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Rudd's 2007 election promises: Indigenous affairs



ALP PROMISES CHECKLIST

The ALP made an awful lot of promises to Indigenous Australians in the lead-up to the 2007 federal election. So many, in fact, that we decided to send NIT reporter AMY McQUIRE on a hunt to find out just how many 'new dawns' are on the horizon for black Australia. What resulted is the most comprehensive list of Indigenous affairs promises made by an incoming government ever to be published. And best of all, we've included a handy checklist so that you can 'play along at home' (or at work) by marking off promises as they're kept. Or not.

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS

AS PART of the \$200 million Australian Federal Police (AFP) enhancement plan, Labor will implement an Indigenous Australian AFP recruitment strategy to boost Indigenous numbers in the AFP.

PROMISE KEPT

PROMISE BROKEN

LABOR will commit \$10 million for the construction of a Remote Enterprise Centre to be built in Alice Springs, to connect remote enterprises to other companies for private investment and mentoring, and to help them to access government contracts and become export-ready.

LABOR will support companies that mentor, develop and do business with Indigenous enterprises.

LABOR will encourage partnerships between business and local communities to ensure the creation of sustainable jobs at fair rates of pay.

LABOR will work with state and territory governments to ensure coastal Indigenous community local fishing plans include opportunities for local Indigenous people to participate in industry.

LABOR will work with the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) and Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to ensure that their investment policies support the expansion of independent Indigenous businesses.

LABOR will investigate ways to maximise the returns of the Indigenous Land Fund.

CDEP

LABOR is committed to reforming CDEP to get more Indigenous people into industry-based training and jobs and make it available to all remote Indigenous communities, including in the Northern Territory.

NORTHERN Territory communities affected by the intervention will have CDEP made available to them.

NORTHERN Territory communities will have payments received under CDEP available for income quarantining.

LABOR will commit \$90 million over five years to train and employ up to 300 additional Indigenous rangers in Indigenous lands and waters.

LABOR supports measures such as intensive mentoring and wage subsidies to help Indigenous Australians into employment.

LABOR will encourage a training and industrial framework that applies to Indigenous employment and which encourages skills development.

LABOR is committed to developing job opportunities as an alternative to CDEP.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

AGED CARE

LABOR understands the need to provide culturally appropriate aged care services for older Indigenous Australians and older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and will promote the delivery of such services.

PROMISE
KEPT

PROMISE
BROKEN

USE OF ROYALTIES

LABOR will work with land councils and native title holders towards the better use of royalty monies.

NT ABORIGINAL BENEFITS ACCOUNT

LABOR will improve transparency and efficiency in the ABA and ensure it is focused on economic development by:

- streamlining application processes;
- requiring a five year strategy to be tabled in the Commonwealth parliament;
- ensuring ABA funds are not used to fund services that would normally be provided by government, develop a clear policy on the approval of low interest loans from the ABA;
- consulting with ABA committee members about the appointment of two external members with business expertise.

INDIGENOUS POLITICAL BODY

IN consultation with Indigenous people, Labor will establish a national representative body - different from ATSIC - to achieve greater accountability at all levels of government and to facilitate a real and honest conversation with government.

A Labor government will develop a strong political relationship with a new national representative body, and be accountable to it.

PERMIT SYSTEM

LABOR has promised to reinstitute the NT land permit system however, journalists and government officials will be exempted from permits.

EDUCATION

LABOR will halve the gap in reading and writing and numeracy achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within a decade. *NOTE: The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Yearbook reports that results for Indigenous students in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) were "consistently lower" than for non Indigenous students. Black students averaged a maths literacy score of 440, compared to 526 for white students.*

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

EDUCATION

LABOR will provide \$21.9 million over four years to expand intensive literacy and numeracy programs in Indigenous schools to help Aboriginal children develop strong reading and writing skills.

LABOR will provide \$60.6 million over four years to employ an additional 200 teachers in the Northern Territory.

LABOR will provide \$40.9 million over four years for three new secondary boarding colleges in the Northern Territory (\$15m of this money will be sought from the Indigenous Land Corporation).

