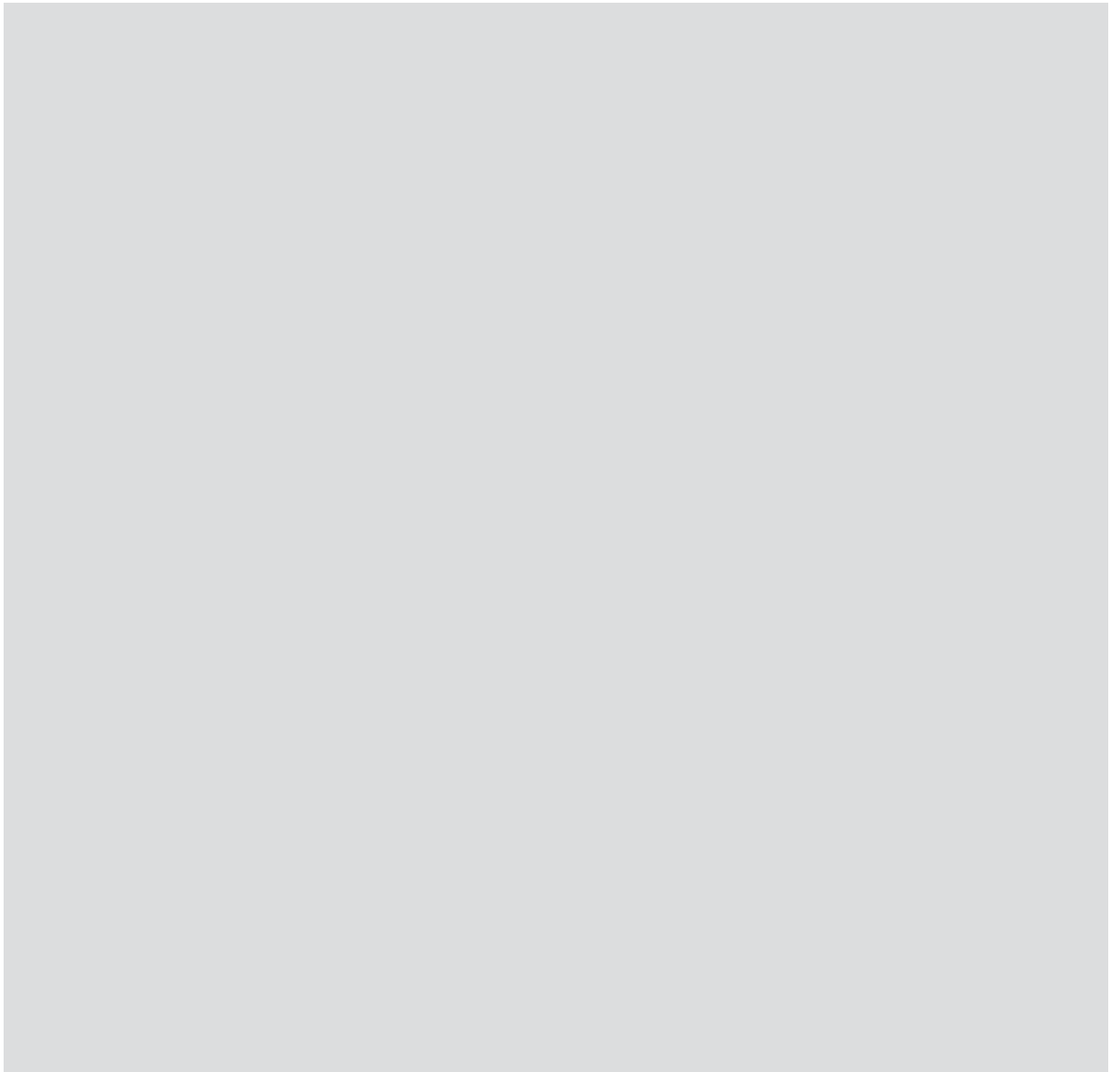




National Platform



Chapter 7: A world-class education for all Australians

Introduction

- 1 Labor believes every child should get a great education. Education is central to personal fulfilment and the future prosperity of our nation. It underpins our culture and our productive capacity. Labor's goal is to make Australia one of the most highly educated and skilled nations on earth.
- 2 Labor has always been the party of educational opportunity. We see education as the great enabler that helps individuals achieve their full potential, gives our industries the knowledge and skills they need to innovate and become more productive, and promotes social mobility and social harmony. Successive Labor governments have established and invested in education at all levels: early childhood, the primary and secondary years, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education. Labor is continuing this tradition and lifting the quality and equity of education at every level.
- 3 The social and economic transition that Australia is undergoing elevates the importance of education. Too many students, particularly from disadvantaged communities, are not reaching their educational potential. Too many children still have their future determined by their postcode. Our economy is also creating new demands for our future workforce. We need workers equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of a clean energy future. Our education system must prepare a new generation of Australians for the jobs and the world of tomorrow.
- 4 Labor's national reform agenda is unprecedented. We are putting in place the reforms, architecture and investment to deliver world-class education for all Australians. We are focused on every stage of the educational lifecycle to ensure high-quality provision from the early years right through to training at work and adult education in the community.

