



23 June 2016

Lisa Annese
Chief Executive Officer
Diversity Council Australia
Level 1, 225 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Annese,

Thank you for your correspondence of 7 June 2016 seeking Labor's response to Diversity Council Australia's pre-election survey. Our responses are provided below.

1. Enabling women's workforce participation

- a) ***The availability, affordability and accessibility of childcare is an issue frequently raised by DCA members and other employers as a major challenge, especially in relation to parents returning to paid work following parental leave. Our research found nearly 95% of employers said access to and availability of affordable childcare presented difficulties for their employees. Can you outline how your Party would address this issue?***

Labor has a proud history of early education reform, and we are driven to build on this platform.

A Shorten Labor Government will deliver child care support that is fairer and will make early education and care more affordable for families.

Under Labor's plan:

- Low and middle income families will benefit from an increase to the Child Care Benefit of 15 per cent.
- Every one of the 813,000 families that rely on the Child Care Benefit will be better off – an increase up to \$31 per child per week, or up to \$1,627 per year, will provide much needed relief for the family budget.
- The annual cap on the Child Care Rebate will be increased from \$7,500 to \$10,000 per child, leaving families up to \$2,500 per child per year better off.
- 107,800 families who would otherwise reach the Child Care Rebate cap this financial year won't have to choose between paying double fees, or dropping out of the workforce.

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Labor's plan also includes:

- Cracking down on unjustified price increases – New transparency and accountability standards, along with extra powers to investigate unjustified price increases.
- Supporting flexible Family Day Care – Investing an additional \$50 million to support improvements to the Family Day Care system, including flexible options for families and enhancing the education, investigation and compliance programs.
- Better services for Indigenous children and children in remote areas – Increasing support for children in Budget Base Funded Services by 15 per cent, in line with the increase to the Child Care Benefit.
- Valuing our early education workforce - \$150 million investment towards developing the early education workforce – developing a new Early Years' Workforce Strategy, and establishing a national Educator Professional Development Program. Labor will also make submissions to the Fair Work Commission proceedings in support of professional wages for early childhood educators.

To help tackle waiting lists, Labor will:

- Invest \$100 million over three years from 2017-18 so services in areas of very high demand can expand – creating more places where families need them. We will target areas of high or rapidly growing demand, with waiting lists in the local area, and priority will be given to community and not-for-profit services which would otherwise not be able to expand.
- Commit \$63.2 million over three years from 2017-18 to establish or expand up to 1,200 Outside School Hours Care services. Grants of up to \$50,000 will be made available. Services must be in areas of high demand, have waiting lists or be in areas where Outside School Hours Care is currently not available.

b) *Can you outline your Party's policy in relation to paid parental leave for mothers, as well as fathers and other parents?*

Labor introduced Australia's first national Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme in 2011, designed so that government and employer contributions combined could help new parents spend as close to 26 weeks at home with their newborn as possible.

Labor's paid parental leave scheme gives eligible new parents 18 weeks' pay at the National Minimum Wage. This is a modest and affordable scheme that appropriately targets assistance to women on low and middle incomes. About 75 per cent of parents receiving Labor's paid parental leave scheme are on incomes of between \$10,000 and \$70,000 a year.

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Labor also introduced Dad and Partner Pay – two weeks government funded pay to dads or partners caring for a newborn or recently adopted child.

In the 2015 Budget the Abbott-Turnbull Government announced they would cut Paid Parental Leave entitlement.

Ministers in the Abbott-Turnbull Government even labelled women who get paid parental leave from their employers ‘rorters’ and ‘fraudsters’ and employers who want to support their staff as ‘scammers’.

Malcolm Turnbull locked in these cuts to Paid Parental Leave in the 2016 Budget. These cuts, which will affect around 80,000 families with new babies are scheduled to begin after the election. A Shorten Labor Government will reverse Malcolm Turnbull’s unfair cuts to Paid Parental Leave. Under Labor’s plan, each year 80,000 families with new babies will be as much as \$11,800 better off than they would be under the Liberals.

c) *What policies do you have that support genuine shared responsibility for parenting, care and other domestic responsibilities between men and women?*

Labor introduced Dad and Partner Pay as part of the PPL package, providing two weeks of government funded paid leave to dads or partners caring for a newborn or recently adopted child.

According to the review of PPL, Dad and Partner Pay is leading to significantly more men taking time out from work after the birth of their new baby.