LABOR will provide \$30 million to provide teachers to at least 2,000 Aboriginal kids not in school in the 73 Northern Territory 'prescribed' communities caught up in the NT intervention.

ALL Indigenous four-year-olds, will have access to 15 hours of government-run preschool for a minimum of 40 weeks per year.

LABOR will ensure health and development checks for every Indigenous child starting pre-school.

LABOR will ensure that all Indigenous children have access to health and early skills checks - hearing, sight, language - so that children are ready to learn.

LABOR will provide \$34.5 million so that every Indigenous student has an Individual Learning Plan, up to Year 10.

LABOR will provide \$1.5 million to all Australian secondary schools to invest in a trades wing. 'Trades Training Centres' will build training opportunities for Indigenous people through this initiative.

LABOR will develop vocational education and training models that acknowledge the community, cultural and educational needs of Indigenous people, including those in isolated communities.

MINDFUL of the particularly acute under-representation of Indigenous students in, and graduates from, universities and in line with Labor's commitment to bringing about permanent improvements to the lives of Indigenous people and their communities, Labor will develop particular policies and strategies and redress this situation.

LABOR has committed to increasing the number of black teachers by working with state and territory governments to develop effective incentives, support mechanisms and strategies for Indigenous education worker enrolments, recruitment, remuneration, career pathways and professional development strategies. *NOTE TO READERS: It's believed there are currently around 2,200 black teachers nationwide, although the figures are very much estimates. NIT is seeking to establish a definitive figure.*

AS well, Labor will work with teacher educators and with the teaching profession to ensure that all teachers enter the profession with a good understanding of Indigenous education issues and perspectives.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

INDIGENOUS HEALTH FUNDING

WITHIN a generation, Labor has committed to Indigenous and non-Indigenous children being able to expect the same health outcomes.

LABOR has committed to halving the gap in mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children under five within a decade. *NOTE: Currently, the national average Indigenous infant mortality rate is around three times higher than the non-Indigenous infant mortality rate.*

LABOR has a \$261 million plan to invest in the early years of Indigenous children nationwide. This includes:

- \$92.2 million to provide Indigenous mothers, babies and children with health care and early learning support during the early part of their pregnancy, through child birth and until their child reaches the age of eight.

- \$17.5 million be spent on supporting parenting skills education.

- \$10 million in accommodation facilities for Indigenous women who need to leave their communities temporarily to have their babies.

- Labor will seek \$75 million from state and territory governments to build comprehensive nurse-led home visiting services for Indigenous families.

- Labor has a \$10.3 million plan to eradicate rheumatic fever amongst Aboriginal children.

LABOR will provide \$10 million to upgrade and expand remote health care facilities.

LABOR will provide \$5 million to establish satellite renal dialysis facilities in remote communities.

LABOR will provide \$4.6 million for sexual assault counselling in remote areas.

LABOR will provide \$15.9 million for alcohol rehabilitation and diversion services in the Northern Territory.

HEALTH WORKFORCE

LABOR will ensure an appropriate supply and distribution of health care workers, with particular emphasis on increasing the numbers of Indigenous Australians at all levels of the health workforce.

IN particular, Labor will adhere to the principle of providing grant funding to state and territory health departments and Indigenous-controlled health services, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to fund comprehensive primary health care services for Indigenous people.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

HEALTH WORKFORCE

LABOR has promised that in order to improve Indigenous health outcomes, it will be necessary to increase health spending, with an emphasis on provision of primary health care and early intervention in remote, rural and urban communities.

LABOR will promote cross-cultural training programs for rural health care workers to ensure Indigenous Australians are appropriately cared for in mainstream health services.

LABOR will ensure that culturally appropriate mental health services are available to all Indigenous Australians.

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

LABOR will provide \$50 million over five years to improve and expand the Indigenous Protected Areas program

LABOR will provide \$10 million to expand Indigenous business opportunities in fledgling carbon trading markets in Australia and overseas.

