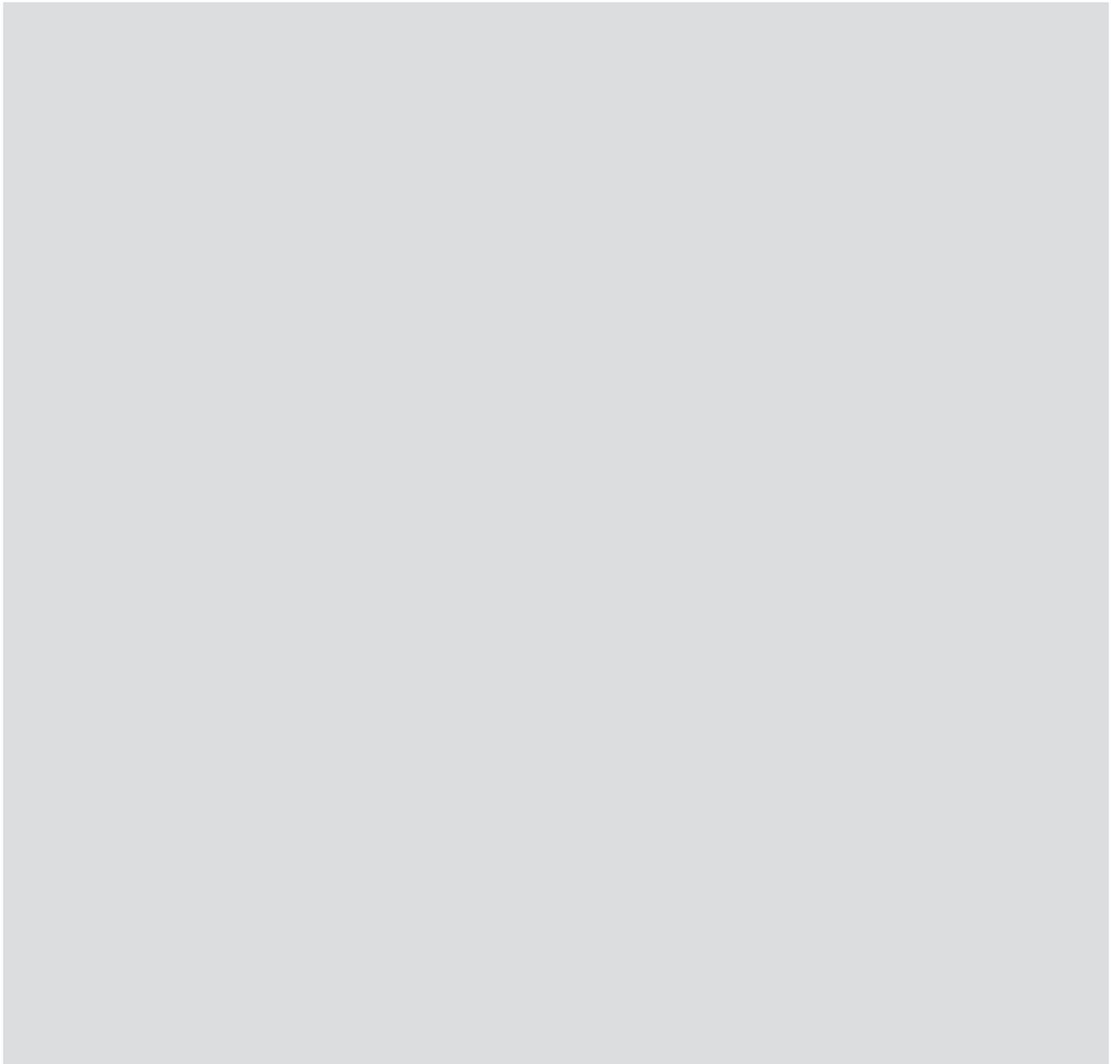




National Platform



Chapter 4: A clean energy future

Introduction

- 1 A clean energy future is at the heart of Labor's long-term plan to reshape our economy and cut carbon pollution. By acting now, Labor is helping Australia look forward to continued economic growth while protecting our environment for future generations. Just as Labor's 1980s reforms laid down the bedrock of our current prosperity, pricing carbon and moving to clean energy will ensure the Australian economy of the 21st century remains globally competitive.
- 2 The foundation of Labor's plan is the climate science. We are advised by scientists that the world's climate is changing and that there will be severe, adverse effects on our nation if the trend continues. Globally, 2010 was the warmest year on record, with 2001–10 the warmest decade. In Australia, each decade since the 1940s has been warmer than the preceding decade. This affects our water security, coastal development, infrastructure, agriculture and health. The environmental consequences translate readily into economic costs and, as a hot and dry continent, Australia has more to lose from climate change than all other developed countries. The longer we wait to take action, the harder and more expensive the change will be.
- 3 Countries around the world are already taking action on climate change. Ninety countries—representing 80 per cent of global emissions and 90 per cent of the world's economy—have already pledged to take action on climate change. Globally, more money is now invested in new renewable power than ever before.
- 4 Alongside climate change, broader environmental issues and environmental protection remain of critical concern to Labor and to Australia's future. This includes protecting our biodiversity and our treasured lived environments. By identifying, protecting and managing our built and cultural heritage, we are conserving a valuable asset and ensuring that these places will continue to be experienced and enjoyed by future generations.

