

Kim Beazley's Plan for Agriculture & Fisheries

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Overview

Australia's Agriculture and Fishing industries are together worth more than \$30 billion to the national economy. Australia's farmers and fishers continue to make an important contribution to our national prosperity and our standard of living.

The challenge facing our primary producers is to maintain and improve productivity off a degraded land and water base.

Our agricultural and fishing industries, including aquaculture, operate under constant threat from incursion by exotic pests and diseases and must sell most of their products in corrupted world markets.

Labor has listened to farmers and fishers and stands ready to work with them in meeting the challenges associated with environmental degradation, exotic pests and diseases and adverse marketing conditions.

There is great potential for these sectors to grow, to create wealth and jobs for the nation, especially in the regions, in both the actual production and in the value-adding process. Labor will work in partnership with these sectors as they work towards achieving their full potential.

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QUARANTINE

Under the Howard Government the Import Risk Assessment (IRA) process has lost the confidence of key Australian stakeholders, according to three key all-party Senate Committee reports and the Australian National Audit Office.

Labor will act to restore certainty to the process by enshrining the provisions of the Import Risk Assessment Handbook in regulations of the Parliament.

This will make the process much more transparent and will mean that it can only be varied after public debate and the agreement of the Parliament.

No longer will the Director of Quarantine be able to unilaterally vary the IRA process in the way it was varied in the cases of the import of salmon and apples.

MORE VETS FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Labor has been concerned about the decline in the numbers of appropriately trained large animal vets servicing our rural industries. Our concerns are shared by the Australian Veterinarian Association and a number of farmer organisations.

Of particular concern is the potential impact that this shortage could have on Australia's ability to mount a 'second tier defence' against incursions by exotic pests and diseases, such as foot and mouth.

Trained large animal vets in rural areas would be the frontline troops in containing any major exotic disease outbreak which managed to breach our quarantine barrier.

Labor will offer up to 30 scholarships a year to veterinary students who have grown up in country areas. These students are more likely to return to the country and work in rural practice than their counterparts from the cities.

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

Labor has a comprehensive plan to reform National Competition Policy (NCP).

Labor will revitalise the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), ensuring that elected governments oversee NCP and strengthen the public interest test and ensure that its application reflects community concerns.

Every application of NCP will be tested properly against the full set of public interest criteria. Foremost among these criteria are economic and regional development (including employment and investment growth), social welfare and equity issues.

Labor will also work to restructure the National Competition Council, to make it more representative of the needs of regional communities.

Labor's reforms to National Competition Policy will work for communities, not just the economy.

PROTECTING FARM BUSINESSES FROM UNFAIR TRADING PRACTICES

Labor will address growing concern among farmers over the capacity of the Trade Practices Act and the ACCC to offer adequate protection in the global economic environment.

Labor will seek the necessary support in Parliament to establish a Joint Select Committee to look at the merit of proceeding with legislative and administrative mechanisms, to protect farm businesses from the potential misuse of market power.

Labor's inquiry will focus on specific issues raised by farmers and small business over the course of the last Parliament, including:

- whether the 'purpose' test within s46 should be changed to an 'effects' test (there is a view that the purpose test is too stringent and too difficult to prove, and that the more appropriate test is the so-called 'effects-test');
- whether it would be appropriate to provide the ACCC with the power to issue 'cease and desist' orders while considering whether a larger firm has been acting in breach of s46; and
- the efficiency, timeliness and cost of the current 'authorisation' processes, and whether authorisations should remain in place until such time as the ACCC deems them to be contrary to the interest of the consumer. This will be of particular interest to groups such as the Australian Dairy Farmers Federation who are currently seeking such an authorisation.

Labor is committed to protecting the interests of farmers and other small business operators by ensuring their security through appropriate legislative mechanisms.

SINGLE DESK: WHEAT AND RICE

Labor is committed to leave the single desk for wheat in place, with a review in three years time.

The Howard Government followed Labor's lead in making this commitment.

Labor is committed to keeping the single desk for rice in place for at least three more years.

