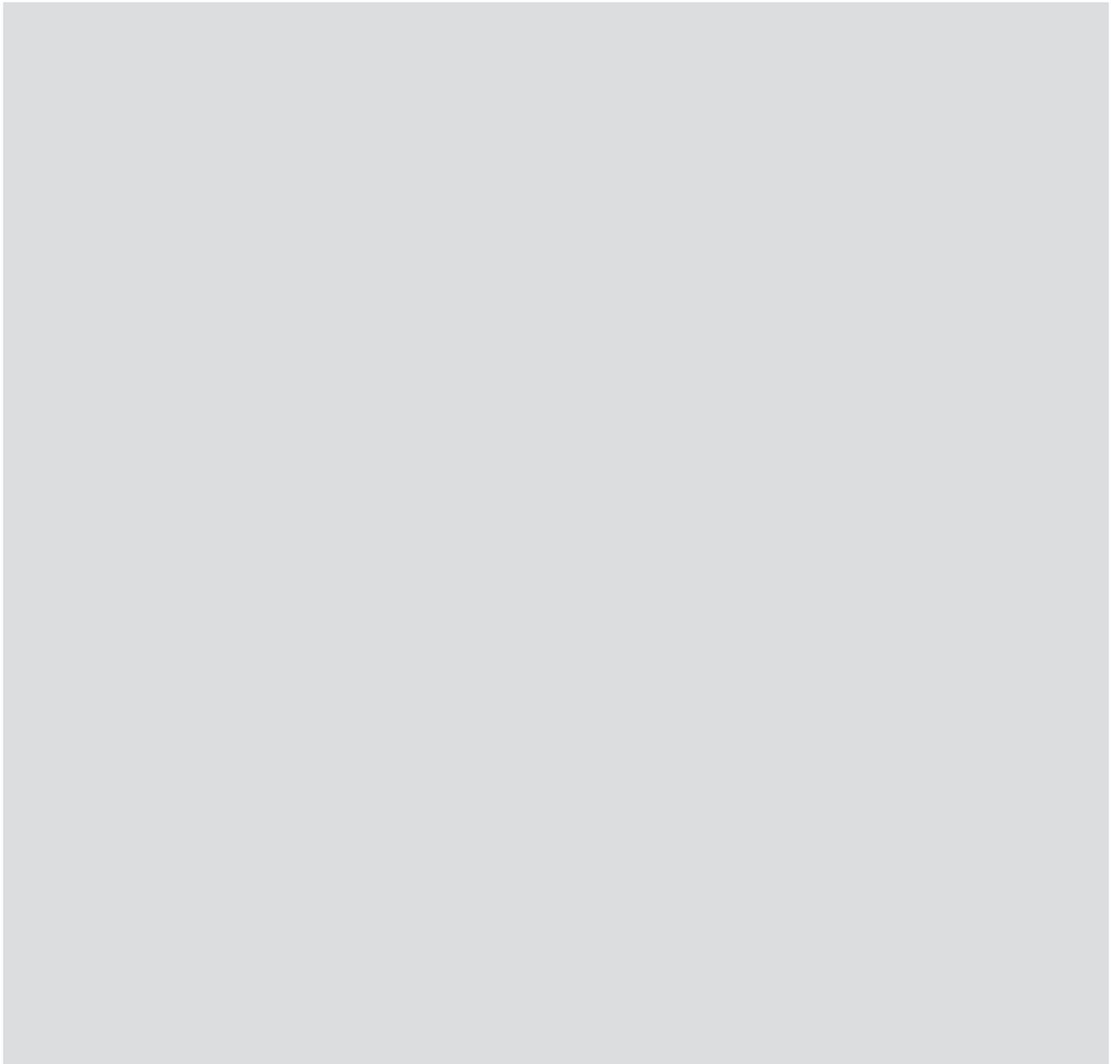




National Platform



Chapter 6: New opportunities for an ageing Australia

Introduction

- 1 Over the last century, average life expectancy has increased by more than 20 years owing to the success of public health policy and huge leaps in medical research. The ageing of Australia's population is also a profound social shift that requires an equally profound shift in society's mindset about age. The ageing of our population should not be perceived as a problem or an inconvenience; it is an historical achievement that humanity has strived for over centuries and presents a range of economic and social opportunities. Australians can now expect to have an extended period of healthy, active retirement that was unimaginable in the past. This development is something that all Australians should be proud of and is an achievement that should be celebrated. The challenge is to make sure that as we live longer, we continue to lead happy, healthy and productive lives. Older Australians have much to contribute to business, to education and to the community and we need to do more to encourage these contributions beyond retirement.
- 2 Labor is committed to promoting healthier lifestyles for older Australians, encouraging skills development and removing obstacles to workforce participation, to support better planning for an extended period of middle life. Organisations will benefit from more flexible work environments that improve workforce retention and from capitalising on commercial opportunities to develop new products and services for an older population. The nation will benefit as we develop a society that celebrates the contribution and capacities of older Australians.
- 3 Labor recognises that older Australians have made our country strong and prosperous and they deserve to be valued and respected within our society and through our policies and actions. With older Australians leading longer, healthier and more prosperous lives than ever before, it is essential that we look carefully at how to provide the best possible opportunities for older Australians. There is great potential to provide older Australians with greater choice and control over their lives than has been afforded in the past.
- 4 Labor believes in a fair and equitable society where Australians who have contributed to our nation's strength and prosperity are able to lead a healthy and productive life whether they are in work, retirement, volunteering or caring roles.
- 5 Labor has been protecting the pension for more than 100 years. And we have delivered for older Australians—meeting our responsibility to ensure that no Australian is left behind. Supporting pensioners today, and providing security for tomorrow. Through our pension reforms, Labor has built a sustainable pension system.
- 6 Labor has a strong history in protecting the financial future of Australians through a commitment to a robust superannuation system. We introduced universal superannuation 20 years ago and we have since committed to further increases and greater protections. We will continue to retain the goal of ensuring financial security in retirement as a core component in Labor policy.
- 7 Labor recognises that our community increasingly relies on the volunteering efforts of older Australians, both in the community and within families. Volunteering in any capacity helps to keep older Australians connected to their community and to feel valued. Our business, education and community lives can benefit enormously from the contribution of older Australians and provides us with an opportunity to foster a richer civil society.