Labor values

- 5 Labor is a social democratic party and believes there is a positive and essential role for government in securing economic and environmental wellbeing. Labor will not ignore the evidence on climate change and will protect Australia's future.
- 6 Labor wants intergenerational equity. Our pursuit of social justice and fair opportunities for all extends to future generations. We believe we have an obligation to leave the world a better place, not to pass on the problems we found too difficult to deal with to our grandchildren and to their grandchildren. Labor believes in making the hard choices now to deliver a clean environment and sustainable prosperity.
- 7 Labor also wants equity within Australia as we move to address climate change and is ensuring that low and middle income earners do not carry a disproportionate burden of our transition to a low carbon economy.
- 8 Labor also believes that the action we need to take now, to ensure future generations can thrive, should not be at the expense of today's Australians. Alongside a price on carbon, Labor believes in supporting Australian jobs and families as we build the clean energy economy. Labor is committed to building a vibrant, clean technology industry in this country.

- 9 Labor believes in evidence-based policy and in constructive dialogue. We have listened to the scientists from CSIRO, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, the Australian Academy of Sciences, NASA and academies of science from around the world. We have engaged in extensive consultation across Australia, with local communities and industry. Our clean energy policy has been informed by these conversations.
- 10 Labor believes in constructive international engagement. While it is in the long term national interest for Australia to transition to clean energy, Labor remains committed to reaching a global agreement on climate change. Tackling climate change will require action by all countries. Reaching agreement between all countries on how to do this is challenging. Each country has its individual priorities and needs, so the international negotiations must find a common ground. Labor will make sure Australia continues to play a constructive role to find this common ground.
- 11 Protecting our biodiversity is a core environmental challenge, requiring research, regulation and protection through sustainable land management practices, forestry, parks and reserves and cooperation with landholders, land managers, governments and agencies. Labor created Australia's modern system of national parks, including the Kosciuszko National Park.
- 12 Labor believes our environmental challenge extends to lived environments and involves identifying, preserving and restoring significant examples of our built and cultural heritage. Our environmental challenge extends to ensuring we have well resourced and equipped emergency services to protect and assist our communities as we respond to the emergencies we will face due to the effects of climate change.

Labor achievements

Climate change

We have:

- ratified the Kyoto Protocol as one of the first acts of the Labor Government on coming to power in 2007
- expanded the Renewable Energy Target and will ensure 20 per cent of Australia's electricity will come from renewable sources by 2020
- developed a comprehensive plan to move to a clean energy future, which starts with putting a price on carbon
- committed to establish the \$10 billion Clean Energy Finance Corporation from 1 July 2013 committed to establish the \$3.2 billion Australian Renewable Energy Agency, which will incorporate existing initiatives including Solar Flagships and the Australian Solar Institute helped 2500 schools take practical action to tackle climate change, through the National Solar Schools program, by installing solar panels and water tanks
- committed to expand the Low Carbon Communities program to help low income households, local governments and community organisations to save energy
- committed to invest in a \$1.2 billion Clean Technology Program to help businesses to improve energy efficiency and reduce their carbon pollution
- initiated the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute to drive the dissemination of technology and knowledge around the world.

Environment and heritage

We have:

- committed to reform for the Murray–Darling Basin with more than \$5 billion of funding
- invested more than \$2 billion in Caring for our Country programs, which aim to protect Australia's unique environment by supporting the contributions of volunteers and community groups
- funded national, regional and local Landcare programs
- taken action in the International Court of Justice to end whaling
- invested in Reef Rescue to protect the Great Barrier Reef, one of the world's greatest natural wonders
- committed to the Marine Bioregional Planning process to support the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's oceans
- started a pilot of drought reform measures in Western Australia to help farmers better manage the risks of drought and prepare for future challenges
- developed a Sustainable Population Strategy, to ensure population changes are compatible with the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of Australia.
- established a Biodiversity Fund committing \$1 billion over six years to restore and protect our unique biodiversity, and enhance the carbon-carrying capacity of the landscape.

Energy capacity

We have:

- established the Australian Energy Market Operator—a key energy market reform—and the Gas Short Term Trading Market to provide greater transparency in the domestic gas sector through the Standing Council on Energy and Resources
- legislated for the National Energy Customer Framework, which was the last big unfinished reform coming out of the Energy Reform Implementation Group
- established the Australian Solar Institute and the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy, both of which are being rolled into the \$3.2 billion ARENA that will be operational from 1 July 2012
- started work on an Energy White Paper expanded the Energy Efficiency Opportunities program to include generators and networks, allowing smaller businesses to opt-in
- delivered a Smart Grid City trial
- delivered a National Energy Security Assessment
- We continue to play an active role in energy policy internationally.

Labor priorities

The transition to a clean energy future

- 13 Labor has a comprehensive plan to create a clean energy future for Australia. Starting with a price on carbon pollution, Labor will promote innovation and investment in renewable energy, encourage energy efficiency and create new opportunities for farmers and regional communities in the land sector to cut pollution levels.
- 14 We will:
- dramatically cut pollution: our clean energy plan will cut pollution by at least five per cent compared with 2000 levels by 2020, which will require cutting new expected pollution by at least 23 per cent in 2020. By 2050, we are committed to cut pollution to 80 per cent below 2000 levels
 - unleash innovation and investment worth billions of dollars in renewable energy: large scale renewable electricity generation, excluding hydro, is projected to be 18 times its current size by 2050. Total renewable generation, including hydro, will comprise around 40 per cent of generation in 2050
 - transform our energy sector away from high polluting sources, like brown coal. We will seek to negotiate to close down up to 2000 megawatts of high-polluting coal-fired power generation, creating space for new clean energy supplies. In such cases Labor will work with industry and the relevant unions to ensure proper processes are in place to manage employee-related issues
 - store millions of tonnes of carbon in land through better land and waste management. Between now and 2050, around 460 million tonnes of carbon pollution will be reduced or stored instead of entering our atmosphere under the Carbon Farming Initiative.