The Howard Government is still threatening to withhold payments to New South Wales unless it dismantles the single desk for rice.

Labor believes these single desk arrangements are important in giving our grain producers an edge in selling into corrupted world markets.

Labor also believes that there has to be sufficient flexibility in these marketing arrangements to allow specialty producers to maximise their returns.

SINGLE DESK FOR SUGAR

The Howard Government has offer assurance about the future of Queensland's single desk marketing arrangements for sugar, following the National Competition Council's (NCC) Assessment, which was released in February 2001.

By remaining silent on the NCC's Assessment the Howard Government has left the sugar industry in a state of uncertainty.

Labor has already announced that it will reform National Competition Policy (NCP) and strengthen the public interest test to ensure that the social and economic impact on regions of any proposal is taken into account.

The sugar industry sells its product into a highly corrupted world market and Labor believes that, on balance, the single desk marketing arrangements have served sugar producers well.

Labor supports the retention of the Queensland Single Desk for sugar.

This will be reviewed in three year's time to determine if the arrangements are still delivering the best possible outcome for producers and the communities that rely on sugar for their economic survival.

During this period Labor will work with sugar producers, local communities and State Governments to ensure that the policy is fine-tuned to allow individual regions to maximise returns on their crops and to encourage the industry to continue improving production techniques in an environmentally sustainable way.

TASMANIAN GRAIN USERS

Labor will help secure the future of Tasmanian industries relying on grain imports by extending the Tasmanian Wheat Freight Subsidy Scheme (TWFS) for a further three years.

The Tasmanian Wheat Freight Subsidy Scheme provides \$1.2 million per year in financial assistance for costs associated with shipments of wheat from the mainland to Tasmania.

Wheat shipped to Tasmania is used for flour milling and processed as livestock feed for poultry (meat and eggs), feedlots, pigs, dairy and aquaculture industries, or used as supplement feed for grazing stock, particularly in times of drought.

The Howard Government has refused to extend the TWFS beyond its expiry date in June 2002.

Labor has listened to the concerns of Tasmanian grain users and will extend the TWFS until June 2005, providing certainty to the Tasmanian industries relying on grain imports and to the 1600 workers in those industries.

INTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The Howard Government has all but ignored the intensive rural industries of poultry, pork, wine, feedlots, horticulture and aquaculture.

Labor recognises these industries as key generators of both jobs and income for regional Australia, and will ensure the Government plays it part in advancing the interests of this sector.

Labor will establish an Intensive Industries Council to enable industries – such as poultry, pork, wine, feedlots, horticulture and aquaculture - to have a direct input into policy development and implementation.

This will ensure that the position of these industries on key policy areas such as quarantine and natural resource management are not ignored.

A BETTER DEAL FOR DAIRY FARMERS

When John Howard was first confronted with Jeff Kennett's decision to effectively bring an end to dairy industry regulation in Australia he should have recognised that the Australia dairy industry is a major job generator, and export earner with enormous further potential.

Further, he could have demonstrated his faith in this industry by grasping the opportunity to work with all sections of the industry to devise a plan to take it forward and to achieve its full potential.

And Howard should have ordered a detailed study of the likely impacts of deregulation on farmers and communities and then carefully crafted a plan to address the needs of those most affected.

However, there was no study and no plan. Instead John Howard and his National Party Ministers panicked and produced a response which did not even adequately meet the needs of those most affected by deregulation and which had to be extensively modified within twelve months of its introduction.

John Howard threw consumers' money at deregulation but did not produce a plan to develop the industry.

Labor's Dairy Task Force visited every State, went out on to farm and into dairy processing and manufacturing facilities, to talk with farmers, workers and management about the problems they face in a deregulated environment.

Labor will work with all sections of the Australian dairy industry to develop a Dairy Industry Plan to grow the industry and position it to meet the domestic and international challenges of the 21st century.

In consultation with the dairy industry (including farmers, processors, manufacturers and unions), Labor will develop an industry plan, similar in concept to the wine industry plan, to position dairying for a sustainable future in Australia.

