



20 June 2016

Dr Brian Babington  
Chief Executive Officer  
Families Australia  
Via email: [admin@familiesaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@familiesaustralia.org.au)

Dear Dr Babington

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions of concern to Families Australia and its members.

### **Q 1 Raise levels of financial support for child safety and wellbeing**

Labor reaffirms our commitment to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 and commits to continuing and enhancing the work outlined in the Third Action Plan under the National Framework.

The protection of our children must be a priority for all governments. While statutory child protection remains the responsibility of State and Territory Governments, Labor believes that the Commonwealth Government must play a role in leading collaboration and reform.

The Commonwealth Government also has an important role in ensuring children are safe and well through the provision of a range of universal and secondary supports and services.

Labor is committed to the right of every child to a safe, happy and healthy childhood. For this reason, in Government, Labor led the development of the first ever National Framework for the Protection of Australia's Children with States and Territories and the non-government sector.

Labor's leadership and work with the States and Territories and non-government sector, helped deliver significant achievements, including the establishment of the first National Children's Commissioner, the development of National Standards for Out-Of-Home care and the design of changes to the Transitioning to Independent Living Allowance.

In spite of the significant work that went into the establishment of the National Framework and the implementation of the First and Second Action Plans under the Framework, it is clear that the current system is still failing many children and families.

Labor was concerned by the delay in the release of the Third Action Plan under the National Framework and the loss of momentum caused by this delay. Labor is committed to ensuring that addressing abuse and neglect and improving outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care is once again a priority for a Shorten Labor Government, as it was under the previous Labor Government.

**BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST**

## **Q 2 Increase efforts to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians with particular regard to child protection.**

In 2008 Labor established an ambitious framework for tackling Indigenous disadvantage, with six targets to close the gap in health, education and employment outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

Labor underpinned efforts to close the gap with unprecedented levels of investment through National Partnership Agreements to ensure a nationally coordinated approach to achieving these targets and reducing Indigenous inequality.

This year's Closing the Gap Report showed some progress in reducing infant mortality and possible improvement in Year 12 attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Many challenges remain, with many of the targets' dates fast approaching. It is important to refocus our efforts on achieving the Closing the Gap targets by working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address their unique challenges and needs.

To build on our past commitments, a Shorten Labor Government will deliver a fairer approach to funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services to reflect the priorities and meet the needs of local communities and to better align funding priorities with the Closing the Gap targets.

Labor recognises the diversity of Indigenous Australia and the need to focus on partnership building in remote and rural areas as well as in the growth communities in our cities and regional areas. Together, we will develop a system that meets the needs and priorities of local communities and provides flexibility to support place-based initiatives to improve the social, economic, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A Shorten Labor Government will align funding priorities with the Closing the Gap targets, which provides a comprehensive framework to track progress in reducing the disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

Labor will not put organisations through another chaotic blanket competitive tender process under the Liberals' disastrous Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

Labor will replace the IAS with a Closing the Gap Strategy, with a funding process aligned with the targets under the Closing the Gap Framework.

A funding process will be developed which:

- Engages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and representatives in the development of new funding guidelines.
- Replaces blanket competitive tendering with consultative, community needs-based processes clearly aligned with the Closing the Gap framework.
- Ensures longer term funding certainty for organisations.
- Prioritises investment in capacity building and support for smaller community controlled organisations.

- Provides weighting for Indigenous organisations, recognising their ability to deliver enhanced outcomes through connection to their local communities and ensuring community ownership of resources and priorities.
- Ensures that where it is appropriate for a mainstream service to receive funding to deliver an Indigenous program or service, demonstration of cross-cultural competency is required as a key selection criterion.
- Removes the requirement for certain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to incorporate under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act, instead providing a choice of corporate regulator for all Indigenous organisations. This will maintain high standards of governance, transparency and accountability while ensuring organisations are treated equally in funding processes.

In addition, and related to child well-being, a Shorten Labor Government will invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early education services to give kids the best start in life.

Labor will invest in the expansion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early learning services, to build capacity to deliver quality early education and address the growing need for access to early learning and child care services.

Labor recognises the importance of stable, long-term programs that support children from pre-birth, with integrated education, health and family supports in an accessible and culturally safe setting.

That is why a Shorten Labor Government will build on its investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres, providing \$57 million to support the expansion of places and the delivery of a range of holistic services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Funding will be made available to each of the 38 Children and Family Centres. We will work with services and communities to identify the level of support required to achieve common objectives, including:

- Level of need and demand for services.
- Local priorities to enable tailored and community-responsive services.
- Remoteness of service delivery.

We will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, families and communities to build capacity, improve access and quality of services, and meet the individual needs of local communities.

The evidence is clear – the social and physical environment that young children are exposed to impacts on their future health, education and employment opportunities.

This investment will ensure that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have access to health services, from prenatal care right up until the day they begin school.

It is important to ensure that families and communities have ownership over the priorities and goals for early years and the plans to achieve them.

Labor is investing in Indigenous-led services that deliver quality culturally competent services and invest in employment opportunities for the local community.

Labor will support integrated service delivery models that deliver a range of support services to their community, improving health, social and educational outcomes.