A carbon price

- 15 Putting a price on carbon is the most environmentally effective and cheapest way to cut pollution. This is a fact well recognised by economists from around the world, and respected institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Productivity Commission. Currently, releasing carbon pollution is free despite the fact it is harming our environment. A carbon price changes this. It puts a price on the carbon pollution that Australia's largest polluters produce. This creates a powerful incentive for all businesses to cut their pollution, by investing in clean technology or finding more efficient ways of operating.
- 16 The carbon price is the first element of Labor's plan for a clean energy future. It will trigger a broad transformation of the economy. Labor is committed to an emissions trading scheme, beginning with a fixed price but transitioning to a flexible price in 2015.
- 17 To ensure we achieve our commitment to cut pollution to 80 per cent below 2000 levels by 2050, when setting pollution caps Labor will be guided by the latest climate science, Australia's international climate change obligations and the advice of the independent Climate Change Authority.
- 18 Our economy has successfully handled comparable structural changes over its history. In fact, transformative changes—new products and technologies, and the integration of our economy into the global economy set in train by the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s—have underpinned rising prosperity and sustainable growth in Australia.

- 19 All revenue from the carbon price will:
- support jobs and competitiveness
 - cut taxes and increase payments to help households with modest price impacts
 - build our new clean energy future.

Supporting industry and jobs

- 20 Labor will deliver sustainable industry policy for the transition to a low carbon economy that utilises the full suite of policy measures available to maximise competitiveness and job growth. Labor recognises that policies to support industry and jobs must include a focus on regional workers and communities at the front line of the transition to a low pollution economy, and promote collaborative planning between workers, employers and government. Sustainable industry policy also includes a plan for research, development and expansion of the renewable energy sector.
- 21 Labor recognises the importance of growing diverse regional economies in areas such as the Latrobe Valley, the Illawarra and the Hunter Valley, as we make the transition to a low pollution economy. Labor recognises that these communities and their traditional industries have underpinned our prosperity and have been the source of jobs for generations of Australians. Labor will work with communities, unions and industry to develop a comprehensive regional development approach which supports the growth of sustainable new industries, technologies and practices.

Household assistance

- 22 Labor will make sure pensioners, low and middle income earners and families are looked after. More than half of the revenue raised from the carbon price will go to households to help meet price impacts and help them to make a contribution to action on climate change.
- 23 Labor's plan will see nine out of ten Australian households get help to make the transition to a clean energy future. There are two ways that households will receive assistance:
- increases in pensions, allowances and family payments
 - income tax cuts on top of these increases.
- 24 Labor will use revenue from the carbon price for significant tax reform—the tax-free threshold will be trebled, while everyone earning up to \$80,000 will receive a tax cut. This in itself is a significant, progressive tax reform.
- 25 Labor will make sure the assistance to households is reviewed and adjusted so that it remains current with price impacts.

Clean energy

- 26 During our first term in government, Labor raised the Renewable Energy Target to 20 per cent ensuring 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply will come from renewable sources by 2020.
- 27 Labor will continue to work toward an increasing proportion of clean energy generation beyond the current mandated target of 20 per cent by 2020.

- 28 With the carbon price and Renewable Energy Target, the new Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency will drive the biggest expansion in the clean energy sector in Australia's history, building a critical mass of renewable energy, energy efficiency and low-emissions generation projects. In developing clean energy, Labor is creating the next generation of industrial jobs. In keeping with Labor's commitment to encouraging local content and industry participation in major projects, Labor will apply industry participation plans for grants of more than \$20 million made under this program for clean energy grants, consistent with the level of the government's current procurement policy. All portfolio transactions of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation exceeding \$20 million would require Australian Industry Participation Plans, subject to the consideration of the report of the CEFC Chair. The CEFC Board will be highly skilled and reflective of the broader community, drawn from the trade unions, the business and investment community and energy and infrastructure industries. The composition of the Board will be determined to best meet the requirements of the CEFC mandate and objectives.
- 29 Clean manufacturing and clean technology service industries will help to drive Australia's transition to a clean energy future. Labor will work with industry to help local firms compete for new clean technology investment, participate in major clean technology infrastructure projects and capitalise on the growing global demand for energy efficient products.
- 30 Labor will support the development of climate change solutions through the Clean Business Australia programs, helping to lift the energy and water efficiency of manufacturing processes and commercial buildings.
- 31 Labor will also invest \$1 billion in two new Clean Technology Investment Programs to support investment in energy-efficient capital equipment and low pollution technologies. This includes dedicated funds to the Food and Foundries Program and manufacturers in other sectors. Labor is also establishing a \$10 billion Clean Energy Finance Corporation to provide a major stimulus to the commercialisation and deployment of renewable energy, energy efficiency and low pollution technologies. This will provide a further fillip to the manufacturing businesses that provide inputs to these sectors. These initiatives will capitalise on Australia's existing expertise and lift Australia to the forefront of climate change science, research and innovation.
- 32 Labor will encourage superannuation funds to invest in clean technology and job creation and adequately consider the environmental impacts of investment decisions.