In addition to the Dairy Industry Plan, Labor will:

- support dairy farmer organisations seeking ways to increase the ability of farmers to bargain collectively with processors and manufacturers;
- require the ACCC and ABARE to conduct a new thorough investigation of the milk supply chain to ensure that neither suppliers nor consumers are being exploited in the wake of deregulation and that no segment of the supply chain has increased its profit margin at the expense of others. This will build on the findings of the recent New South Wales Parliamentary Inquiry.

- establish an inquiry into the operations and accountability mechanisms of dairy cooperatives, reflecting the concerns of many dairy farmers and their representatives.
- review the operation of the Dairy Exit Program to make it more accessible to dairy farmers who choose to leave dairying but who want to stay in farming.
- review the security protocols at the Dairy Adjustment Authority (DAA) to ensure that private information supplied by farmers stays private.
- review the guidelines for access to the DAA's \$20 million anomalies fund to ensure that the package is flexible and fair. In particular, the treatment of lessors and lessees, and Tasmanian market milk producers under these guidelines will be reviewed.

In relation to the Dairy Regional Assistance Program (DRAP) Labor will:

- review the operation of DRAP to ensure that priority is given to projects which directly assist those who have lost jobs or whose income has been slashed as a result of deregulation.
- earmark \$20 million from DRAP for projects aimed at assisting farmers, processors and manufacturers of dairy products to become more highly skilled, more productive and more profitable.
- establish a consultative committee, which will include representatives of dairy farmers from a number of regions, to assess the merits of each application for DRAP funding, instead of relying on Canberra bureaucrats to make the decision.
- remove any remaining prohibitions on dairy farmers being able to access DRAP grants where a project can be shown as likely to result in long-term employment in a dairying area.

Labor will fund a program being developed by the University of Tasmania to provide the additional skills farmers and others involved in the production, processing and marketing of our agricultural produce will need to face the challenges of the 21st century.

This will be a program of national significance, and the materials and courses developed in Tasmania will serve as a model for other regions and will especially focus on the dairy and horticulture industries.

This initiative will ensure a sustainable flow of highly skilled and motivated young entrants into key primary industries.

Labor has recognised that without a sufficient number of trained young people coming into these industries, Australia could lose its competitive edge.

Labor will commit \$939,000 from uncommitted funds in the DRAP to fund this initiative to provide skills for young people who want to work in our great primary industries.

BETTER DATA MEANS BETTER FISHERIES

Years of neglect by the Howard Government in collecting and analysing data on a number of key fisheries, including the southern, western and eastern tuna fisheries, has meant that important decisions related to fisheries management are being made without sufficient baseline data.

The lack of data also impacts on the ability of government agencies to assess bycatch and other risks to the ecology of fisheries.

In order to greatly accelerate the process of establishing baseline data for these fisheries, public funding will be provided for a limited period for actual data collection before reverting to industry/government funding arrangements.

Labor supports managing fisheries for long-term sustainability and will:

- Establish an independent data verification process in Australian fisheries;
- Complete ecological and bycatch risk assessment processes in Australian fisheries; and
- Provide transitional funding for data collection following the establishment of data verification processes in fisheries.

LABOR'S FISHERIES TRAINING A BOOST FOR JOBS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Labor will provide a major boost for training in Australia's seafood industries with a commitment of \$4.35 million to the Australian Fisheries Academy.

The Australian Fisheries Academy will play a central role in ensuring that operators and workers in the fishing and aquaculture industries have the skills they need to take advantage of the enormous growth potential possessed by these industries.

This is a very practical example of Kim Beazley's plan for the Knowledge Nation.

Labor's commitment to training in the fishing industry will result in more skilled jobs where they are needed most – in regional Australia.

BUSINESS SKILLS TRAINING FOR FARMERS

Farmers operate multi-dimensional businesses in an increasingly complex business and trading environment. The Howard Government has significantly added to the complexity through its time consuming GST.

Labor will re-focus business skills training programs to ensure that funds are used much more effectively and are not wasted administration and duplication of effort. Labor will ensure that programs deliver the sort of assistance farmers are asking for and not just the assistance that bureaucrats think they ought to have.