Labor values

- 5 Labor believes that all Australians, regardless of their social background, have the right to a high quality education to enable them to reach their full potential.
- 6 Labor recognises that good education in the early years is crucial for the development of critical foundational learning skills necessary for later educational success. Early childhood education should therefore be universally available, affordable and of the highest quality.
- 7 Labor believes that every Australian in every community should be able to access free, secular, high quality government schooling and government policies should recognise this. Adequate public funding significantly contributes to the quality of public education and training.
- 8 Labor believes greater equity in educational outcomes is important for strengthening social inclusion and promoting opportunity. Disadvantage and background should not be a barrier to educational achievement for any child. Achieving this requires high expectations of all schools and a socially representative public school of the highest quality in every community that offers every child an excellent education.

- 9 Labor is committed to greater transparency and accountability in our schools and education institutions.
- 10 Labor believes that the right to education demands an environment free from bullying and harassment, including racist, sexist or homophobic bullying and harassment.
- 11 Our publicly-funded schools are among our most important community institutions. Labor believes they should be places where young Australians learn about their civic rights and are immersed in practising values and ethical literacy of active citizenship for the maintenance and renewal of our democracy.
- 12 Labor is committed to the right of families to choose non-government schooling and that this decision should be supported by public funding that reflects need and is consistent with the creation of a diverse and inclusive society.
- 13 Labor believes that government has a clear responsibility to ensure that all students have access to high quality teaching and learning opportunities. Labor will give priority to this imperative in collaboration with state and territory governments, education authorities and the teaching profession, to ensure that support for teachers to develop and improve is enhanced and teachers can achieve the highest standards of professional practice.
- 14 Labor is strongly committed to providing real choice to school leavers in regional areas on where they advance their education. Labor believes that every student in Australia should have access to world class education, which can provide benefits to individual students and to their local communities.
- 15 Labor believes VET is crucial for the creation of a socially mobile, high-wage, high-skill workforce and reform and delivery of high-quality VET is a national priority.
- 16 Labor believes Australia's universities and other higher education institutions play a vitally important role in providing opportunities, teaching knowledge and skills and conducting research for the benefit of society, industry and the environment, and must be funded for the task. Academic freedom must be guaranteed and protected at all times against all forms of commercial and political pressure.
- 17 Labor believes opportunities should be available through our educational institutions including VET and universities, for career enhancing learning and life-long learning in older age.
- 18 Labor believes education and training is fundamental to reducing Indigenous disadvantage and providing opportunities for Indigenous people. Labor is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous communities and families to develop and implement education and training access, attendance and outcomes in order to close this gap.

Labor achievements

Early childhood, school education and youth

We have:

- invested over \$65 billion in schools over four years — almost double the former government in the last term. We have delivered the most significant education reform agenda in living memory
- delivered the Building the Education Revolution program — \$16.2 billion to modernise schools across Australia, support local jobs and stimulate investment
- invested in the modernisation of all schools in regional, remote and rural Australia, through the Building the Education Revolution program and investment in trades training facilities
- introduced and secured agreement for Australia's first ever National Curriculum and delivered curriculum content for English, Maths, History and Science
- given parents and school communities more information about schools than ever before through the My School website
- implemented the first ever national testing through NAPLAN, allowing us to track the literacy and numeracy skills of every student, so we can better target resources
- invested \$2.5 billion in National Partnerships with the states and territories, helping to improve literacy and numeracy, boost teacher quality, and provide extra support to schools with low socioeconomic status
- provided more than \$970 million so all Australian children can have access to early childhood education for 15 hours a week — meaning 51,000 more children will be enrolled in preschool in 2013
- invested \$2.4 billion on the Digital Education Revolution, which is on track to deliver over 780,000 computers to schools by the end of 2011
- invested \$2.5 billion in Trade Training Centres in schools, with every high school student to have access to a centre, laying the foundations needed to address Australia's skills shortage and boost productivity
- commissioned the first review of school funding in more than 30 years, with the independent review panel delivering its findings to government at the end of 2011
- invested almost \$169 million in training and retaining a quality early childhood education workforce
- agreed a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan which will boost attendance levels and literacy and numeracy skills
- endorsed the first National Professional Standards for both school principals and teachers
- committed an extra \$200 million under the More Support for Students with Disabilities scheme
- completed almost half of the 38 additional Early Learning and Care Centres that we have promised to deliver across the country
- supported working families by lifting the Child Care Rebate to 50 per cent of out-of-pocket costs up to a cap of \$7,500 per child per year and made it available to all parents with children in childcare on a fortnightly basis
- contributed \$273.3 million to support the introduction of the new National Quality Framework, which will improve staff to child ratios so children receive more individual care and attention, and improve staff qualifications so educators are better able to help children learn and develop
- committed through the Closing the Gap strategy to ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities within five years, to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade, and to halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rates by 2020.

