



FEDERAL LABOR LEADER

JOINT STATEMENT BY FEDERAL LABOR LEADER MARK LATHAM AND SHADOW MINISTER FOR WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND PUBLIC SERVICE CRAIG EMERSON

Labor briefs ACTU on putting families first

Labor will today brief the ACTU Executive on its plans to ease the financial pressure on Australian families, and provide better jobs for working Australians.

We want to help families balance the demands of being both a good parent and a good employee. They shouldn't have to make a choice between the two.

A Latham Labor Government will also put in place policies that provide cooperation and productivity in the workplace.

We also understand that keeping education and health services affordable and accessible eases the financial burden on families.

We will brief the ACTU Executive on our policies, including:

WORK AND FAMILY

Baby Care Payment: Worth \$3000 in 2005 and rising to \$5,380 by 2010, Labor's Baby Care Payment delivers financial help to families when they need it most – when babies are born and family budgets face additional costs and

pressures. The payment will be tax free and available to 90 percent of new mums who are either working or at home.

Working Parents: Labor will legislate to ensure that the Australian Industrial Relations Commission takes into account the need to find a better work and family balance, and will support parents who want to return to work on a part-time basis after taking parental leave. We have done this in a way that avoids placing an unreasonable burden on small business.

AWAs: Labor will abolish Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs). Employees will retain the right to negotiate common law agreements but, unlike AWAs, these can't be used to undercut award conditions. We will restore the right of all working Australians to bargain collectively.

JOB SECURITY

Casuals: Labor will legislate to ensure the Australian Industrial Relations Commission takes into account job security and the need to prevent the misuse of casual employment. This will give regular, long-term casuals a better chance of converting to permanent work.

Employee entitlements: Labor will protect 100 per cent of employee entitlements in the event of employer insolvency, with no additional cost to small business.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Needs-based School Funding: Labor believes in funding all Australian schools – government or non-government – on the basis of need. Labor guarantees the overall funding level for the non-government sector will be maintained. Needy government and non-government schools will receive additional funding.

Aim Higher: Labor plans to give more Australians a TAFE and university qualification by creating 20,000 new university and 20,000 new TAFE places. Labor will invest \$2.34 billion to rebuild, reform and expand our universities and TAFEs to ensure a quality education for all. Labor will keep university education affordable by reversing the Howard Government's 25 percent HECS hike.

HEALTH CARE

Bulkbilling: Labor built Medicare and is committed to rebuilding it for the future. A Labor Government will raise bulkbilling rates from 67 to 80 per cent by increasing the Medicare patient rebate for all bulkbilled consultations by an

average of \$5 and making other targeted incentive payments to bulk billing doctors.

Labor will also introduce 100 Medicare Teams for health hotspots – areas where bulkbilling is in free fall. Medicare Teams will offer families access to bulkbilling and ease pressures on local hospital emergency wards. Hotspots will have up to 4 Medicare Teams which will consist of two doctors and a practice nurse – providing an estimated 56,000 consultations a year.

Dental Care: Currently more than 500,000 Australians, most of them elderly, are on waiting lists to get their teeth fixed. Labor will invest \$300 million in Australian Dental Care over four years. This will provide up to 1,300,000 extra dental procedures. Pension and concession card holders will be entitled to free check-ups and subsidised dental treatments, restoration and dentures.

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