Energy efficiency

- 33 Labor will help Australians save money on their energy bills. Australia can reduce carbon pollution by improving energy efficiency across government, business and households. Small actions can make a big difference, and simple improvements to the way we do things save money. That is why energy efficiency is a key part of our plan for a clean energy future.
- 34 Labor will assist low and middle income households to reduce their energy costs and contribute to a clean energy future with schemes to improve energy efficiency.
- 35 Labor is committed to undertaking more work—which will include a proper cost benefit analysis—on the development of a national energy savings scheme that rewards energy efficiency actions across households and businesses, with any consideration of such a scheme to be a COAG decision. Labor will help households to use energy more wisely by providing advice, including through the Living Greener website, which provides information on savings through improved energy efficiency.

- 36 The Remote Indigenous Energy Program will provide around 55 remote Indigenous communities with funding to install renewable energy systems, reducing reliance on diesel for electricity generation.
- 37 The carbon price will provide strong incentives for businesses to improve their energy efficiency. The government will help businesses in this process through a range of measures, including the \$1.2 billion Clean Technology Program.

Carbon farming

- 38 Labor will purchase non-Kyoto compliant carbon credits through the Carbon Farming Initiative. This program will create incentives to undertake land-based action such as the storing of soil carbon, revegetation and forest conservation. Credits from these projects can also be sold to companies wanting to offset their carbon pollution to meet voluntary commitments to carbon neutrality. The Carbon Farming Initiative will provide new economic rewards for farmers and landholders that take steps to reduce carbon pollution. Labor will continue to facilitate the development of new crediting methods consistent with the carbon farming legislation, including in relation to forestry activities and agricultural practices which are not common practice.
- 39 Labor supports Indigenous land producing benefits for Indigenous people.
- 40 Carbon farming projects can increase resilience to the impacts of climate change, protect our natural environment, and increase farm profitability and food production. Increasing carbon storage in agricultural soils improves soil health and productivity. Revegetation will help restore degraded landscapes, provide biodiversity habitats and corridors, and help to address salinity, protect livestock and reduce erosion.

Indigenous economic development

- 41 Labor supports Indigenous Australians, particularly those living in remote communities, to be part of national action to tackle climate change. Labor will:
- support employment programs for Indigenous Australians to work on and manage country
 - support new opportunities for Indigenous Australians, particularly those in remote and regional communities, to participate in a low carbon economy through initiatives such as carbon farming
 - support Australians, including Indigenous Australians, living in remote communities reliant on diesel fuel for electricity to transition their use to low-carbon alternatives such as solar.

International action on climate change

- 42 Labor's first act of government was to ratify the Kyoto protocol, which signified Australia's readiness to be part of existing international efforts. Under Labor, Australia is now playing an active and constructive role in international efforts to forge a new global climate change agreement which covers a broader range of countries and emissions than the Kyoto Protocol alone.
- 43 Labor believes a key part of reaching a global solution involves decoupling economic growth from emissions growth, a priority that has particular meaning for developing countries, which have a right to promote sustainable economic development and raise living standards.
- 44 Labor recognises that a critical aspect of the global effort is cooperation with developing countries to develop technologies for cleaner growth, such as the Global Initiative on Carbon Capture and Storage initiated by Labor.

- 45 Labor recognises that achieving a comprehensive global solution also requires a change in the traditional dynamic between developed and developing nations, and has fostered cooperative relationships with developing countries, such as with Indonesia through the Australia–Indonesia Forest Carbon Partnership. In consultation with interested Australian parties, Labor will continue to work collaboratively with developing countries to support the participation of relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society, in REDD+ mechanisms.
- 46 Labor is also committed to working within our region with vulnerable developing countries to adapt to climate change. Labor will help our neighbours, primarily in the Pacific and Timor Leste, to prepare for and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Direct investment in clean energy jobs

- 47 Labor believes Australia’s low-carbon future will be driven by the creation of new industries and new clean energy jobs in existing industries. These new industries and new jobs represent an important opportunity to tackle climate change and assist industries to transition to a low pollution future. Labor recognises that the skills needed to make these transitions are often found in regions with existing carbon reliant industries, providing an opportunity to create the jobs of the future when and where they are needed.
- 48 Labor will continue to press for appropriate verification mechanisms in international agreements on climate change. Action that Australia and other countries take to address climate change must be consistent with maintaining an open and transparent international trading system and reinforce the importance of maintaining mutually supportive trade, industry and environment policies.
- 49 Labor will drive the creation of clean technology jobs in Australia through the implementation of a carbon price and other measures and will continue to draw on international experience and world leading policies to further enhance clean technology employment opportunities for Australians. Australia’s response to climate change should seek to create new ways of work in all its forms—from production and maintenance, through to research, design and development.
- 50 Labor recognises the importance of supporting high carbon emitting industries to find ways to become more energy efficient and reduce emissions. This includes supporting workers in these industries to access training and skills programs to allow them to support lower emissions practices. Labor further recognises the importance of making training and skills programs available for workers wishing to transition to new, clean energy or low pollution industries.

Building energy capacity

- 51 Among Australia’s greatest economic strengths is the extent and diversity of its natural energy resources, energy infrastructure and energy technology. Australia is both an important producer of established sources of energy, including coal, gas, oil and condensate, and a world-class developer of renewable and sustainable energy technologies.
- 52 Labor recognises the community concern about coal seam gas extraction. Labor will take action to ensure that it is conducted in a way that is safe for local communities, manages environmental impacts and ensures sustainable local economic activity. Labor expects the industry to operate at the highest operational and environmental standards and will ensure the coal seam gas industry assess and manages environmental and other impacts including on water reserves and co-existence with other agricultural activities. Labor also calls on the industry to constructively engage with affected landholders to achieve and sustain community acceptance.