Vocational education, training and universities

We have:

- made a \$3 billion investment to educate and train the skilled workers we need through our Building Australia's Future Workforce package
- set ambitious targets to halve the proportion of Australians aged 20–64 years without qualifications at the Certificate III Level and higher; and double the number of diploma and advanced diploma qualifications by 2020. The number of students in publicly funded vocational education and training undertaking studies at Diploma level or above has already increased by almost 21 per cent between 2007 and 2009
- developed the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development and introduced a reform-focussed National Partnership with funding of \$1.75 billion over five years from 2012–13
- committed \$550 million in a new National Workforce Development Fund. This fund will make it possible for government and industry to work together to deliver an estimated 130,000 high-quality training places
- legislated a demand driven university funding system for undergraduate places from 1 January 2012, in which Commonwealth funding will follow the student, responding to demand and to the strengths of different universities and providing for future workforce need
- committed, following the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, to a target that by 2025, 40 per cent of all 25 to 34 year-olds should hold a qualification at bachelor's degree or above and that by 2020, 20 percent of undergraduate enrolments should be students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- give more Australian students than ever before the opportunity of a university education. In excess of 500,000 undergraduate places are being funded at public universities — an increase of 100,000 places since we came to government in 2007
- increased funding for additional student places at public universities under the new demand-driven system
- ensured that growth in participation is also underpinned by the new indexation arrangements which will deliver \$3.15 billion over the five years to 2015, putting universities on a more sustainable basis
- established the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), a key element of the government's quality agenda for higher education. TEQSA will be an independent body with powers to regulate university and non-university higher education providers, monitor quality and set standards
- introduced new performance funding arrangements to reward universities for improving participation in higher education and funding to support structural adjustment to allow universities to improve pathways from VET qualifications and to expand course offerings to better respond to what students and employers need to support the move to the new student demand driven system, the new My University website will improve transparency
- published the Excellence in Research Australia scores which has empowered universities to improve their research performance
- committed \$708 million over the next four years to improve the number of people from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing higher education through a range of school and university-based initiatives, to maximise their opportunity for personal advancement and to contribute to the economy
- following the findings of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, introduced comprehensive reforms to ensure that more students across Australia have fairer access to student income support. allocated \$500 million over five years for a Regional Priorities Round of the Education Investment Fund, and regional loading totalling \$249 million, which will strengthen regional higher education by helping to overcome the higher costs of regional campuses, compared to campuses in major cities.

Labor priorities

Early childhood education and care

- 19 Labor's Education Revolution regards early childhood education and care for our young children as national priorities. This includes the expansion of high quality, integrated, accessible and affordable early learning and care programs, including early intervention programs for students with extra educational needs.
- 20 Labor believes that not only are each of the stages of education important in and of themselves, the transitions between them are also vital times that can be stressful for both students and their parents. Ensuring that every student has a clear pathway between the different levels assists their education and promotes lifelong learning.
- 21 Labor recognises that experiences in early childhood heavily influence the opportunities and life chances of young Australians. Learning and development therefore must be at the centre of our system of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Creating this 21st century early childhood education and care system is the responsibility of all levels of government. Our goal is to provide universal preschool education for all children by 2013.
- 22 Labor will work to create nationally consistent early education standards in cooperation with early childhood educators, ECEC providers and unions, looking specifically at the role of play-based learning, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, and the integration of care and learning in all early childhood settings.
- 23 Labor is committed to:
- providing high-quality early education and care options that are flexible, accessible, affordable and convenient for parents
 - ensuring government funding is tied to workforce and quality care outcomes
 - supporting employment and education participation through the provision of early education and care and out of school hour care options that are flexible, accessible and affordable.
- 24 Labor believes that cost must not be a barrier to early childhood education and care, and will work with all state and territory governments to make early childhood education and care services more affordable for families. Through record investment in fee assistance Labor is committed to ensuring that early childhood education and care remains affordable for Australian families, particularly during this period of reform for the early childhood education and care sector.
- 25 Labor will better target assistance to overcome income and location disadvantage in accessing of early childhood education and care.
- 26 Labor recognises the historical barriers to genuine enterprise bargaining in the early child sector that have resulted in low wages for skilled childcare professionals. These barriers include the highly feminised workforce, multiple small sites of employment, limited community recognition of the work and the high responsibility placed on the workforce, making industrial action difficult.
- 27 Labor believes that quality care for children can only be provided by a highly-skilled, professional and well-paid workforce. To this end, Labor is:
- cutting tuition fees for students taking Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses in Children's Services at TAFE colleges around Australia
 - creating additional university places in Early Childhood Education courses
 - providing additional financial support to early childhood educators working in hard-to-staff areas, with assistance to reduce HECS-HELP debts incurred through their studies.

