



# Opportunity for all Indigenous Australians

## **Kerry O'Brien**

Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs

Labor is committed to restoring opportunity for Indigenous Australians.

Under the Howard Government, Indigenous Australians have been denied a fair go.

Labor is determined that all Australians have access to the ladder of opportunity to ensure better lives for themselves and their families.

After eight years of policy failure, only now is the Howard Government acknowledging the health, education, housing and employment crisis facing Indigenous Australians.

Rather than work with Indigenous Australians to address these problems, the Howard Government has blamed them for its own failures.

Now John Howard wants to stop Indigenous Australians participating in decisions about their own future.

Labor has a different way.

A Federal Labor Government will restore opportunity for Indigenous Australians by supporting Indigenous participation in decision making and developing more effective ways to deliver Indigenous programs.

Labor won't deliver excuses for continuing poor outcomes.

Nor will Labor deny Indigenous Australians a place at the table when decisions that affect their future are made.

A Federal Labor Government will work in partnership with Indigenous Australians, state and territory governments and the community to deliver results.

Labor is committed to a comprehensive relationship with Indigenous Australians that demands responsibility, delivers improved services and promotes Indigenous social justice and equity.

## **Indigenous self-governance and program delivery**

A Federal Labor Government will abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and create new arrangements for Indigenous self-governance and program delivery.

Since releasing its framework statement on Indigenous self-governance and program delivery in March 2004, Labor has been talking to Indigenous communities and organisations around the country about the principles that underpin Labor's plan – opportunity and responsibility.

It is clear that Indigenous Australians want to take more responsibility for their own future.

### **Regional responsibility**

Under Labor, responsibility for Indigenous program development and delivery will be transferred to new regional Indigenous bodies.

These bodies will receive pooled funding from a new national body with responsibility for brokering partnership agreements, coordinating funding and undertaking consolidated auditing.

New regional Indigenous bodies will make key decisions with support from their communities and the federal government. They will facilitate regional project proposals, develop regional partnership arrangements and implement and administer regional programs.

Labor supports the direct election of Indigenous members to these bodies but, in recognition of regional differences, will negotiate their composition with Indigenous communities.

### **National representation**

Labor will strengthen Indigenous representation by establishing a new directly-elected national Indigenous representative body.

This body will have responsibility for providing independent policy research and advocacy, delivering policy advice to government and the private sector, and monitoring policy outcomes.

### **A national priority**

Under Labor, addressing entrenched Indigenous disadvantage will be a national priority.

Indigenous disadvantage will be placed prominently and permanently on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda. Labor will use COAG to negotiate the implementation of new governance arrangements and improve national coordination of Indigenous services.

### **Implementation**

A Federal Labor Government will maintain existing Indigenous governance arrangements, with the exception of the ATSIC Board, pending the transition to new arrangements for Indigenous self-governance and program delivery on 1 July 2005. Subject to consultation with Indigenous Australians and state and territory governments, Labor will seek to establish a new national representative body and regional bodies on 1 July 2005.

## **Improved outcomes**

Labor will work with states and territories to develop transparent objectives, benchmarks and performance indicators to demonstrate progress in eliminating Indigenous disadvantage.

Additional data collection and reporting requirements will be incorporated into the conditions of Specific Purpose Payments upon renewal of relevant agreements with state and territory governments.

## **Reclaiming responsibility**

Labor's new arrangements for Indigenous self-governance and program delivery will give Indigenous communities the opportunity to take responsibility for their own future.

A Federal Labor Government will support community responsibility initiatives including alcohol and kava management, domestic violence and 'return to land' programs.

Labor recognises the desire of Indigenous Australians to take more responsibility for their future. This is the real key to addressing entrenched Indigenous disadvantage, not centralising decision-making in Canberra – as the Howard Government has done.

## **Social Justice Package**

A Social Justice Package is the third – and undelivered – component of the policy response to the Mabo decision negotiated by the federal government with Indigenous Australians in 1993.

The content and timeframe for delivery of the package will be negotiated with Indigenous Australians in the first term of a Latham Labor Government and progressed through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

## **Reconciliation**

In June 2004 John Howard omitted Reconciliation as a policy objective of his government. When Labor identified and exposed this disgraceful omission, Mr Howard reversed it.

But all Australians know he didn't mean it. The Howard Government has never been committed to Reconciliation.

Labor embraces Reconciliation as an objective of government.