- 8 One of the great challenges ahead of us is maximising the benefits and opportunities that come with a larger and more active population of older Australians. Labor has established the first Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians to ensure these considerations are injected into a range of contemporary policy debates, such as the opportunities created by the NBN for senior Australians. The panel will report in late 2012, and its recommendations will improve the design of policies that affect senior Australians.
- 9 The Broadband for Seniors program is only one example of an initiative already in place to deliver older Australians a better quality of life. The program helps build the confidence and skills needed to use new technology, so they can participate in and share the benefits of the growing digital economy. Older Australians can access this initiative through kiosks at community centres, retirement villages, nursing facilities, libraries and community clubs. Free training is provided in a friendly face-to-face environment by volunteer tutors. Access to training materials including an online development course are also provided so people can learn at their own pace as well as on their computers at home.
- 10 In 2010 Labor tasked the Productivity Commission to provide an analysis of the aged care sector and detailed proposals for aged care reform. These recommendations have been received and will be considered alongside the recommendations from community and industry consultations as part of the broader ageing agenda. Labor is committed to the reform of aged care and this will need a sustained commitment over many years to meet the needs of older Australians through more flexible, appropriate and person centred services.
- 11 Labor recognises the needs of ageing populations in regional communities and is committed to the provision of aged care, health services and appropriate community facilities in these areas.

Labor values

- 12 Labor believes the ageing of the population should be seen as a significant success, with opportunities to be harnessed by both the individual and society more broadly.
- 13 Since the federation of our nation, Labor has believed in the need for a strong age pension for Australia. Labor introduced the age pension during our nation's first decade driven by our core Labor belief in a fair society that rewards a lifetime of work and our sense of responsibility to ensure that no Australian is left behind.
- 14 We believe in ensuring Australians enjoy financial security in retirement and deliver on this value through continued commitment to improving superannuation.
- 15 Labor believes that employees should be able to access low cost, profit for member (not-for-profit) superannuation funds through their workplace.
- 16 Labor is committed to ensuring older Australians are able to lead a healthy and productive life in retirement with access to the care and support appropriate to their needs.
- 17 Older Australians are a core part of Australia's social fabric and deserve greater choice and control over their lives. Labor is committed to providing older Australians with more flexible and appropriate opportunities to engage in all aspects of life.
- 18 Labor understands that volunteering and mentoring make valuable contributions to Australia's economic and social wellbeing.