Labor’s Fair Work Act in 2009 provided a legal right to request flexible working arrangements in a range of circumstances, including being a parent or having responsibility for the care of a child, without gender distinction, so dads can access that provision too.

Labor also introduced the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Act) which aims to improve and promote equality for both women and men in the workplace and established the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. We continue to strongly support the Agency’s work assisting employers in promoting and improving gender equality in the workplace.

d) *What policies and programs do you have to increase women in leadership roles and / or enhance the representation of women in corporate Australia?*

Labor is committed to increasing the representation of women in parliament and in the private sector.

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Last year, Labor's National Conference amended our Party's rules to ensure that by 2025, 50 per cent of Labor's members of Parliament will be women.

In Government, Labor had a target of reaching 40 per cent of female representation on government boards, which we reached in 2013.

A Shorten Labor Government will set a target of 50 per cent representation of women on all Australian Government boards by the end of the first term.

Labor will continue to prioritise the need for high level participation in leadership and work with the ASX 100 to raise the engagement of women on private boards.

Only Labor is committed to increasing the representation of Australian women in leadership and decision-making roles.

e) Science, technology and mathematics (STEM) have been identified as essential requirements for a future workforce, yet women remain under-represented in these fields. What are your policies to encourage and enable women's workforce participation in STEM?

With women making up only 28 per cent of workers in information, communications and technology (ICT), Labor recognises that if Australia doesn't increase women's participation in science, technology and mathematics (STEM), it will limit our nation's capacity to capture and embrace the opportunities of the digital economy, let alone meet the projected demand for ICT skills across industry.

The lack of diversity will affect our ability to innovate as a nation. On top of that, women could be left out economically, shut out from influential positions in industry and government due to lack of relevant skills and experience.

That is why a Shorten Labor Government will introduce Girls into Code – a \$4.5 million grants program to support organisations that promote, encourage and inspire girls to learn code.

Labor's Girls into Code grants program will facilitate mentoring and access to role models, connect coding programs to schools, and create opportunities for girls to build up their confidence and showcase their talent in coding and ICT skills.

Labor will also make a university STEM degree more accessible than ever before, representing a major step towards delivering the high-skilled graduate workforce our country needs.

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Labor will offer 20,000 STEM Award Degrees a year for five years. Upon graduation, the entire HECS-HELP debt will be written off, meaning these students can graduate debt free.

The selection criteria will reflect Labor's equity objectives, targeting increasing enrolments in underrepresented groups like women.

2. Domestic violence

a) *What are your policies in relation to supporting and protecting victims of domestic violence in the workplace?*

A Shorten Labor Government will provide for five days paid domestic and family violence leave in the National Employment Standards.

Those who have access to the leave entitlement will retain their job and income, which gives women choice, reduces isolation, and helps them to care for their children and provides them with a safe home environment.

It is vital for people who have experienced family and domestic violence that their workplace understands the impact violence has on their lives, and for leave arrangements to be handled sensitively and confidentially, which will happen as part of Labor's plan.

Labor will make sure domestic and family violence leave becomes a workplace right.

b) *How will you drive cultural change on this issue?*

Labor will provide the necessary educational support to employers, particularly small businesses, to implement the mandatory arrangements. Labor believes businesses, which already offer a variety of forms of leave, including sick leave, annual leave, and long service leave, will see a reduction in lost revenue associated with absenteeism and decreased productivity.

Providing those impacted by domestic violence with time to attend court appearances and related appointments, to seek legal advice and make relocation arrangements will contribute to employees returning to work and contributing to business productivity.

Labor will commission a National Crisis Summit within 100 days of coming to government. A National Crisis Summit on violence against women is required for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to agree to urgently implement coordinated judicial and social services reform within their areas of responsibility to better deal with family violence. A national crisis summit on violence against women is the best way for stakeholders to openly and transparently lay down the key policy challenges for addressing family violence.

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3. Pay equity

a) *What action would you take in Government to close the gender pay gap?*

Labor's commitment to closing the gender pay gap led us to enshrine the principle of pay equity, not just pay equality, in the Fair Work Act in 2009. Labor supported the Australian Services Union pay equity case before the Fair Work Commission on behalf of community sector workers, which resulted in a pay rise for about 200,000 community workers.