By ensuring the long term sustainability of these flexible, locally tailored services, we will ensure a healthier and happier future for generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

### **Q 3 Better support for adult survivors of child sexual and other abuse in institutions.**

A Shorten Labor Government will establish a National Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.

For too long in this country, children in the care of institutions were subjected to appalling sexual abuse and terrible violence.

No country should stand by and let this happen. No country should stand by and let perpetrators get away with these crimes. Most importantly, no country should stand by and do nothing to help with the healing of survivors.

The establishment a National Redress Scheme is a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in its final report into redress and civil litigation.

The Royal Commission determined that around 60,000 survivors of child sexual abuse should be given access to redress. Labor is committed to ensuring people who have survived horrific abuse at the hands of institutions that should have been responsible for their care get the redress they deserve.

The Royal Commission has recommended that appropriate redress for survivors include direct personal responses, counselling and psychological care as well as monetary payments.

The Commission recommended the cost of redress be met by the perpetrators of the abuse, with Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments acting as a funder of last resort.

Labor has announced that it will invest \$33 million to implement the National Redress Scheme.

This includes an initial \$20 million contribution to establish the National Redress Agency, as well as a National Redress Advisory Council to work with all governments and institutions on the development and operation of the scheme.

The National Redress Advisory Council will include representatives of:

- Survivor advocacy and support groups.
- Non-government institutions, particularly those that are expected to be required to respond to a significant number of claims for redress.
- People with expertise in issues affecting survivors with disabilities.
- People with expertise in issues of particular importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors.
- People with expertise in psychological and legal issues relevant to survivors.

Labor established the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to give the thousands of people affected by these evil crimes an opportunity to finally be heard.

The establishment of a National Redress Scheme is the next important step.

Labor will continue to work with survivors, their families and advocates to do what we can to support them on this process of healing.

For more information please visit [www.alp.org.au/nationalredressscheme](http://www.alp.org.au/nationalredressscheme)

### **Growing Together – Labor agenda to tackle inequality**

There are a range of additional measures that demonstrate Labor's commitment to tackling inequality and that address the key elements you have highlighted in your correspondence. *Growing Together* is Labor's overarching policy agenda for tackling inequality, developed under the leadership of the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Shadow Minister for Families and Payments and Disability Reform.

Labor recognises that after a quarter-century of continuous economic growth, inequality is at a 75 year high. In Australia, 2.5 million people live below the poverty line and hundreds of thousands of people are unemployed. For all the success Australia has achieved, the rewards are not as widely spread or as fairly shared as we like to imagine.

Too many Australians want work but cannot find it. Unemployment is unacceptably high in parts of the country, and for particular groups – young people, people with disability and Indigenous Australians. Increasingly, underemployment, insecure work and low wages growth is making it harder for Australians to build stable lives.

Inequality is rising – undermining living standards, sustainable growth and social cohesion.

Perhaps for the first time in our history, we cannot be confident that the next generation of Australians will be better off than we are. Understandably, many Australians are anxious about what the future holds for their families and their country.

This is a national debate we need to have. Therefore, following extensive consultation and research Labor has outlined our agenda for tackling inequality: *Growing Together*.

*Growing Together* tells the real story of life in Australia and offers new policy thinking and a new agenda, putting inclusive growth and social investment at the centre of Australia's future.

With the latest evidence and contributions from some of the country's leading policy thinkers, it provides a detailed assessment of Australian society today, and offers some ideas for change.

Labor has identified seven key pillars of social policy. These are not the only areas that require our attention, but they are critical if we are going to equip every Australian with the skills to adapt to the rapid change taking place in our economy, and seize the opportunities that lie ahead. By prioritising these key areas, Labor is outlining a new agenda for addressing inequality and building a fairer society.

The seven pillars for success are:

- Putting Jobs First – we need economic and social policies that focus on putting jobs first. Creating decent and secure jobs should be a key priority of a Labor government.
- Investing in the Early Years – we need to invest in the early years of life. When children are happy, healthy and learning, they have every chance of succeeding in the future.
- Quality Education Across Life – we need to deliver quality education across life, so that young people are prepared for the jobs of the future, and working Australians can successfully transition to new careers.
- Balancing Work, Care and Family – we need to support Australians to balance work, care and family, so that people are better equipped to respond to the competing responsibilities of life.
- Supporting Longevity – we need to encourage and support longevity so older Australians can continue contributing to society, and are rewarded for all they've given us.
- Building Stronger Communities – we need to build stronger communities to improve social cohesion and ensure local people have a real say in the decisions and debates that directly affect their lives.
- Modernising Policy Development and Governance – we need to modernise policy development and governance to make sure our investments are smart investments that deliver results.

Together, these represent a new agenda for tackling inequality in Australia. *Growing Together* tells the real story of life in Australia. The report can be downloaded here:

<http://cdn.australianlabor.com.au/documents/Growing-Together.pdf>

You can read more about Labor's measures to tackle inequality and disadvantage here:

[http://www.100positivepolicies.org.au/#policy-cat-tackling\\_inequality\\_and\\_disadvantage](http://www.100positivepolicies.org.au/#policy-cat-tackling_inequality_and_disadvantage).

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions of concern to Families Australia and its members.

Yours sincerely

**ALP Information Services Unit**

**Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters**

[www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)