Labor achievements

Health and wellbeing

We have:

- undertaken significant reform to our health system to bolster our primary care and preventative care services on the ground to keep people out of hospital, to help people stay well in their community and to ensure the health and wellbeing of Australians as they age
- committed to reforming our aged care system as part of a broader positive ageing agenda, following on from the Productivity Commission's report 'Caring for Older Australians'
- increased residential and community aged care places and increased transition care places to assist frail older Australians to leave hospital earlier each year.

Further education and employment

We have:

- established an Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians to ensure the potential of older members of our community is considered in a range of policy debates
- introduced the Experience Plus program to provide more support to older Australians who want to stay in the workforce longer, with additional training opportunities and more support for mature workers with a health condition
- introduced a new and improved Work Bonus that will provide a further incentive for older Australians to work by allowing pensioners to keep more of their pension and more of their wage when they do choose to work. Eligible pensioners can earn up to \$250 a fortnight without it being assessed as income under the pension income test
- established 2000 internet kiosks (reaching about 160,000 seniors) across Australia to provide older Australians with free access to computers and the internet, as well as training in information technology skills
- job seekers and workers over 45 years of age are now eligible for free, professional career advice to help them plan for successful career transitions.

Financial

We have:

- since September 2009, driven significant increases in the pension, especially for singles. On top of the historic increases in the base rate of the pension, new and more generous indexation arrangements make sure that the pension keeps in step with the financial needs of pensioners
- made economic stimulus payments to more than three million pensioners and self-funded retirees to fend off the impact of the Global Financial Crisis
- made pension payments more flexible—so that the system better meets the changing needs of pensioners. The new pension supplement can be paid fortnightly or quarterly, and more flexible advance payments can be made to meet unexpected costs
- ensure older Australians who do not receive the age pension can be supported through the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. Labor has introduced a new Seniors Supplement for seniors health card holders

- delivered national transport concessions so that state Seniors Card holders get concessions when they travel interstate
- supported older Australians prepare for a clean energy future by ensuring that pensioners receive increased pension payments that meet the expected average price impact from the introduction of the carbon price. Self-funded retirees with a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card will receive the same assistance as age pensioners as the carbon price is introduced.

Support

We have:

- created a separate Age Discrimination Commissioner, who will drive community debate about ageing discrimination while also dealing with complaints of discrimination
- continued the role of the Ambassador for Ageing to participate in major events and promote key messages on the substantial and ongoing contribution of older people and the importance of productive and healthy ageing
- introduced one-on-one support to grandparent carers in the form of grandparent advisers to help older Australians who are the primary carers for their grandchildren apply for government support such as family assistance and income support payments.

Labor priorities

- 19 Labor is committed to fostering the full participation of older Australians in work and community life. Labor will:

Health and wellbeing

- develop policies and practice to foster inclusion of older people in all aspects of life, including education, work and social environments
- reform the aged care system to ensure appropriate quality care is available and provided when required, recognising the desires and preferences of older Australians
- develop strategies to address the workforce challenges in the aged care system
- develop a wellbeing framework, to guide the development of future aged care policy that promotes independence, wellness and the continuing contribution of older Australians to society
- invest in prevention and primary care to keep older Australians well and out of hospital
- deliver eHealth solutions to assist older Australians, in their home and in aged care facilities, access services including the personally controlled electronic health record and TeleHealth services for specialist medical care.

Education and employment

- help senior Australians gain financial literacy and provide information, education and support to seniors on post-retirement incomes, superannuation and financial products
- assist seniors gain confidence and build skills in Information and Communications Technology through education and the availability of appropriate public resources
- commit to programs such as The Golden Gurus Program which provides Australians aged 50 years and over with a range of opportunities to assist community organisations and small businesses
- provide support and assistance for those entering the later phase of their working life to ensure they are fully supported to pursue new opportunities, change direction or slow down their careers.

Financial

- ensure the age pension keeps pace with the cost of living through improved indexation arrangements that make pension rates more responsive to the price changes experienced by pensioners
- maintain the benchmark of maximum single adult rates of aged, disability and carers pensions to at least 27.7 per cent of male total average weekly earnings and ensure basic rates are indexed at least twice a year in line with movements in the Consumer Price Index or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index
- ensure that those whose only income is provided through the social security system will not have to pay income tax
- boost superannuation savings to ensure Australians can enjoy their retirement
- recognise the important contribution that self-funded retirees have made and continue to make to the Australian economy and to their communities by providing targeted support and incentives
- continue to implement progressive reform of the pension system to provide more financial security for seniors.