Labor will establish an easy to access national data base of business skills training courses available through state, federal and other sources so that farmers can make an informed choice about the sort of training they need and which ones suit the competing demands on their precious time.

SAFETY ON AUSTRALIAN FARMS

Farms are one of the most unsafe working environments in Australia. Much good work is being done throughout Australia to make our farms safer.

Labor wants to build on this good work already being done by farm organisations and State authorities to ensure that effort is not being needlessly duplicated and

that the benefits of this good work is made available to all Australian farmers, wherever they live.

Labor aims to reduce the death and injury toll on Australian farms by boosting attention to greater on-farm safety.

A BOOST FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Howard Government has allowed rural and regional infrastructure, and especially transport and communications infrastructure, to run down, adding to the cost of doing business in rural Australia. This has imposed a significant cost burden on farm businesses and has made it more difficult for Australian farmers to compete in world markets.

Labor's \$565 million regional development package will directly boost regional Australia.

There are two aspects of the Plan.

First, Labor's \$215 million Regional Development Program will support local people to drive local agendas, and confront the jobs crisis that still exists in many regional communities.

The Regional Development Program will be responsive to local needs, and focused on meeting the needs of communities rather than the needs of bureaucrats.

The Regional Development Program will offer a menu of support items and brokered services, addressing issues such as:

- Community infrastructure;
- Regional skill shortages;
- Industry support, such as value-adding, clustering, marketing and export enhancement;
- Technology support and business advice, especially for small business
- Sustainable development strategies;
- Leadership development;
- Locally-based support officers; and
- Community development strategies.

Secondly, Labor's Regional Infrastructure Kickstart program will provide concessional loans to support agricultural infrastructure projects of regional significance.

In addition to agricultural initiatives, Regional Infrastructure Kickstart will support the building or expansion of rural infrastructure such as:

- Transport (roads, bridges, public transport, railways, airports, ports);
- Commercial (warehouses, cool rooms); and
- Information and Communications (servers, powers, cabling).

Proponents of regional infrastructure projects will be able to apply for a concessional loan if they can demonstrate that their project contributes significantly to regional economic development.

Labor's Regional development Program will make available \$215 million available to support local people to drive local agendas, and confront the jobs crisis that still exists in many regional communities.

\$350 million in loans will be made available for dedicated Enterprise Zones – announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for our Regions*. This scheme will be open to infrastructure applications from local governments, regional investment funds, and other reputable bodies.

To be eligible for support, project proponents will need to demonstrate consistency with the region's development priorities, consideration of best practice, and funding leveraged from other sources.

RESTORING OUR NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Our agricultural producers face a major challenge to maintain and improve productivity off a degraded land and water base.

Kim Beazley's Plan to Combat Salinity outlines a truly national approach to the management of our natural resources, and a more strategic approach to salinity and land degradation issues. This includes recognition of regions beyond the 21 priority areas identified, such as North East Victoria.

Importantly, Labor explicitly recognises the right of landholders to be compensated when society's environmental expectations affect their property rights.

All stakeholders understand that a sustainable future for regional industries and communities will require a long-term commitment to the smarter use of our natural resources. Labor also understands that this requires additional resources.

Labor will dedicate an additional \$169.5 million to natural resource management, over and above the Howard Government's existing commitments. This means more funds for Landcare and other worthwhile programs assisting farmers to restore the health of our land and water base.

FLOOD MITIGATION

Flood damage can impose huge costs on rural communities. A recent report estimated that damage from floods averaged \$315 million a year.

Floods disrupt the all-important flow of goods and services to our farms, severely disrupt family life, and delay the movement of farm products to our domestic and export markets.

Flood damage can be prevented with proper investment. This investment itself can be a significant economic boost for many communities.

Labor's Regional and Urban Flood Mitigation Program recognises the importance of flood prevention measures in many communities.

Labor will return the basis of flood mitigation funding to the 2:2:1 formula – two fifths Federal, two fifths State and one fifth local government contributions. This compares with the existing 1:1:1 formula, which places an unfair burden on local government.