- 53 Australia's energy supply and use must be sustainable, economically efficient and internationally competitive. Such national energy capability is essential for Australia's sustained economic growth. Labor recognises that the long-term challenge of global environmental issues must be built in from the start in planning the future of the Australian energy industry.
- 54 Increasingly, more efficient and clean energy supplies and use will enhance Australia's capacity for the downstream processing of minerals and other natural resources and more competitive manufacturing generally, thus providing employment benefits.
- 55 The continued development and application of new technology to improve the economic and environmental efficiency of energy production and consumption is vital to Australia's long-term international competitiveness.
- 56 To improve our national energy capacity, Labor will continue to:
- facilitate a process of cooperation and development involving state and territory governments, industry representatives, including peak industry associations and unions to ensure Australia builds the necessary electricity industry transmission, distribution and generation facilities to meet Australia's electricity demands and ensure supply for the future for all Australians
 - encourage continued development and investment in energy infrastructure and technologies, particularly gas and renewable energy sources and lower emission energy sources such as gas
 - encourage research and commercial development of new and renewable energy sources and technology
 - take into account the relative environmental impact of differing energy sources
 - encourage the use of lower emission energy sources to operate alongside existing energy sources
 - encourage investment in an intensive national oil and gas exploration effort
 - facilitate free and fair competition between energy sources
 - facilitate free and fair interstate trade in gas
 - facilitate a national electricity market
 - encourage co-generation.
- 57 Labor will continue to encourage greater efficiency in the production, transmission and use of existing energy sources by:
- maintaining a concerted and ongoing effort to encourage the greater use of clean and renewable energy sources and enabling technologies in Australia's domestic, transportation and industrial energy consumption through demand management strategies and government procurement policies
 - encouraging greater energy efficiency and consumer purchase of energy efficient products through consumer education programs, innovative financing mechanisms, product standards and energy efficiency labelling schemes
 - encouraging energy audits for the industrial, commercial, transportation and residential sectors to inform users of their relative energy efficiency and how this can be improved.
- 58 Labor recognises that major opportunities are emerging in new and renewable energy technologies within the global energy market. Accordingly Labor will continue to:
- support public and private sector research and development in innovative energy technologies that are cleaner and more efficient
 - ensure 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply will be sourced from renewables by 2020 through a legislated target

- encourage Australian development, manufacture and commercialisation of renewable energy technologies for both domestic and export markets
- encourage local and foreign investment to increase Australia's renewable energy technology manufacturing capability.

59 Labor's national energy industry policy will continue to integrate the need for improving energy efficiency, abating greenhouse emissions and encouraging the development and commercialisation of new Australian energy industries, including renewable and sustainable energy technology.

60 Labor will continue to ensure that consumers are protected in the new national energy environment, through access to competitively priced energy, proper regulation of the national energy market and viable dispute resolution mechanisms.

61 Labor will accelerate the use of low-emissions technologies in Australia through a coordinated, national approach to research and development of new technologies. This will include:

- international efforts led by Australia's Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute established by Labor in 2009
- continuing support for the National Low Emissions Coal Council that brings together representatives from government, industry, and Australia's research community
- continuing support for the National Carbon Capture and Storage Council, which is examining the existing Carbon Capture and Storage projects across Australia to evaluate effectiveness and provide further support
- continuing support for renewable energy through the \$3.2 billion Australian Renewable Energy Agency, to support solar thermal and solar photovoltaic research and development and help solar power become cost competitive with other energy sources
- developing geo-thermal and second generation biofuels technologies through new demonstration and development opportunities
- continuing to support the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy, which manages a range of renewable energy technology funding programs that support solar, geothermal, second generation biofuels, ocean, storage and renewable integration projects
- eliminating perverse incentives in government policies and programs that encourage energy inefficiency by, for example, replacing mileage-based vehicle salary packaging arrangements with concessions linked to engine efficiency and capacity.

Adapting to the climate change we cannot avoid

62 Labor understands that some climate change is already built into the world's climate, so while we work to reduce emissions we need to adapt to the climate change that is happening now. Adapting to a changing climate is a central part of Labor's long term planning to tackle the issues around water and other resource management. Labor is also working with the states and territories to implement the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework across all jurisdictions through the Council of Australian Governments process.

63 Labor also understands the importance of strengthening the ability of Australians to respond to the impact of climate change, which involves helping local governments, coastal planners, agricultural communities, architects and others to build a response to climate change.

64 Labor will continue to put in place a range of programs at the local level, to assist local councils and other organisations better understand their vulnerability to climate change and develop strategies to address those vulnerabilities.