- 28 To ensure a quality education and care sector into the future, Labor supports:
- improving wages and conditions for existing workers and to assist in the recruitment of new qualified workers. Labor recognises that the federal government has a role in funding these improvements as the benefits of quality early childhood care flow to the whole community and parents cannot afford increases costs
 - addressing Occupational Health and Safety concerns, including immunisation and first aid courses for children's services workers and additional cleaning staff
 - better matching supply and demand of early childhood education and care places.

- 29 Labor will also:
- coordinate a national program of recognition of prior learning for experienced early childhood education and care professionals to attain formal qualifications
 - Cut tuition fees for experienced, diploma-qualified early childhood educators to undertake early childhood degrees at universities. This will ensure the number of university qualified early childhood teachers required under the National Quality Framework are available
 - support dedicated programming time in centres
 - work to reduce staff-to-child ratios in early childhood education and care centres, to improve quality of care by enabling early childhood education and care professionals to develop secure attachments with children
 - work with state and territory governments to phase in a Certificate III in Children's Services as a mandatory minimum qualification for early childhood education and care professionals.

High standards for all in every school

- 30 Equity in education demands that standards must be raised in every school. Labor will work to raise standards in Australian schools by improving teacher quality, creating a national curriculum, improving school-to-work transitions and investing in new digital technologies, school buildings and other modern facilities.

- 31 Labor will:
- oversee the rollout of the first phase of the \$69.1 million Empowering Local Schools initiative to 1000 schools in 2012–13 — giving school communities more say over decision-making
 - invest \$37.5 million in the National Trade Cadetships scheme to provide school students with a valuable, rigorous vocational training pathway
 - commence the \$18.1 million Teach Next Program to see the first specialists start their intensive teaching course
 - reward our best teachers under the Rewards for Great Teachers scheme
 - ensure the chaplaincy and student welfare program:
 - enables schools to engage secular welfare workers
 - requires minimum educational qualifications to be met by those engaged as chaplains and welfare workers
 - is available to a further 1000 schools
 - develop and deliver a new funding model for Australian schools
 - ameliorate barriers to participation in schooling, including through the provision of childcare assistance and other support mechanisms for school-aged parents.

- 32 Australia must increase the proportion of young people completing 12 years of school. To encourage higher levels of national achievement, Labor has set a number of important targets to be met through the COAG process. By 2020 Labor will:
- raise Year 12 equivalent retention rates to 90 per cent
 - halve the proportion of adult Australians without Year 12 or an equivalent qualification
 - at least halve the gap in Year 12 attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 33 Labor understands and values the benefits that flow from parental involvement in education, including parent participation in school decision-making and governance, especially in disadvantaged communities. Labor will work towards a more systematic approach to supporting parent engagement in our schools.
- 34 Labor believes that every Australian school student should have access to the teaching and learning resources needed to achieve the full range of learning outcomes contained in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. Access to these resources should not depend on the financial capacities of individual school communities. It must be universal.
- 35 Labor recognises that a strong education system committed to the highest possible academic standards for every child is essential for the creation of a fair and prosperous society. Labor recognises the excellent work currently performed by the nation's teachers, lecturers and all members of the school and education community, in often challenging circumstances.
- 36 Labor recognises the important work and contribution of education support workers and non-teaching support staff to the school community. It is vital that these workers continue to be directly employed by the states and territories to ensure a cohesive and integrated education community.
- 37 Labor supports a mandatory Indigenous Studies component as part of all teachers' pre-service training and will work with teacher educators and the teaching profession to ensure all teachers have a good understanding of Indigenous education issues and the knowledge to work effectively with Indigenous communities and families.
- 38 Labor understands the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and teachers play in achieving successful education outcomes for students. Labor will work with state and territory governments to develop effective recruitment and professional development strategies to increase the number of Indigenous educators within the system.
- 39 Labor believes that schooling must be shaped by Australian society and culture, and keep pace with the times, to strive for educational and intellectual excellence, contribute to the development of shared values that sustain democratic life and foster innovation, awareness, creativity and optimism towards a shared future.
- 40 Labor will work cooperatively with the states and territories to raise and better target school funding, to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and teacher quality and provide the necessary support for low socioeconomic schools and students most in need.
- 41 Greater equity in educational outcomes is important for strengthening social inclusion and promoting opportunity. Labor believes every local community should have access to quality government schooling that offers every child an excellent education. Labor will continue to give priority to equity in schooling so every student can achieve their full potential. We will focus the right support on those who are not currently participating or achieving what they can, including those whose participation is harmed by bullying and harassment. We will do this through a comprehensive approach to the planning, funding and reform of schools, where targeted initiatives complement the base of adequate and appropriate resources needed in all schools.