EXPORT ORIENTED REGIONAL INDUSTRIES

Australian farmers make a substantial contribution to our nation's economic and cultural wealth, and provide the basis for sustainable regional economies and communities. In fact, rural based industries are responsible for the vast bulk of Australia's exports.

Industries such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and energy provide investment and jobs, new technology and skills, export and growth opportunities, and global links for our regions.

Labor's regional industry programs will support investment in physical and human resources, develop export potential, and promote the uptake of new skills and technologies.

Labor's commitment to regional development is underpinned by a commitment to strong regional industries.

Regional Australia is responsible for two-thirds of Australia's exports. Our export performance depends critically on our ability to compete in international markets.

Through active and effective trade diplomacy and by providing Australians with the direct advice and support they need to compete successfully in world markets, Labor will actively develop Australia's regional export opportunities.

A better trade outcome for our regional industries will involve restoring the Export Market Development Grants.

Labor will provide an extra \$15 million to Australian assist exporters. The scheme will be reoriented to focus on the needs of first time exporters in small and medium sized business, including farm businesses.

IMPROVING THE TECHNICAL MARKET ACCESS PROGRAM

In this increasingly uncertain world trading environment it is important that all our eggs are not in the one basket when it comes to market development and access.

Labor believes that it is timely to review the operation of the Technical Market Access Program, which is linked to the Supermarkets to Asia Program, and to broaden its horizons.

Lowering and removing technical barriers to access for Australian agricultural products wherever such barriers exist in the world can only benefit Australian producers.

RURAL TRANSACTION CENTRES

Labor will continue the Rural Transaction Centre program, as one option for returning services to regional communities. However, with only 30 or so Rural Transaction Centres currently in place, the program cannot offer the number of outlets, nor the long-term certainty, that can be achieved through Australia Post.

In rolling out future Rural Transaction Centres, Labor will prioritise those communities that cannot be adequately served by other outlets, including Australia Post.

Banking

Banking is an essential service that people in rural and regional communities simply cannot do without. Banks have obligations to people and communities, not just to profits and the corporate bottom-line.

It is critical that these obligations are understood and met if Australians – no matter where they live or how much they earn – can continue to access affordable banking services.

Kim Beazley's Plan for Banking includes the following key elements:

- a Social Charter of Community Obligations;
- a Financial Services Obligation;
- improving the availability of banking services; and
- a Bank Closure Protocol.

Social Charter of Community Obligations

Labor will develop a Social Charter of Community Obligations for banks, in consultation with stakeholders.

This Social Charter will restore affordable banking services to Australians and restore banking services to communities that have lost them. Importantly, the Social Charter will be legally binding on banks.

Financial Services Ombudsman

Complaints about the failure of banks to meet their social obligations would be made to a new Financial Services Ombudsman, who would refer breaches of the Social Charter to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC).

If the banks refuse to negotiate an acceptable Social Charter, a Beazley Labor Government will impose a Social Charter through legislation. If this is necessary, banks will be required to contribute to a Bank Social Obligations Fund that will fund improved banking services.

Improving the Availability of Banking Services

Labor will map the levels of banking service provision across Australia and once those areas of most need have been established, we will ensure that banking services are delivered to those areas as part of the Social Charter.

Labor is committed to improving access to regional services, including banking and financial services, through Australia Post and other vehicles.

Labor will also seek to address the emergence of the 'digital divide' by encouraging banks to offer innovative ways for consumers to access Internet banking.

Branch Closure Protocol - Before the Bank Leaves Town ...

Branch closures can have a significant impact on farming families and on farm businesses. Even with the best will of a rural community, there is no way that alternative banking services can be organised in a matter of weeks.

Where a bank proposes closing a bank branch, Labor will ensure that rural communities are consulted. Banks will be required to provide six months' notice of a branch closure. These branch closure protocols will be amongst the toughest in the world.

Rural Education**EDUCATION PRIORITY ZONES**

Labor will establish Education Priority Zones (EPZs), many of them in regional and rural Australia, to provide a massive injection of funds to improve the schools most in need.