Preparing primary industries for climate change and future droughts

- 65 Labor recognises that severe droughts and other natural disasters have a serious impact on the livelihood of rural and regional Australia.
- 66 Labor acknowledges the challenges that droughts and human induced climate change poses to Australian primary producers. Labor will continue to work with rural and regional Australia to establish the most efficient and effective policy framework for farmers to manage and prepare for risks associated with long periods of drought in a manner that does not diminish their long-term productivity.
- 67 Labor believes there is a need to refocus programs to support early investment in preparing for the social, environmental and economic impacts of drought and climate change. Drought policy should be aimed not just at improving farm productivity but also supporting the wellbeing of families on the land.
- 68 Labor believes that farmers should be supported during periods of transition to new policy settings by:
- ensuring governments address the specific needs of farming families, farming businesses and farming communities
 - ensuring future farm family welfare assistance is built on mutual responsibility
 - supporting farming families to access off-farm income during times of financial hardship
 - providing farming families with a temporary period of exemption from the normal assets tests for farm assets, but otherwise receiving the same access rights to income support as the wider community. Government support for farm businesses should assist businesses to plan for the future. Farm business support should be premised on a willingness to prepare for the impacts of drought and climate change
 - ensuring government policies and programs support farming communities to prepare for drought and enhance their long term sustainability and resilience.
- 69 Labor recognises the increasing frequency and intensity of drought is not the only risk posed from climate change. Australia's primary industries are particularly vulnerable to predicted increases in severe storm events and shifts in the distribution of weeds and pests.

Strengthening the role of farmers in the delivery of environmental services

- 70 Labor recognises the critical role of the rural community in the ongoing stewardship of our land.
- 71 Labor sees an expanded role for the agriculture sector in meeting major environmental challenges such as soil degradation, salinity, chemical use, water conservation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, river rehabilitation, feral animal and noxious weed control, and the loss of biodiversity. Labor acknowledges the considerable progress made by farmers in these areas.
- 72 Labor recognises that many of the improvements farmers make to the environmental resilience of their land also make their land more productive and better prepared for the impacts of climate change.

- 73 Labor will:
- encourage the development of innovative production systems and farming practices, new research and infrastructure developments that address these major challenges
 - acknowledge the particular implications for Australian agriculture of climate change, direct scientific effort to identifying areas at risk from such change, and develop long-term strategies for regions required to change the nature of their farming activity
 - make the development of economically and environmentally sustainable farming methods for a changing climate a focus of research efforts.
- 74 Labor is committed to building on the achievements of Landcare, encouraging the uptake of sustainable farming practices and the continuing support for the repair of our rural landscapes.

Managing our water assets

- 75 Labor understands that addressing Australia's long-term water issues requires national leadership. Labor believes that responsible management of water assets requires a combination of:
- taking action on climate change
 - using water wisely
 - securing water supplies
 - supporting healthy rivers.
- 76 Labor is committed to addressing the long term problems of the over-allocation of water resources of the Murray–Darling Basin, and the neglect of the health of its iconic rivers and wetlands. These problems have been further exacerbated by prolonged drought and the emerging impacts of climate change.
- 77 The Murray Darling Basin is one of the most significant river systems in Australia with considerable cultural, social, environmental and economic value. Decades of over extraction from the Basin left many areas of the Basin close to collapse during the recent drought. Labor welcomes the release of the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan on 28 November and notes this significant step on the path to returning the Basin to a more sustainable level of health. Labor endorses the ambition of a healthy working Basin which underpins healthy rivers, strong communities and sustainable food production. Labor notes that since 2008, 1,068 gigalitres of water have been recovered for the environment, mainly through the Australian Government's Water for the Future Program. This water is already delivering substantial environmental benefits in providing environmental flows to wetlands and floodplains across the Basin. Labor calls for a Murray Darling Basin Plan which keeps the Mouth of the River Murray open nine years out of ten to enable the export of salt and sediment from the system. Labor calls for a Murray Darling Basin Plan which, within legal and physical constraints, returns enough water to the Basin to protect key environmental sites, including, but not limited to the Ramsar wetland sites. Labor calls for the government to continue to bridge the gap to new Sustainable Diversion Limits as the Murray Darling Basin Plan is finalised.
- 78 By continuing to purchase water from willing sellers and investing in water savings, Labor will improve the health of our rivers and facilitate an early transition in anticipation of lower sustainable diversion limits under the new Basin Plan.
- 79 Labor will fund research to ensure sustainability of water extraction from the Great Artesian Basin.

- 80 Labor recognises that water is vital to the livelihood of many regional and rural communities across the Murray–Darling Basin. That is why Labor is committed to investing in water efficiency projects in the Murray–Darling Basin to help rural and regional communities improve the efficiency and productivity of water usage. By improving irrigation water management practices and on-farm water use efficiency, and by modernising our outdated, leaky irrigation infrastructure, this investment will enable more crops to be grown with less water. As projects get underway this investment will boost regional economic and employment opportunities in the Basin, and help underpin the future prosperity of irrigation communities.
- 81 Labor recognises that climate change means we need to use water more wisely in our cities, at the same time as diversifying our water supplies so that we reduce our reliance on rainfall.
- 82 Labor will invest in initiatives to improve water security for Australia’s cities and towns. Labor will continue its support for new investments in wastewater recycling, desalination, stormwater harvesting and efficient water infrastructure throughout Australia.
- 83 Labor will also provide assistance for Australian households to adopt water saving and water efficiency measures in their homes and businesses.
- 84 Labor will support research and commercialisation of new technologies in improved water efficiency, desalination and water recycling.