- 42 Poverty remains the greatest indicator of disadvantage and the single most important barrier to educational success. Labor recognises that schools that serve communities with many low income families need specialised support for teachers, student counselling and community engagement, and additional resources to provide that support. Labor will provide targeted resources to schools with concentrations of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their educational participation and achievement.
- 43 To lift standards and quality, Labor will improve transparency and accountability at all levels. In return for higher levels of investment, Labor will expect increased effort from educational authorities, schools and students.
- 44 Labor will adopt new funding arrangements for all schools that reflect the following principles:
- federal, state and territory funding policies will be aligned to provide a coherent national approach to the resourcing of schools
 - a new era of transparency and stronger use of evidence will inform the allocation of resources and lift educational outcomes across all schools and sectors
 - public funding should be subject to all schools in all sectors meeting exacting quality standards for curriculum and teaching, ensuring maximum value in the use of public resources and consistent accountability and reporting requirements
 - parents, teachers and members of the community should have access to nationally comparable information that details a school's results and the workforce, financial resources and student population it serves. Transparent reporting of student and school achievement must be designed to aid improvement rather than contribute to division within and among schools. It must also occur in a way that does not identify individual students
 - the same transparency and accountability requirements will apply to both government and non-government schools
 - governments have a prime obligation to adequately and properly fund government schools in order to provide high quality public schooling that is accessible to all children and young people.
- 45 Labor believes that Australia should have a consistent, world-class national core curriculum suited to the needs of all students in the contemporary world, as well as allowing time and space in the school curriculum for local content to meet needs of individual communities. Labor will develop this through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, which brings together for the first time the functions of curriculum development, assessment and reporting at a national level. This includes the collaborative development of the National Curriculum, initially in the core areas of English, Maths, Science and History. Labor acknowledges that the content of what is learnt in Australia's education systems should be inclusive of Indigenous cultures and perspectives and will ensure this is part of the National Curriculum. Labor will ensure that environmental education is a core study for all high school students and forms part of the national curriculum.
- 46 Labor is committed to providing better access to trades training in our secondary schools. Labor believes a trades education is a great way for young Australians to pursue an important career path and to contribute to national prosperity. Labor's Trades Training Centre program will ensure that over the next decade more Australian students can access VET in new or upgraded trade and vocational education and training facilities.
- 47 Labor recognises the potential for ICT to accelerate learning and improve educational outcomes. Labor will continue to invest in new digital technology for all Australian school children to ensure Australian schools are using ICT to improve learning and universal access.

- 48 To this end, Labor's Digital Education Revolution will continue to:
- provide new information and communication technology for all secondary school students in years 9–12
 - improve broadband connectivity to schools via the NBN
 - develop more training options for teachers to update their ICT skills
 - create new online curriculum tools and resources to support Australia's new National Curriculum.
- 49 Labor recognises that Building the Education Revolution means building the school facilities of the future. Labor believes that the physical condition of our schools must reflect the importance of education to society. Rundown school facilities cannot project the necessary level of dignity involved in the pursuit of knowledge and skills.
- 50 Labor has invested in Australia's biggest ever school building modernisation program by providing funding for new school infrastructure projects in every school to upgrade and build new facilities, such as libraries, multipurpose halls and science and language classrooms. This will bring our schools into the 21st century, and prepare them to deal with the challenges of the future.
- 51 Labor is fully committed to the principle of excellent, universal public education and will not pursue the privatisation of any aspect of public schooling.