In contrast the Abbott-Turnbull Government made a submission against the United Voice Union's action on pay equity for childcare workers – a case which is now in limbo since the Commission raised the bar on proving pay inequity after the Abbott-Turnbull Government's intervention. A Shorten Labor Government would support early childhood educators' claim for equal pay in this case.

The Abbott-Turnbull Government also tried to water down Workplace Gender Equality Reporting. Labor fought hard, and successfully, to make sure the Australian Government continued to measure workplace gender equality.

A Shorten Labor Government will allocate \$3.8 million to Working Women's Centres to continue the outstanding work they do delivering free-specialist employment advice services for vulnerable women.

Women make up a disproportionate share of workers in both the retail and hospitality sectors and will thus be disproportionately affected by cuts to penalty rates. Labor has taken the unprecedented step for an Opposition of making a submission to the Fair Work Commission arguing against cuts to penalty rates – the only party in this election to have done so.

A Shorten Labor Government will intervene in proceedings before the Fair Work Commission in favour of retaining penalty rates.

Labor will establish Women's Advisory Committees and Diversity Units in all Federal Government Departments to set and report on gender targets for all portfolio areas. The Office for Women will work with Department Secretaries to ensure that all public service leaders' key performance indicators specifically include diversity and inclusion as part of their performance review and promotion processes.

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b) *What action would you take to close the gender gap in superannuation savings?*

In Government, Labor introduced the Low Income Superannuation Contribution (LISC), to help low income earners save for retirement. The majority of those who benefited were women – 2.1 million women, or one in two working women.

The Abbott-Turnbull Government sought to abolish the LISC, but failed due to a determined campaign by Labor and community groups, and has now backed away from those plans.

A Shorten Labor Government will amend the Sex Discrimination Act to ensure companies are able to make higher superannuation payments for their female employees when they wish to do so. We will ask the Australian Human Rights Commission to advise on the most appropriate legislative approach and to develop guidelines and advice for any organisation contemplating additional superannuation payments for women.

4. *People with disability*

c) *How would you improve the employment opportunities of people with disability?*

A Shorten Labor Government will deliver three concrete actions in our first term to help get more people with disability into meaningful work.

- We will support businesses and not-for-profit organisations to develop their own Disability Employment Action Plans. These Action Plans will allow organisations to:
 - Identify existing barriers to employment for people with disability in their workplace;
 - Improve recruitment policies and procedures so they are more inclusive; and
 - Outline specific strategies and targets to boost employment and training opportunities for people with disability within their organisation.
- We will seek to trial a new approach in some National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) locations to better integrate Disability Employment Services for NDIS participants. In selected trial locations, people with disability who want to work will be able to choose their own employment supports as part of their individual plan. A Shorten Labor Government will invest \$5 million over two years in these trials, which will also help inform the rollout of the new Disability Employment Services model. Labor is also committed to making sure people who are employed at an Australian Disability Enterprise can also access job search assistance through Disability Employment Services.

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- We will task the Australian Public Service Commission with developing a series of employment targets for people with disability, in partnership with different departments and agencies and in consultation with disability stakeholders. The employment targets will be national, departmental and agency-specific and will include targets for leadership positions. Commonwealth departments and agencies will also be expected to develop or update existing employment action plans to help make sure these targets are met.

5. *What policies do you have to support workers who are also carers (caring for people with disability etc)?*

Labor has a proud record of supporting the 2.7 million unpaid carers in Australia who work tirelessly every day to care for children, sick or elderly family members and people with disability. In recognition of that contribution, in 2009 Labor developed and then delivered the National Carer Recognition Framework, a comprehensive framework of recognition of the value of those Australians who care.

The framework comprises two pillars: the Carer Recognition Act in 2010 and the National Carer Strategy, both of which aim to improve supports for carers and acknowledge the vital social and economic contribution that carers make to Australian society.

In 2009, as part of Labor's historic increase to the pension system, carers in receipt of the Carer Payment or Parenting Payment received an increase of \$30 a week to the base rate of their payment. Thanks to Labor, the Carers Payment is now linked to the highest of Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, CPI or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index, meaning it will always keep pace with the standard of living.

Labor also established the annual Carer Supplement, providing eligible carers with \$600 per year. In 2013, Labor amended the Fair Work Act to include carers, as defined by the carer recognition act, as eligible employees with the legal right to request flexible working arrangements.

In 2013, Labor delivered the NDIS, the biggest social reform since Medicare. When fully rolled out, the NDIS will provide support to around 460,000 people with disability. It will also completely transform the lives of families and carers of people with disability.