Engagement

- continue to engage with representatives from seniors' groups prior to introducing any new reforms and recognise the importance of seniors' community organisations through its communities policy and social inclusion agenda
- recognise the valuable contribution that mature age people make to Australian communities and business and to raise awareness among these citizens and the community of the benefits of skilled volunteering and small business mentoring
- commit to increasing the number of people who participate in volunteering and mentoring roles and the availability of volunteering and mentoring opportunities for older Australians.

Pensions

- 20 Labor has delivered for pensioners, driven by our belief in a fair society that rewards a lifetime of work. We will continue to deliver pension increases through regular generous indexation and improvements in a long-term, sustainable way by gradually increasing the age pension age starting in 2017, rising to 67 by 2023. This will allow people to have time to plan and prepare for this change. We will continue to protect the rate of the pension into the future, by keeping Australian pensioners front and centre of reforms.
- 21 Under Labor, pensions will keep up with the rising cost of living. The wages benchmark rate has increased for singles from 25 per cent to around 27.7 per cent of Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, an increase of more than ten per cent. This new benchmark is now enshrined in legislation. The new Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index considers a 'basket of goods and services' that better reflects pensioner consumption patterns than the overall Consumer Price Index.
- 22 Labor has more than trebled the Utilities Allowance and increased the Telephone Allowance by half and introduced new arrangements to give pensioners easier access to advance payments in times of need.
- 23 Labor has simplified payments to pensioners, combining four allowances into a single, simple Pension Supplement, paid fortnightly. To increase flexibility for pensioners in balancing their household budgets, pensioners can choose to have some of their Pension Supplement paid quarterly instead of fortnightly.
- 24 Pensioners will be supported in this government's plan to put a price on pollution and not pensioners. Under our plan, pensioners will receive household assistance that is more than the expected average price increase from putting a price on pollution. This will be a real and permanent increase to the pension.

Superannuation

- 25 Labor will provide an historic boost to Australian's superannuation savings by:
- increasing the Superannuation Guarantee to 12 per cent commencing 1 July 2013
 - providing an annual contribution of up to \$500 into the superannuation accounts of 3.5 million workers earning less than \$37,000 from 1 July 2012
 - doubling the concessional super contributions cap to \$50,000 for those 50 and over with up to \$500,000 in super from 1 July 2012. This important measure will benefit almost 275,000 older Australians; including those who have had interrupted work patterns or entered the workforce at a later stage
 - enabling workers aged 70 to 74 to receive Superannuation Guarantee Contributions for the first time since the introduction of compulsory superannuation from 1 July 2013
 - improving the efficiency of the super system, including enabling super funds to offer a new low cost superannuation product called MySuper from 1 July 2013.
- 26 Labor's historic superannuation reforms will:
- boost the retirement savings of 8.4 million Australians including many older Australians who benefit in particular from our measures to boost super for the over 50s
 - lift retirement savings by more than \$85 billion over ten years and by more than \$500 billion by 2035
 - provide a 50 per cent tax discount on up to \$1000 of interest income earned on savings products including bank accounts—50 per cent tax break for the first \$500 of interest on savings from 1 July 2012, increasing on 1 July 2013 to \$1000 of interest on savings. This will benefit around 740,000 self-funded retirees and age pensioners when this measure is fully implemented
 - from 1 July 2013, around 8700 self-funded retirees will become eligible for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and the Seniors Supplement through the introduction of a new standard \$500 tax deduction that reduces taxable incomes
 - older Australians are regular users of financial planners and have also been the victims of poor financial advice. Labor is reforming financial advice to ensure consumers are better protected and also don't pay unnecessary fees. Labor's reforms include a ban on sales commissions paid to financial advisers, a new duty to act in the customer's best interest and a compulsory requirement for advisers to seek approval from their clients to charge ongoing fees.

Ageing and aged care

- 27 In considering the reform and planning to redesign the aged care system for the future, Labor will be guided by four overarching principles:
- every older Australian has earned the right to be able to access quality care that is appropriate to their needs
 - older Australians deserve greater choice and control over their care arrangements than the system currently provides
 - funding arrangements for aged care need to be sustainable and fair, both for older Australians and for the broader community
 - every Australian can access quality care provided by an appropriately skilled and remunerated workforce that meets their needs.
- 28 Labor welcomes the federal government's commitment to legislate for 12 per cent superannuation to be progressively implemented over future years—as well as other significant superannuation reforms. However, noting the significant economic, fiscal and social benefits of superannuation, Labor calls on the government to investigate increasing the target contribution rate to 15 per cent.