Children with disability

- 52 Labor wants to ensure all children have the skills and opportunities to participate in society. This means investing in measures that improve educational outcomes and promote inclusion for all children, particularly those with disability.
- 53 Labor is providing new funds to help families fund early intervention services for eligible children with disability. Additional funds will be available to children living in rural and remote areas to help meet the additional costs of accessing services. There will also be further funds for the Helping Children with Autism program to meet increased demand for early intervention services. Labor is working to build a National Disability Insurance Scheme that will provide early intervention services for children with disability.
- 54 Labor has also committed further funding to assist schools and teachers to meet the needs of students with disability by offering coordinated support and connecting students with services. This investment will help identify the strategies that most improve the learning experiences of these students.
- 55 Labor is reviewing the funding arrangements for schooling, including investigating how best to meet the needs of different students, including those with disability. The Disability Standards for Education are also under review and work is underway to develop a nationally consistent definition of students with disability.

Providing a strong transition from school to work or training

- 56 Labor believes that the transition from school to work is a crucial time in every person's life. Students who do not make a successful transition from school to work face the prospect of diminished opportunities and the heightened risk of long episodes of unemployment throughout their adult life.
- 57 Labor is committed to education policy reforms to improve the school-to-work transition for young Australians. Labor recognises that governments must do all they can to encourage young people to stay at school, develop a range of learning pathways within and alongside schools, and support students in the world beyond school if they choose to leave.

58 Labor will:

- aim to lift the proportion of young Australians achieving Year 12 or its equivalent (including TAFE, adult and community education, apprenticeships and traineeships) to 90 per cent
- provide financial and other support, incentives, jobs programs and related training, for those young people outside the formal education and training system
- promote collaboration between business, trade unions and educational providers to enhance the participation of young people in post-school learning or work pathways
- provide better access to career pathways and qualifications so that all young people can remain connected to further learning or work after leaving school
- seek to eliminate inappropriate duplication between federal, state, territory and local government roles and services in the education system
- promote opportunities for career progression and job enrichment to further social inclusion.

The vocational education and training system of the future

59 A strong education and training sector is vital to ensuring Australia can create the high-skill, high-wage jobs of the future and transition into the low clean energy economy of the future.

60 Labor is proud of the strong role played by the labour movement in building the VET sector, from its beginnings in the working men's colleges and mechanics institutes of the 19th century, to the great expansion of the 1980s and 1990s. The results can be seen today in the unmatched prosperity and independence enjoyed by millions of Australians with trade and para-professional qualifications.

61 Labor believes Australia's VET sector and universities, while remaining separate institutions, must provide educational pathways for all Australians, to reflect the demand for knowledge and skills in every industry and the expansion of new knowledge-intensive service industries, including such industries as early learning and aged care, which have narrowed the traditional divide between knowledge-based and vocationally-based education.

62 Labor believes Australia's VET system will require sustained levels of investment and modernisation to play its full role in this future to help individual Australians develop the skills they need to obtain secure, sustainable and satisfying employment.

63 Labor recognises that the current economic context requires an even stronger emphasis on skills for future workforce development. Labor will:

- ensure that all young people are equipped with the qualifications necessary for a successful transition to a secure working future. The proportion of young people without the Year 12 or equivalent and the proportion who are not engaged in full time work or full time education and training will be reduced
- ensure that the proportion of the existing workforce without post-school qualifications is reduced and the level of the qualifications is increased. Labor regards this as an essential step in increasing participation rates in the labour market, improving the productive performance of our industries, increasing innovation, reducing unemployment and underemployment, and enabling workers and firms to better adapt to workplace change
- lift the level of literacy and numeracy in the population as a whole, including among existing workers to remove this critical barrier to participation in further education and training and more productive work
- ensure that workers in carbon intensive industries can access the training and qualifications they need to support low carbon pollution practices in existing carbon intensive industries and in new low pollution activities.

64 Labor will build a VET system based upon the following principles:

- a national system, with high quality nationally-accredited qualifications that connects to further pathways in work, learning and the community
- quality in all aspects of delivery and assessment
- transparent governance, funding and performance
- competency-based qualifications that are developed by Industry Skills Councils in cooperation with industry stakeholders and the new National Workforce Development and Productivity Agency
- accessibility that allows new workers, existing workers, youth and industry participants to easily have their needs met
- diversity, with the core role of TAFE supported by a range of private providers
- the system's capacity to contribute to innovation and productivity
- quality through professional teaching qualifications and standards for VET teachers.