LABOR will provide \$10 million to the Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnerships Program, including at least \$5 million for the employment of Sea Country Officers in Indigenous communities. Extra funding will also be provided for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to strengthen partnerships with Indigenous communities to traditional fishers through the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

LABOR supports the commitment by mining company ERA's majority owner, Rio Tinto, to maintain its formal agreement with the Mirrar traditional owners, and that no future work at the uranium mine be undertaken without the explicit written consent of the Mirrar people.

LABOR will implement an action plan on environment and heritage matters in order to reflect community and Indigenous concerns.

LABOR will oppose any future proposals for exploration and mining in World Heritage areas.

LABOR will significantly reform national heritage protection legislation to provide adequate protection of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, as well as economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

LABOR has committed to promoting policies that support the preservation and recording of Indigenous cultural heritage and its protection from expropriation, exploitation and desecration. Labor will work with Indigenous communities and recreational fishermen to ensure hunting of marine animals is sustainable and humane and that threatened species are protected.

LABOR recognises the imminent threat of the loss of Indigenous knowledge systems and will fund the recording of Indigenous oral histories, stories and languages.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

LABOR will facilitate the negotiation of more Indigenous Land Use Agreements and ensure that traditional owners and their representatives are adequately resourced for this task.

LABOR will address the chronic staffing retention issues of native title representative bodies by supporting professional development and mentoring opportunities.

LABOR will involve Indigenous people as key decision-makers over the location, care and rules of access to their particular cultural heritage, artefacts and human remains in Australian public collections. Labor will also vigorously advocate this approach to other national governments whose institutions hold Indigenous Australian cultural heritage, artefacts and human remains.

NUCLEAR WASTE DUMPS

LABOR will remain strongly opposed to the importation and storage in Australia of nuclear waste that is sourced from overseas.

LABOR will not proceed with the development of any of the current nuclear dump sites identified by the Howard government in the Northern Territory, providing no contracts have been entered into for those sites.

LANGUAGE

LABOR will make the protection, preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous languages a "major priority".

RIGHTS

LABOR will implement the recommendations made in 2000 by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and will use the Council's Australian Declaration towards Reconciliation as a basis for action.

LABOR will work towards a lasting settlement with Indigenous Australians.

CONSTITUTION

LABOR will seek to remove racially discriminatory provisions from the Constitution, in particular to delete section 25 of the Constitution and to amend placitum 51(xxvi) to ensure it cannot be used to discriminate against Indigenous Australians. (See Constitutional Amendments section)

LABOR supports the inclusion of a new preamble to the Constitution which recognises Indigenous Australians and the core elements of Australia's history and democracy and appropriately expresses the values, aspirations and ideals of the Australian people.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

LABOR will endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and be guided by its benchmarks and standards.

PROMISE KEPT

PROMISE BROKEN

TORRES STRAIT

LABOR will provide \$7.5 million to strengthening the economic independence of Torres Strait Islander communities by reallocating ownership of Torres Strait commercial line fishing licenses.

LABOR will allow Torres Strait Islanders to commercially lease access to finfish stocks.

STOLEN GENERATIONS

LABOR will make it a priority to offer a formal apology to victims of the Stolen Generations.

LABOR will provide \$15.7 million to reunite 1,000 Stolen Generation survivors with their families, and fund up to 40 additional counsellors.

LABOR will provide a comprehensive response to the Bringing Them Home report.

HOUSING

LABOR will deliver the \$1.6 billion committed to Indigenous housing through the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation (ARIA) program.

LABOR will ensure appropriate investment to increase and maintain the stock of Indigenous housing beyond 2012. *NOTE: Currently, it's estimate there is a national Indigenous housing shortfall worth at least \$2.3 billion.*

LABOR will ensure tenders and contracts for housing provide training and employment opportunities for local Indigenous people.

LABOR will involve Indigenous communities in the design, building and maintenance of their homes.

LABOR will examine the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program (HOILP) and see how it can be improved. *NOTE: currently most of the \$107.4 million committed by the Howard government remains unspent..*

LABOR will encourage local property development among Indigenous communities.

LABOR recognises that the National Rental Affordability Scheme can help provide additional rental housing to Indigenous Australians.