Schools in EPZs will receive an average of \$1 million each over four years to work with their local communities to improve education results and increase the number of students finishing year 12 and going on to further studies.

Each EPZ community will develop a plan which must include a commitment to focus on core educational outcomes such as literacy, numeracy and year 12 completion rates.

Initiatives in the local plan could include:

- Employing more teachers;
- Extra teacher training;
- Improved student behaviour; and
- Encouraging links with local businesses and local government.

BRINGING UNIVERSITIES TO THE BUSH

Labor will invest \$320 million over five years to establish the University of Australia Online (UAO). The UAO will create 100,000 new online undergraduate places by 2010. HECS charges for these online places will be halved.

Through the UAO, students will be able to study in their own home, at their own pace and at a time that suits them.

Thousands of Australians are currently denied a university education because they cannot afford to give up three years of paid work or because they do not live in university towns or cities. Australia cannot afford to waste talent in this way.

To ensure that mature age students are able to meet the high entry standards of Australian universities and develop the study skills needed to succeed in higher education, foundation courses will be made available free of charge.

Labor's information technology and communications policies will ensure more affordable access to these online learning opportunities for Australians, no matter where they live.

REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES – RESEARCH TRAINING PLACES

Labor will invest \$35 million over five years to create a pool of 400 new fully funded research training places especially for regional universities and campuses to ensure they remain vibrant centres of research.

Labor understands that regional universities play a crucial role in the economies of many rural centres as employers, centres of opportunity for local students, and in undertaking research relevant to local rural industries.

We will not allow them to be undermined by the policies of the Howard Government.

The Howard Government has abolished 1 in every 5 research training places at regional universities. Several regional universities have lost between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of their research training places.

Rural Health

Australians who live in rural areas are not getting their fair share of health services under the Howard Government. Labor will not treat the health needs of older people in the country as an after-thought.

Labor will ensure country hospitals get their fair share of new funding under the Medicare Alliance. Our Medicare Bonus will provide \$57 million over four years for regional and rural hospitals to invest in local priorities for replacement of equipment and upgrading of facilities.

Labor is committed to increasing the number of doctors and other health professionals in the country. We will simplify schemes for recruitment and support of rural GPs and will establish a Health Workforce Agency to get nurses, pharmacists, dentists and other health professionals into rural areas.

Better Support For Carers In Regional Australia

Labor is committed to providing better support for older carers in regional Australia.

Older people play a unique role in supporting families, and as volunteers in community organisations particularly in regional areas. Many have caring responsibilities for a spouse or grandchildren, and over 130,000 people aged 75 and over provide significant support for a person with a profound or severe disability.

Labor will develop a National Strategy for Carers, which will be responsive to the needs, concerns and fears of carers. The Strategy will provide better information, more flexible support and genuine care for older carers. It will be a means by which we make supporting carers an explicit goal of our aged and community care programs and broader government policy.

A Working Credit For Older Australians

Labor will reward these older Australians who are entitled to a pension to keep their full entitlements when they engage in periodic work.

Farmers are very skilled workers and are well placed to make an important contribution to rural towns after they retire.

Protecting Australia's Institutions

Telstra, Australia Post and the ABC play a important role in rural and regional Australia. Under Labor that role will be maintained and expanded to ensure key services to the bush are protected.

Telstra

Kim Beazley and Labor will maintain Telstra in majority public ownership.

Labor believes that Australia's national interest is best served by the Government – as majority shareholder – working with Telstra for the benefit of all Australians particularly those living in regional Australia. We believe that Telstra should care more about people than profits.

Universal access to telecommunications is especially important to older people, particularly those living in outer metropolitan, rural and regional Australia. Should John Howard be re-elected he will fully privatise Telstra. The proceeds of the sale are in his forward estimates. Australians know that once Telstra is sold, it will be sold for good and that the service they receive will suffer.

Australia Post

Labor will keep Australia Post in public hands. We will not be deregulating Australia's postal industry piece by piece.