65 To strengthen these foundations, Labor will:

- ensure the Australian economy has the qualified skills base it needs to grow, innovate and prosper by expanding opportunities for VET, through apprenticeships or institutional-based learning
- equip Australians with relevant, valued and long-term qualifications and maintain the integrity of Australian trade qualifications by ensuring that there is an effective and thorough system in place to recognise skills obtained both domestically and overseas
- maximise training opportunities for existing workers to continually update and raise their post-school qualifications and skill levels, to prevent workers being forced into low-skilled and precarious employment
- meet the needs of people from educationally and vocationally disadvantaged backgrounds so they can gain qualifications and employable skills, including those who would benefit from 'second chance' opportunities for education and training
- support TAFE in its dual roles of training provider and as a key access point for community education and ensure it is not undermined by competition based on low cost and quality
- require the training system to be more responsive to the needs of individuals and their employers particularly through flexible delivery methods, better integration of work and learning and more effective recognition of prior learning
- encourage the inclusion in qualifications of transferable skills and knowledge that will equip workers for innovation and enable them to adapt to new technology and workplace change
- ensure that training is particularly targeted at high quality and higher level training and lifting the participation of those who have been hardest to engage in further education and training
- increase the linkage between public training investment and the actual take up and use of skills and qualifications in more innovative and productive workplaces and in more secure employment. This will involve the greater engagement of employers, the workforce and their unions in identifying skills needed in the workplace and industry, linking on the job learning to national qualifications and encouraging greater employer investment and opportunities for a more productive workplace
- recognise that workplace representatives have a key role in promoting training opportunities to existing workers and facilitating greater demand for training
- ensure that workers who are in business and industries that are facing restructuring have access, at the earliest possible time, to broad-based training to achieve national qualifications that can improve their chances of secure employment and career paths

- extend learning opportunities through affordable, flexible adult and community education and ensure the continued modernisation of infrastructure and better access to these learning opportunities
- ensure that training strategies are linked to industry development policy
- introduce governance arrangements to support an effective, cooperative national training system with a leading role for government, employers and unions
- ensure that all providers of VET are subject to an efficient, comprehensive and national system of quality assurance, including independent and regular auditing
- require all providers of VET to have effective internal mechanisms to deal with student concerns and complaints
- ensure that green skills and sustainable practices are included in training packages and relevant VET qualifications.

Boosting apprenticeships and traineeships

- 66 Labor recognises that the apprenticeship system is the backbone of our skilled trades and technical workforce, providing a valuable and rewarding career for millions of Australians.
- 67 The apprenticeship system of the 21st century will need to adapt to the changing structure of the workforce by improving the form, structure and duration of apprenticeships and traineeships. We are committed to consulting further to identify additional opportunities to align the Australian apprenticeships system with the needs of the economy.
- 68 An effective apprenticeship system involves a partnership between government, business, trade unions, TAFE and other training providers. Australian businesses need to provide more apprenticeship opportunities. Australian governments at all levels, have an obligation to provide apprentice training opportunities where possible.
- 69 Labor will:
- establish and implement minimum national standards and individual training plans for the protection of apprentices and trainees
 - focus on quality apprenticeship and traineeship programs and on higher skill levels, ensuring that public funding is directly linked to the level of training effort, the completion of quality outcomes and the development of future skill needs
 - make sure all apprenticeship and traineeship programs deliver full qualifications consistent with the national qualifications framework
 - ensure that trades qualifications continue to promote a combination of work and on-the-job training, so that the career paths for workers are enhanced
 - ensure there is sufficient funding available for on and off-the-job training for apprentices, especially in regional and rural Australia
 - support the role of group training companies particularly in facilitating employment and training for apprentices engaged by employers in the resources sector on major projects
 - simplify, improve and enhance the effectiveness of incentives for employers to increase the number of apprentices they engage and provide increased mentoring and other support for employers committed to training our future workforce
 - develop and enhance incentives for employers to increase the number of apprentices they engage and provide increased mentoring and other support for employers committed to training our future workforce.

Indigenous education

- 70 Labor believes that a high quality education is critical to Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and is committed to ensuring that Indigenous children and young people have access to the same opportunities as non-Indigenous Australians.
- 71 Labor celebrates the fact that more Indigenous children are attending school than ever before, recognising however that current levels of Indigenous school participation and attainment are still unacceptable. All people have the power to change their children's lives by ensuring that their children attend school. Evidence shows that higher school attendance rates will provide better employment, health and life outcomes and opportunities for all children. Labor will support Indigenous families and communities to get their children to school each day and ensure they are engaged in learning.
- 72 Labor has:
- established clear targets to Close the Gap in educational attainment, participation and literacy and numeracy
 - invested in early childhood education to ensure that Indigenous children receive quality early childhood education and care.
- 73 The Indigenous Youth Career Pathways program will also provide for schools-based traineeships and other support to assist Indigenous students to complete high school and move into work or further education.
- 74 Labor recognises that improving education and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians is critical to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage, and believes that the future of every Indigenous child should include a good education and a good job. Labor is committed to ensuring that Indigenous Australians have access to the same education opportunities as other Australians and has established clear targets for closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage in education. Labor has committed to:
- ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities within five years
 - halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade
 - halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rates by 2020.