Leadership on sustainability

- 85 Labor is committed to open and transparent environmental decision making and effective monitoring, assessment and reporting of environmental performance. With state and territory governments, Labor will develop a National Sustainability Charter that sets key national targets across a number of areas that impact on Australia’s environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- 86 Labor will establish an independent National Sustainability Commissioner and Council to monitor Australia’s performance against sustainability targets and to evaluate government policies for their impact on sustainability and agreed national targets.
- 87 Labor will incorporate sustainability into government decision making and operations. Labor will ensure all government departments and agencies increasingly adopt best practice energy efficiency. Labor will update the Energy Efficiency in Government Operations policy, which includes portfolio energy intensity targets and minimum energy performance standards for office buildings, appliances and vehicles. Labor will ensure that office copy paper used throughout government will have a minimum post consumer recycled content of 50 per cent by July 2011, with progression to 100 per cent post consumer recycled content by July 2015 consistent with value for money principles.
- 88 Labor will support local government to fulfil its potential in environmental protection, repair and natural resource management.
- 89 Labor will ensure that national environment laws, including the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* provide strong, rigorous and accountable protection for the environment while being harmonised with state and territory regulatory regimes.
- 90 In the context of a comprehensive response to climate change, Labor will consider the appropriateness of a climate change trigger in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

- 91 Labor is committed to post-approval monitoring of major projects to ensure that measures and targets agreed during environmental impact assessment processes achieve the desired environmental outcomes.
- 92 Labor notes that the whole community should play a role in climate change actions. This includes the role played by those in our community that deliver quality public services, like local government, water supply, electricity and public transport. These industries take actions every day in a range of services from recycling, water harvesting, demand management and much more. This is a significant role in making our community environmentally sustainable and fighting climate change. Labor recognises the role played by the community and will continue to implement a broad range of climate change actions.
- 93 Labor recognises the contribution environment and conservation groups make to protecting our environment through practical action and policy and social leadership, particularly at the local level. Labor will continue to work with non-government and environment groups to take action on climate change and protect biodiversity and our natural resources.

Protecting biodiversity and natural resources

- 94 Labor is committed to protecting Australia's biological diversity through a national system of comprehensive, adequate and representative parks and reserves, while using education, regulation and incentives to achieve ecologically sustainable use elsewhere in the landscape.
- 95 Labor will work with state and territory governments and landholders to develop, resource and implement threat abatement and recovery plans for threatened species and ecological communities, while preventing clearing that will have a significant impact on threatened ecological communities and critical habitats for threatened species.
- 96 Labor will work to ensure that Caring for our Country programs and other volunteer and community programs like Landcare support local conservation and environmental priorities as well as contributing to national priorities to improve biodiversity and sustainable farm practices.
- 97 Labor will cooperate with the states, territories and landholders to achieve a net increase in Australia's vegetation cover, to improve its management and to end broad-scale clearing. Funding of state, territory and landholder projects will be conditional upon appropriate clearing controls being in place.
- 98 Labor will promote research into invasive species and weeds and fund measures for their control on both public land and private land.
- 99 Labor will build on the achievements of Landcare by encouraging the uptake of sustainable farming practices and supporting improved natural resource management.
- 100 Labor will provide funding and other support for landholders who have engaged in good environmental practice, particularly those who are conserving and regenerating native plant communities.
- 101 Labor is committed to ensuring proper management and protection of our wetlands and will promote and honour Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention.
- 102 Labor is committed to maximising the social, economic and environmental benefits that flow from the sustainable management of Australia's forests.
- 103 Labor will support forest certification which sets best practice, transparent, consistent and objective standards in sustainable forest management, chain of custody and labelling, and promotes adherence to ILO core labour conventions and are managed by organisations with robust governance arrangements.

- 104 Labor is committed to the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system, through arrangements like the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement, which facilitate the transition of the industry to a more sustainable footing, increase use of plantations and increase value-adding in the sector.
- 105 Labor recognises the multiple benefits that flow from developing plantations and integrated farm forestry, particularly on existing cleared agricultural land, and recognises that any adverse effects need to be carefully managed.
- 106 Labor does not support mining or other resource extraction in national parks and World Heritage areas.
- 107 Labor supports Indigenous people being involved in land management through various means, including national parks, tourism and state forests, particularly where this provides cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits.
- 108 Labor will work with the Queensland Government and traditional owners to pursue World Heritage listing for appropriate areas of Cape York, recognising the importance of Commonwealth leadership and the consent of traditional owners.

Marine and coastal protection

- 109 Labor is committed to promoting the conservation and sustainable use of our marine and coastal environment. Labor will work with state, territory and local authorities and agencies to ensure Australia's marine environment is monitored and sustainably managed.
- 110 The Commonwealth will provide leadership, policies and resources to maintain marine biodiversity through ecosystem-based management.
- 111 Labor will develop a national coastal policy to respond to population growth in coastal regions and support coastal planning initiatives and consider the impacts of sea level rise and coastal erosion on coastal communities, acknowledging that climate change will exacerbate such impacts.
- 112 Labor will protect our coasts and beaches by investing in high conservation value areas and supporting community Coastcare as well as meeting international obligations, continuing legislative reform and opposing inappropriate development.
- 113 Labor will work towards reducing the serious threat to water quality from coastal shipping practices, sewage and stormwater disposal, thermal pollution, nutrient sedimentation and the introduction of exotic pests and diseases via ship ballast water.
- 114 Labor will promote the efficient and sustainable use of Australia's marine resources and will address unsustainable fishing practices.
- 115 Labor supports meeting Australia's international obligations for marine protection by creating a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine reserves, including buffer zones and 'no take' zones, to sustain ecosystem health and fish stocks, commencing with the South West marine bioregion.
- 116 Labor will promote the conservation of key ecosystem health indicator species such as whales, dugongs, turtles and sharks, both in Australian waters and across the world's oceans.
- 117 Labor will work with Indigenous communities and recreational fishers to ensure hunting of marine animals is sustainable and humane and that threatened species are protected.