Labor respects Australia Post's vital role in ensuring that Australians living in rural and regional areas have access to a reliable and efficient postal service. Under Labor, Australia Post will continue to provide current postal, retail and financial services, including Giropost, bill paying and banking.

Labor's Australia Post will also be a critical platform by which we deliver services to people living in regional Australia.

Better access to electronic services

Rather than deregulating Australia Post, Labor will work with Australia Post to roll out additional electronic services at Australia Post outlets.

Australia Post has a powerful network across Australia capable of delivering face-to-face and on-line information and services to rural and regional communities.

Labor will provide point-of-sale technology - including Giropost, Medicare Easyclaim and phone and fax facilities - at all Australia Post outlets.

Labor will also provide Access Australia kiosks at Australia Post outlets.

Labor will provide rural and regional services through face-to-face outlets, telephone support and the Internet - a flexible and integrated approach.

Labor will work towards the goal of providing Federal, State and Local Government shop-front services via single outlets, whether that be a Post Office, a Rural Transaction Centre, a Local Council office or a State Government 'one-stop-shop'.

The ABC

For sixty years, the ABC has been a distinctive part of rural Australia. The ABC is a key source of news and other important information to the farmers.

Labor will ensure that the ABC is an adequately resourced, genuinely independent and truly national public broadcaster. It will guarantee that the ABC remains one of our national treasures and continues to provide quality information and entertainment to rural and regional Australia.

Costing

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	Total
Review Of Import Risk Assessment	0	0	0	0	0
More Rural Veterinarians	0	0.2	0.3	0.5	1.0
Tasmanian Wheat Freight Subsidy	0.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	3.6
Intensive Industries Council	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4
Dairy Response ¹	0	0	0	0	0
Better Fisheries Management	0.5	1	1	1	3.5
Fisheries Academy ²	0.75	1.2	1.2	1.2	4.35
Business Skills Training	0	0	0	0	0
Farm Safety	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.8
Regional Development Program ³	19.2	45.3	60.4	90.1	215.0
Regional Infrastructure ³	0	0	0	0	0
Restoring Natural Infrastructure ⁴	10.6	21.3	51.3	86.3	169.5
Flood Mitigation ³	6	2	2	2	12
Export Promotion ⁵	0	15	0	0	15
Education Priority Zones ⁶	20.0	60.0	70.0	120.0	270.0
University Of Australia Online ⁶	0.0	30.0	50.0	90.0	170.0
Increased Research In Regional Universities ⁶	2.3	4.8	7.3	10.0	24.4
Regional Hospitals ⁷	*	*	*	*	57
Increased Funding For ABC ⁶	0.0	10	10	40.5	60.5
TOTAL (millions) ⁸	59.75	192.6	255.3	443.4	1,008.05

1. Announced in *Labor's Plan to Grow the Dairy Industry*, on 27 October 2001.
2. Announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for South Australia*, on 15 October 2001.
3. Announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for Our Regions*, on 20 October 2001.

The provision of \$350m Regional Infrastructure Kickstart loans affects only the composition of the Commonwealth's financial assets. As such this measure has no direct impact on fiscal balance. These loans are made possible because of the early repayment of debt from the corporatisation of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority. The public debt interest implications are \$19.3 million per annum commencing 2002-03. For costing purposes, and consistent with page 5 of the Guidelines for Costing Election Commitments circulated on 8 October 2001, this adjustment will not be included against the measure but will be subsequently included by Labor as an adjustment in the Treasury Portfolio. Policy announced on 20 October 2001 in *Kim Beazley's Plan for our Regions*.

4. Announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for Combating Salinity*, on 15 October 2001.
5. Announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for Trade*, on 1 November 2001.

6. Announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for the Knowledge Nation*, on 31 October 2001.
7. Announced in *Kim Beazley's Plan for Public Hospitals*, on 21 October 2001.
8. The figures in the costing table above reflect the full value of Kim Beazley's Plan for Agriculture. The net impact of today's announcement on the Budget (\$m) is:

01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05
0.9	3.0	3.1	3.3