Adult and community education

- 75 Adult and community education is an integral component of lifelong learning in Australia. Labor is committed to extending learning opportunities through adult and community education that is affordable, flexible and community-based, and can adapt to the diverse learning needs of all adults.
- 76 Labor acknowledges the significant contribution to the education of new arrivals to Australia by adult migration education services.

Greater equity, higher quality teaching and world-class research at our nation's universities

- 77 Labor believes that all Australians, regardless of their background or where they live, should have the opportunity to access higher education. Today's university students will become the graduates that Australia's industries and businesses need to compete in the global contest for skilled employees. Australia needs a strong, affordable and accessible higher education system to ensure that we are equipping Australians for the jobs of the future. Labor is committed to supporting a strong role for public libraries as spaces for community enrichment and learning.

- 78 Labor understands that investment in higher education will drive improvements in productivity and improve Australia's future economic competitiveness. We are committed to the expansion of a high quality university sector, to educate the graduates needed by an economy based on knowledge, skills and innovation. This approach is essential to enable Australia to participate fully in, and benefit from, the global knowledge economy. Labor acknowledges the importance of community based self-help groups and activities such as Men's Sheds, University of the Third Age, regional conservatoriums and community bands as forums for lifelong learning and engagement.
- 79 Labor will ensure Australian universities are open to all Australians, based on principles of merit and equity. Labor recognises the important role of higher education in shaping a fairer, more socially-inclusive society and is committed to promoting greater participation in tertiary education by Australians from lower income backgrounds and from regional, remote and Indigenous backgrounds.
- 80 Labor supports the role that higher education plays in improving the quality of our lives by fostering higher learning. Labor believes that the pursuit of knowledge is an important end in itself, and will continue to support the autonomy of public universities and the principle of academic independence that underpins higher learning.
- 81 Labor recognises that excellence in higher education is vital to enable Australia to achieve other key objectives, including environmental sustainability, greater understanding of other cultures, improved engagement with our region and building a stronger framework of our democracy.
- 82 Labor will:
- steadily increase levels of national investment in higher education as part of a funding framework that at least maintains the value of public funding for teaching and research in public universities
 - work towards a national target of 40 per cent of 25–34 year olds holding bachelors degree or higher by 2025, by ensuring that future funding for Australia's public universities is responsive to student demand
 - work towards the achievement of a national target of 20 per cent of university undergraduate enrolments made up of low socio-economic background students by 2020, through support and resourcing for innovative programs to assist universities to attract, support and retain students from under-represented groups
 - support a joined-up tertiary sector to make it easier for students with VET qualifications to articulate into higher education degree programs to build their skills
 - work towards the closing of the gaps in Indigenous participation and retention in higher education for Indigenous students and Indigenous academic staff
 - provide access to university for students with disabilities through innovative programs that support universities to promote and disability access
 - recognise and support the important role that regional universities and campuses play in making higher educational opportunities available to regional students and in the development and support of regional communities
 - support strong, effective oversight of the international education sector, with the protection of international students at its core, through a risk-based regulatory framework, independent scrutiny and quality assurance
 - support universities in planning for their future academic workforce needs in a growing higher education system
 - focus on the quality of educational outcomes in higher education, rather than interfering in the internal management of universities
 - Labor strongly opposes the introduction and use of full fee degrees for undergraduate courses in Australian universities.

- 83 Labor recognises that financial costs and pressures act as a barrier to participation in tertiary education. Labor strongly supports HECS-HELP and related student loan programs that ensure greater participation in tertiary education by allowing students to defer the cost of their studies until they are earning a decent income. Labor recognises that Australian students make a significant contribution to the cost of their education and will ensure that HECS contributions do not create financial disincentives to study. Labor also supports a strong, sustainable and targeted system of student income support that provides greater assistance to Australian students who need it most. Under Labor governments, students who do not have the means to support themselves during their university study will be provided with adequate support.
- 84 Labor strongly supports student involvement in the management of their university communities and in university decision-making processes. Labor believes that it is important that funding is restored for student-run services and independent advocacy. Labor will support students in the creation of democratic, student-run representative bodies and safeguard the right for students to voluntarily organise themselves on campus. Labor believes that good student amenities and services like childcare, health services, counselling, advocacy, and sporting facilities are vital to the quality of students' experience on campus and should be securely and adequately funded.
- 85 Labor supports the potential of flexible delivery and online learning, using technologies and community spaces to create and support access to learning, particularly in regional communities.