- 29 In recognition of the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Labor understands that early access to preserved superannuation accounts can play an important part in providing support to some individuals and their families. Labor will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on transition to retirement strategies, including access to superannuation, in acknowledgment of these circumstances.
- 30 Labor recognises that the reform process will only be successful if critical issues of workforce and wages are addressed. The work performed by our aged care sector is both vital and difficult.
- 31 The reform process will open up the sector to increased competition, will aim to improve quality of care and will require those who have the capacity to pay to contribute to the services they receive. Within this reform process Labor is committed to ensuring that all older Australians, regardless of wealth or circumstance, are able to access quality care. Labor understands that a reform process that opens up the aged care sector to market forces entails risks for current and future consumers of aged care. Labor is committed to ensuring that all older Australians, regardless of wealth or circumstance are able to access quality care. Labor recognises the importance of strong and effective regulation of the aged care sector in achieving this commitment.
- 32 Ensuring the wellbeing of older Australians is a Labor priority and a wellbeing framework will be developed in consultation with older Australians and the wider community. It will guide the development of future aged care policy that promotes independence, wellness and the continuing contribution of older Australians to society. It will have as its hallmark, a commitment to treating older Australians and their carers with respect and dignity. Labor believes all older Australians have a right to safe and secure aged care services, whether they are received in a residential complex or in the home.
- 33 Many Australians as they age come to rely on the support provided by the aged care sector, services range from low level home support with domestic chores to full residential care. In reforming the aged care sector Labor will seek to align services with the needs and preferences of older Australians.
- 34 Labor will take into account the current ratio system, demographic changes and rural and regional issues to ensure the supply of aged care services appropriately meets current and future demand. Labor is committed to the provision of an adequate number of aged care places offering a high standard of care and subject to relevant regulation.
- 35 Labor recognises that support in the home is vital to meeting the needs of an ageing population and that there is an increasing demand for home support services. Older Australians want to stay in their own homes for the duration of their lives wherever possible. Labor is committed to the provision of services that help older Australians remain independent and in their own homes, close to their family and community wherever possible. Labor recognises that a move towards greater provision of community care is not possible without fair and competitive wages and improved working conditions. Without such conditions, the attraction and retention of staff will be problematic, leading to reduced quality and worsening care outcomes. Labor will continue to invest in community care services to meet these goals.
- 36 Labor is committed to delivering the services older Australians need in their homes and in the community where it is accessible and feasible and will ensure recipients are well supported and have choice of service. Where home support is not possible residential care provides an environment for care particularly for those who are frail and have complex comorbidities requiring care.

- 37 Labor recognises the need to provide culturally appropriate aged care, including strategies that address:
- the propensity of older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experiencing dementia to revert to their first language, through provision of culturally appropriate care
 - the experience of discrimination of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex older Australians in aged care based on presumptions of both universal heterosexuality and asexuality in personal relationships between older Australians
 - the need for Indigenous older Australians to maintain contact with their culture and country, however possible.
- 38 Labor recognises the profound grief, suffering and loss experienced by members of the Stolen Generations as a result of forced removals and other past government policies and the need for appropriate aged care services that take into consideration their differing needs. We also understand that for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, the impact of childhood experiences in institutions and children homes is ongoing and lasting. These 'care leavers' have special needs in accessing aged care services, particularly residential care and aged care should be responsive and appropriate for their needs.
- 39 Labor acknowledges the importance of staying well and using preventative health measures as we age. It is vital that we tackle the chronic diseases that impact on older Australians.
- 40 Labor recognises the need for competitive wage and entitlement outcomes to assist in the attraction and retention of staff and to lead to better quality of care outcomes. Labor will continue to invest to meet these goals.

Securing quality aged care through a quality workforce

- 41 Labor recognises there is a critical workforce shortage in the residential and community aged care sector. This shortage is attributed to a combination of current workforce structure, training provision and wages. For aged care reform to be successful we must address this workforce shortage. Labor will work with the sector on the development and implementation of an aged care workforce strategy that addresses career pathways, appropriate training pathways, improved management and supervision and wages.
- 42 Labor strongly supports the vital work performed by all staff in the aged care system, including nursing and personal care staff and will seek to address remuneration issues through the aged care reform process. Without changes to the workforce, attraction and retention of staff will continue to be problematic and potentially lead to negative quality and care outcomes.
- 43 Labor recognises that there has been a high level of staff turnover in the aged care sector and is committed to reducing this through a range of mechanisms including competitive and fair wages, better career structures and improved entitlements. Labor is committed to ensuring aged care staff are retained for the long-term.
- 44 Labor recognises and understands that there is a critical workforce shortage in aged care, particularly in mining boom states and remote and rural areas who struggle to compete for qualified staff.
- 45 Labor is committed to developing the workforce and through various programs including the Workforce Development Fund, to assist aged care workers to obtain vocational aged care qualifications. Labor believes that staff should have access to further training to improve and develop their skills. This increase in relevant qualifications should be related to an increase in remuneration, reflecting Labor's belief that the aged care workforce should have fair and competitive wages. Through the National