National and World Heritage

- 118 Labor recognises its international obligations to protected World Heritage Areas, and areas that are subject to international treaties such as Ramsar sites. Labor recognises human activity such as mining and oil drilling, as well as urban and commercial developments near World Heritage Areas, Ramsar and similar sites, have the potential to affect these areas. Labor will ensure that any proposal within the vicinity of a World Heritage Area, Ramsar or area subject to an international treaty, will be subject to a full independent Environmental Impact Statement, and be considered under environment protections and biodiversity conservation legislation.
- 119 Where culturally appropriate, Labor will promote and provide access to our built and cultural heritage, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- 120 Labor recognises that Indigenous knowledge is a key to an environmentally and socially sustainable Australia. Labor will fund the recording of Indigenous oral histories, stories and languages to minimise the loss of Indigenous knowledge systems.
- 121 The identification and listing of properties of heritage significance should be carried out by an independent expert body.
- 122 Labor believes that the Commonwealth government has a responsibility to provide adequate heritage protection for Commonwealth properties of heritage significance.
- 123 Labor will support the proper funding, protection, management, monitoring and presentation of World Heritage Areas, including the important work of government authorities such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Labor will continue to support the investigation and nomination of areas suitable for future listing in cooperation with state and territory governments.

A cleaner environment for living

- 124 Labor will recognise and support the community's desire to live in a clean and healthy environment, and empower it to achieve that goal.
- 125 Labor will recognise and support the role of non-government and community organisations in advocacy and taking action for the protection of our environment and heritage.
- 126 Labor will support the development of industries that minimise resource consumption, waste and pollution generation.
- 127 Labor will work with state and territory governments to promote a coordinated national approach to waste. This approach will maximise the economic opportunities of a harmonised and strategic national waste policy, and will be informed by the principles of ecologically sustainable development.
- 128 Labor is committed to the strict control of pollutants and toxins in the environment, including the minimisation of the production, import and use of harmful substances, the development of alternative technologies and, where possible, the elimination of harmful substances.
- 129 Labor believes nations have a responsibility for the appropriate disposal of hazardous wastes generated within their boundaries. Labor is committed to fulfilling Australia's obligations in the control of trans-boundary movements of hazardous waste.
- 130 Labor remains strongly opposed to the importation and storage of nuclear waste in Australia that is sourced from overseas, while acknowledging that we have a responsibility to manage nuclear waste that has been produced in Australia.

- 131 Genetically modified crops will not be released unless they are safe to health, safe to the environment and beneficial to the economy and there has been extensive community consultation. Labor will preserve the right of the states to implement and manage moratoria on the commercial production of GM crops.
- 132 Labor will support action to improve air quality and avert the serious health risks that air pollution represents, particularly by promoting national air quality standards and monitoring and reporting air pollution.
- 133 Labor recognises the need to promote more transport choices and will pursue strategies to encourage alternative modes of transport, alternative fuels, greater fuel efficiency and lower average vehicle age.
- 134 Labor recognises that government has a role in long-term strategic planning for demographic change and local government priority setting, particularly by supporting infrastructure investment and protecting remnant vegetation and catchment health.
- 135 Labor is committed to appropriate demographic policies and to ensuring that any population increase is sustainable and does not come at the cost of the environment. Labor has developed a Sustainable Population Strategy. The strategy is the government's framework for a sustainable Australia. It will help to ensure that future population changes are compatible with the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of Australia.
- 136 The strategy recognises that population change is not only about the growth and overall size of our population, it is also about the needs and skills of our population, how we live, and importantly, where we live. It recognises that population change impacts different communities in different ways. A sustainable Australia is a nation of sustainable communities that have the public services, job and education opportunities, affordable housing, amenities and natural environment that make them places where people want to work, live and build a future. The strategy's focus is ensuring that we have in place the necessary policy settings and governance arrangements that will deliver improvements in our wellbeing, at the local, regional and national levels into the future. It outlines our commitment to improving the liveability of our urban areas, and building stronger regions.

Environmental diplomacy

- 137 Labor considers the protection of the global environment a vital foreign policy objective, as environmental degradation contributes to social and political conflict and undermines regional and international security.
- 138 Labor recognises that existing international environmental protection regimes need to be strengthened and new arrangements developed to address emerging issues. Labor will take a leadership role in multilateral forums that consider issues of environmental protection and sustainable development, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Convention for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species and the International Whaling Commission.
- 139 Labor will assess all trade agreements to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and will work to prevent any conflict arising between trade agreements and multilateral environmental agreements and domestic legislation to protect the environment.

- 140 As a priority, Labor supports cooperation on environmental issues in the Asia–Pacific region through APEC and in cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We will seek to upgrade consultation with Japan, the US, Canada and New Zealand. We will further seek to consolidate and expand dialogues with major developing countries, especially China, Indonesia and India.
- 141 Labor will increase Australian support for Pacific Island countries, particularly in the areas of sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity, including fisheries.
- 142 Labor will work to further strengthen the Antarctic Treaty System with particular emphasis on enhancing environmental protection.
- 143 Labor will work through international forums to address unsustainable fishing practices worldwide with the establishment of high seas, marine protected areas a particular priority. We will energetically seek to combat unsustainable, illegal and unregulated fishing in the Southern Ocean.
- 144 Labor will pursue a permanent end to all commercial and scientific whaling and the establishment of a global whale sanctuary. Labor will use all available means to end the slaughter of whales for all time, including the option of legal action against whaling nations before international courts and tribunals.