6. *What policies do you have to drive workforce participation for Indigenous Australians?*

When Indigenous students achieve Year 12 or its equivalent, there is almost no disparity in employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

A Shorten Labor Government will invest an additional \$100 million to support Indigenous students to succeed at school, and boost the number of Indigenous teachers.

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This is part of Labor's plan to help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Labor's Your Child. Our Future plan will make sure that Indigenous students get the targeted support we know makes a difference to their education – an additional \$96 million go towards improving outcomes for Indigenous students around Australia over school years 2018 and 2019.

In addition, Labor will provide \$4.8 million over the forward estimates to fund 100 scholarships per year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.

Labor will partner with the Stars Foundation to empower Indigenous girls through education and gender equity, providing 7155 student places in a program that supports Indigenous girls and young women at risk of disengaging from education, providing full-time school-based mentors including sport, art, music, dance and community experiences to achieve targets and outcomes.

As well, a Shorten Labor Government will double the size of the Indigenous Ranger program. Indigenous rangers are role models in their communities, providing a pathway from welfare to work that has been shown to improve Indigenous health, incomes, crime rates and incarceration rates. It is a program that provides training and real, good jobs in some of the most remote and disadvantaged Indigenous communities in Australia.

Labor is proud of its environmental record and we are proud of our record in tackling Indigenous disadvantage. Our commitment to double the size of the Indigenous Ranger Program continues our record in both areas.

7. What policies do you have to drive workforce participation and retention of mature age workers?

In government, Labor was proud to establish an Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians.

The Panel observed that the challenge for the nation — governments, industry and individuals — is to adapt to the growing and diverse older population in a way that captures and realises the opportunities.

The challenge is to re-shape workplaces, communities and society to facilitate the contribution of senior Australians rather than to reinforce outdated approaches that create barriers to their participation and lead to disengagement and social isolation.

Unfortunately, the Abbott-Turnbull Government axed the Panel in November 2013. Labor is committed to ensuring that older Australians can participate to their full capacity and potential in the economy and in community life.

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In Government we amended the Fair Work Act to ensure that older workers aged 55 and over are eligible employees with a legal right to request flexible working arrangements.

In opposition, Labor supported the Abbott Government's policy measures to offer incentives for employers to hire mature workers back into the workforce, including the Restart Programme wage subsidy - a payment of up to \$10,000 for employers who hire eligible mature age job seekers for 12 months or more.

The plight of mature aged workers was identified throughout Labor Shadow Minister for Families and Payments Jenny Macklin's recent publication 'Growing Together':
<http://cdn.australianlabor.com.au/documents/Growing-Together.pdf>

A Shorten Labor Government will develop an aged care workforce strategy. Labor is committed to a national strategy for an age-friendly Australia under the direction of a dedicated Minister, Shayne Neumann, and a whole-of-government approach to the challenges and opportunities presented by an ageing population.

In addition to the restart subsidy, under Labor's New Jobs Tax Cut, small businesses will be able to claim a tax deduction of up to \$20,000 per worker to offset the wages of up to five new employees.

Just like the previous Labor Government's instant asset write-off, businesses will be able to claim the New Jobs Tax Cut as part of their regular tax return. This minimises paperwork for busy employers

Priority workers for the New Jobs Tax Cut include unemployed people over the age of 55, as carers returning to the workforce. It will help up to 30,000 Australians into new jobs each year.

8. Cultural background

a) *What policies do you have that enable workforce participation of people from culturally diverse backgrounds, including in relation to their representation in leadership roles?*

For too long the economic contribution of migration and multiculturalism to Australia has been significantly undervalued.

By funding migrant support properly in the short term, Australia will be better off over the long term. By ensuring our programs and policies continue to improve, more new migrants can fully participate.

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Australia is one of the most diverse societies across the globe. This was no accident and has been the result of hard work. We cannot stop now. Promoting social cohesion and economic inclusion will see the multicultural dividend grow into the future.

A Shorten Labor Government will renew investment in Australian multiculturalism, with \$28.3 million of new funding to support social cohesion and economic inclusion.

Labor will re-establish an Office for Multicultural Affairs in the Department of Social Services. The Mandate of the office will include workplace diversity.

A Shorten Labor Government will introduce an Anonymous CV application process for new graduates and entry-level applicants for roles in the Australian Public Service.