Workforce Development Fund and other programs including Recognition of Current Competencies programs, Labor will support aged care workers to obtain vocational qualifications that are tied to fair and competitive wage outcomes. While Labor remains committed to the aim that Certificate Level III becomes the mandatory minimum qualification, existing workers should not be disadvantaged.

- 46 Labor believes in transparency and accountability in funding to aged care providers and ensuring that every dollar provided in public funding is directed to ensuring quality of care. Quality care is reliant upon staff being adequately trained, competent to practice and having robust standards and guidelines that determine practice.
- 47 Labor recognises that workforce issues as a key concern to be addressed through the industry reform process. Labor recognises that workforce issues are threshold issues and that a quality aged care system is not possible without fair and competitive wages and decent working conditions. Labor is committed to working with industry stakeholders to achieve sector reforms including properly benchmarked rates of pay delivered through appropriate industrial instruments.
- 48 Labor understands that the federal government is the primary funder of the aged care sector and consequently exercises control over wage rates and working conditions. Labor also recognises the structural barriers aged care workers face when bargaining for better wage outcomes. Labor is committed to fair and competitive wages and conditions for aged care workers delivered through a open and sustainable pricing system.

Dementia

- 49 Dementia is a major chronic disease of the 21st century and will have a major impact on the quality of life of older Australians, both people with dementia and those who support and care for them. Already there are 269,000 Australians who have dementia. The rapid ageing of the Australian population means the number of people with dementia is expected to increase to nearly one million by 2050.
- 50 Over half of all residents in aged care facilities have a diagnosis of dementia and projections indicate a significant increase in the incidence of dementia over coming years. Labor will strive to make Australia a dementia-friendly society, promote dementia risk reduction and achieve timely diagnosis of dementia.
- 51 Labor believes that people with dementia should have access to quality and appropriate care. Labor will achieve this by providing support to people living with dementia and their carers, including information, counselling, service referral and access to flexible, people-centred services.
- 52 Labor is committed to tackling the challenges posed by the prevalence of dementia, including issues of social attitudes to dementia and targeting research to better understand the causes of dementia and the means of stopping its progression.

Palliative care

- 53 Palliative care is an important part of the aged care and health care systems and every person should have access to quality palliative care. Labor is committed to providing appropriate care that best meets the needs and preferences of older Australians, at home, in hospital or in an aged care facility.
- 54 We will strive for high-quality advance care planning to ensure that older Australians, their families and carers are fully informed about end of life issues and the associated choices that are available. We recognise that Australians want to have better control and choice over the circumstances of their death.

- 55 Labor is committed to promoting community awareness about palliative care and advance care planning to encourage families to discuss the wishes and preferences for the final stages of a person's life.
- 56 To ensure the best possible palliative and end of life care, it is important to build the skills and knowledge of the aged care and primary care workforce along with access to, and the support of, palliative care services. Medical professionals and the health workforce have an obligation to respect the end of life decisions and advanced care directives of older Australians. Older Australians should have their right to have a say over the circumstances of their death respected by all medical professionals.
- 57 We know that people with incurable terminal illness and their carers and families can endure great hardship and disadvantage as they progress through the end of life period, and that they need more and better coordinated palliative and supportive services, clinical and non-clinical, from specialist and non-specialist providers.
- 58 Labor also recognises the specific end of life care needs of particular population groups such as Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people living in rural and remote areas.
- 59 Labor believes that investing in community palliative and end of life care and supporting the families and carers of Australians who are in the end stage of their lives is essential to achieving better end of life outcomes. Important considerations include respite, community care and provision of sub-acute beds and services.
- 60 Labor will support infrastructure development in meeting Australia's current and future palliative and end of life care needs.
- 61 Labor is committed to improving the quality of end of life care in hospitals by supporting holistic, multi-faceted best practice models for palliation.