LABOR believes encouraging home ownership on Indigenous land must not undermine the property rights of traditional owners.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

WELFARE REFORM

Labor supports a trial linking family and welfare payments to school attendance and the proper care of children in four communities in the Cape York.

PROMISE KEPT

PROMISE BROKEN

ABORIGINAL ART

Labor will implement a Resale Royalty scheme.

Labor will provide \$7.6 million over four years for the National Arts and Crafts Industry Support program to support Aboriginal Art Centres and artists around the country.

Labor will review deficiencies in business and governance training to enable Aboriginal art centres to develop sustainable business models.

Labor is committed to developing and promoting the Indigenous art sector to its full social, cultural and economic potential.

TOURISM

Labor will highlight Indigenous tourism in international advertising campaigns.

Labor will involve working with Indigenous people and archaeological groups to market Indigenous culture.

Labor will develop tourism projects to enhance the employment prospects of Indigenous Australians in areas in which they live and work in conjunction with the appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies.

JAIL RATES AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Labor supports the removal of customary law for bail and sentencing.

Labor will adopt special measures to prevent deaths in custody, particularly among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Labor will reinstate the full publication of statistics on deaths in custody.

Labor will ensure training of police and prison officers in understanding Indigenous culture and the Indigenous social context. Labor will continue to oppose mandatory detention when applied to juvenile offenders and to adults who commit minor offences. Labor acknowledges that it is discriminatory in practice and ineffective in reducing crime or criminality. *NOTE: Mandatory detention for juveniles was first introduced in Australia by Labor in the early 1990s, under Carmen Lawrence's Labor government in Western Australia.*

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

JAIL RATES AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY

LABOR will strengthen funding to Aboriginal Legal Aid agencies. Labor is committed to reducing the over-representation of Indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system. Labor acknowledges that a national whole-of-government social justice approach, in cooperation with State and Territory governments, is required to tackle complex underlying causes of such over-representation.

PROMISE
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MEDIA

LABOR will ensure the ABC produces high levels of local content and has the capacity to work with Indigenous people to provide services and programs relevant to them and their communities. Labor regards community and Indigenous broadcasting, including radio and television, as an essential component of Australian broadcasting, and will continue to encourage its maintenance, growth and development.

LABOR will investigate the need for administrative arrangements to assist the training, support and regulatory compliance needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasters.

LABOR believes that adequate public funding must be provided to Indigenous radio and television for their effective ongoing operation. Labor seeks to improve the capacity of community and Indigenous stations to serve their communities by providing support to the sector for content production, improving skills, technical infrastructure, and sector coordination and planning.

SPORT

LABOR is committed to ongoing recognition and support of Indigenous sport and recreation programs and will ensure there is appropriate support, resources and facilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ALCOHOL/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

LABOR's priority is to focus on prevention and also to protect the health and welfare of those who misuse volatile substances or are at risk of misusing them.

OTHER

LABOR will review the effectiveness of the NT intervention after 12 months of operation.

LABOR will provide \$452 million for upgrading roads in remote parts of the Northern Territory.

LABOR acknowledges that many towns in regional Australia have very high Indigenous populations where 40 percent of the population is under the age of 15. This should be understood in the planning of service delivery and policy development. Labor will ensure, in these places, that the local Indigenous community is engaged in the development of delivery of programs and services.

ALP PROMISES CONTINUED

THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Section 25 of the Australian Constitution reads:

"...If by the law of any State all persons of any race are disqualified from voting at elections for the more numerous House of the Parliament of the State, then, in reckoning the number of the people of the State or of the Commonwealth, persons of the race resident in that State shall not be counted."

In laymen's terms, the offensive part of Section 25 is that a person can be excluded from voting at an election based on their race.

Section 51 of the Australian Constitution reads:

"The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to... the people of any race, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws."

Section 51 was amended in 1967, as part of the famous referendum.

But a High Court decision in the late 1990s in relation to the Hindmarsh Islands affair found that even though the intent of the 1967 referendum was to benefit Aboriginal people, Section 51 also allowed laws to be made to the detriment of Aboriginal people, which is clearly an abhorrent law.

Labor is proposing to amend the constitution so that laws can only be made for the benefit of Aboriginal people.