This means new applications will be de-identified to remove references to a person's gender, ethnicity and age when it progresses through the assessment and evaluation process for new roles.

This will ensure that positions are filled on the basis of a person's merit rather than influenced by any unconscious bias. In turn, this process will promote confidence for applicants from diverse backgrounds and over time strengthen the Australian Public Service.

The Office for Women will also work with Department Secretaries to ensure that all public service leaders key performance indicators specifically include diversity and inclusion as part of their performance review and promotion processes.

b) Given the importance of Australia's relationship with Asia, what action will you take to improve Asia capability for the future workforce?

Labor recognises the importance of linguistic diversity to the cultural and economic health of our community.

In government, Labor released the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper – a comprehensive, long-term plan for Australia's engagement in our region.

It included an ambition for Asian literacy and languages to become a core part of the Australian school system. Sadly, the vision of the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper was abandoned by the Liberals but replaced with nothing.

A Shorten Labor Government will award 100 scholarships a year to Australian school teachers so they can further develop their Asian language skills.

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The scholarships, worth up to \$20,000 each, will allow our teachers to get advanced language experience in Asian countries. All qualified Australian school teachers who teach an Asian language will be eligible to apply.

Recipients will be able to use their scholarships for things such as intensive Asian language courses, or teaching opportunities in Asian schools.

A Shorten Labor Government will re-establish an Office for Multicultural Affairs in the Department of Social Services, with a mandate which includes language services.

9. What are your policies to prevent discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation of LGBTI+ people and their families, both in the workforce and more generally?

Labor will support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex Australians and ensure they are safe, valued and respected.

In 2007, Labor audited Commonwealth laws to identify discrimination against same sex couples. In 2008, Labor passed laws to remove discrimination from 84 pieces of Commonwealth legislation. In 2013, Labor amended the Sex Discrimination Act to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

In 2013 Labor amended the Sex Discrimination Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or intersex status for the first time ever under Federal law. This built on the earlier work of the Labor Government which amended close to 100 laws to remove discrimination against LGBTI Australians.

The ALP has a proud history of delivering real reforms for the LGBTI community that is unmatched by any other party standing for election in 2016.

A Shorten Labor Government will appoint a permanent, dedicated full-time LGBTI Discrimination Commissioner, to ensure that the rights of LGBTI Australians have a new champion, and lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex Australians can feel safer, more secure and more included in Australian society.

This reflects the fact that LGBTI Australians continue to face discrimination in many areas of their life.

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While Labor understands that this will not put an end to the discrimination experienced by many LGBTI Australians, having a dedicated Discrimination Commissioner is an important next step in the fight for a more equal Australia.

The Australian Labor Party strongly supports the Safe Schools Program as a vital tool to combat schoolyard bullying. Labor believes that all students have a right to be safe and secure at school regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Labor funded the national roll-out of Safe Schools and we will continue to tackle bullying and discrimination.

10. Do you have any proposed measures to enable the mainstreaming of flexible work for all people?

Recognising the importance of flexible working arrangements, in 2009 Labor provided the legal right for employees with responsibility for caring for a child to request flexible arrangements in the Fair Work Act. A 2012 independent review found that Labor's flexible working arrangement provisions were working effectively, with the vast majority of requests being granted when made.

In 2013 Labor extended the eligibility to request flexible working arrangements to include more employees, including carers, employees with a disability, mature-age employees, and employees experiencing family violence or providing support and assistance to a member of their immediate family or household experiencing family violence.

Providing these opportunities means that workers and employers have a framework for discussing employees' needs for flexible work arrangements across a range of circumstances. It benefits employees who may otherwise feel they have no choice but to leave employment, and benefits employers who retain skilled and experienced staff and benefits the broader economy and community by providing pathways for increased workforce participation and social inclusion for particular groups.

Labor believes the Australian Public Service can be a leader in providing flexible work environments for employees, without compromising job quality or conditions of employment. A Shorten Labor Government will immediately begin work with the Australian Public Service as the Community and Public Sector Union to investigate how we can promote more flexible working arrangements across the Australian Public Service.

These changes will be achieved through constructive consultation that gives staff a genuine say in managing their work and personal responsibilities.

Labor also introduced the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Act) which aims to improve and promote equality for both women and men in the workplace and established the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. We continue to strongly support the Agency's work assisting employers in promoting and improving workplace flexibility.

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Thank you for writing on these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

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