In the spirit of Reconciliation, Labor will move to acknowledge Indigenous Australians as the original custodians of our land during the formal opening of each Parliament.

## Stolen Generations

As Prime Minister, Mark Latham will apologise on behalf of the nation to the Stolen Generations.

A national apology for the separation of Indigenous children from their families will constitute an important recognition of past wrongs and a powerful act of Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Labor is committed to a comprehensive response to the *Bringing Them Home* report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

This response will include an examination of alternative means to resolve legal claims against the Commonwealth for the act, and enduring impact, of taking children from their families.

A Federal Labor Government will commission HREOC to review the response to the *Bringing Them Home* report by all governments and undertake ongoing monitoring.

## Stolen wages

For many decades the wages of Indigenous workers were confiscated by governments and placed into trust funds. Much of the money has been permanently withheld or lost.

State governments, including Queensland and New South Wales, have begun to address claims for compensation for stolen wages.

A Federal Labor Government will commission an independent review of responses by the states and territories to stolen wage claims.

## Community Development Employment Projects

Labor will reform the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program to deliver better development, employment and training outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

A Federal Labor Government will allocate \$60 million over four years and provide access to Labor's *Families in Work* program as part of Labor's *Tax and Better Family Payments Plan* to support innovation and excellence by CDEP providers.

CDEP is an employment, training and community development scheme that provides 36,000 participant places for Indigenous Australians who voluntarily forego income support to participate on the program.

It is delivered by approximately 240 community based service providers.

In 2003-04 approximately \$400 million of the total \$520 million CDEP allocation was offset against welfare entitlements.

CDEP accounts for approximately 25 per cent of Indigenous employment and substantially dampens reported Indigenous unemployment figures.

**Opportunity for all Indigenous Australians**

Notwithstanding CDEP's importance to Indigenous communities, the Howard Government's policy malaise has limited the scheme's employment and community development potential. In some cases, CDEP has become a welfare trap in its own right by failing to assist participants to make a timely transition to employment.

Labor recognises the diverse circumstances in which CDEP operates. Informed by the recent ATSIC review of CDEP, Labor in government will support the scheme's dual, and non-mutually exclusive, policy goals:

*Training to Employment* – Where labour market opportunities exist, Labor will ensure CDEP participation lowers the barriers to employment by adequately equipping participants with the experience and skills they need to get a job.

*Sustainable Communities* – Where access to the labour market is limited, Labor will ensure CDEP builds more sustainable communities by supporting individual, family and community wellbeing and developing local capacity.

A Federal Labor Government will reform CDEP by:

- Injecting an additional \$60 million over four years into CDEP to encourage and support innovation and excellence by CDEP providers.
- Requiring regional Indigenous bodies to work with CDEP providers to develop annual performance benchmarks for local projects that have regard for labour market opportunities and community needs.
- Improving linkages between CDEP and mainstream training and employment opportunities as well as other Commonwealth, state, territory and local government programs.
- Encouraging regional Indigenous bodies to develop partnership arrangements with the community and private sector to supplement public funding of local projects.

Labor's \$60 million boost to CDEP will fund new CDEP places, governance training, and provide additional capital and on-cost support for CDEP organisations.

Labor will reward, not penalise, CDEP providers for success.

Labor supports the delivery of CDEP by local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations capable of demonstrating high standards of corporate governance and financial accountability.

## **Indigenous health**

The state of Indigenous health is a national disgrace. Under Labor, renewed efforts to address the appalling state of Indigenous health will be made by delivering practical programs through regional Indigenous bodies with strong accountability requirements. Solving the health crisis in Indigenous communities will not happen overnight, but an immediate start must be made to address two health crises inflicting Indigenous communities – the poor state of ear and eye health.

## **Eliminating trachoma**

Labor will tackle trachoma and eliminate it from our Indigenous communities by 2010.

Australia is the only developed country to still have trachoma. Trachoma rates in Aboriginal communities are amongst the highest in the world, far worse than some of the poorest areas in Africa.

Trachoma is an infectious disease that is passed from child to child, and child to mother. Transmission is aided by poor hygiene and poverty. Sometimes known as sandy blight because of the feeling of sand in the eyes, repeated infections of this disease causes scarring on the inside of the eyelid. Eventually the eyelashes turn in, rubbing on the cornea at the front of the eye. The scarring on the cornea leads to severe vision loss and blindness, usually when people are 40 to 50 years old.

Fred Hollows championed the treatment of trachoma in the 1970s. However, in remote communities north and west of Port Augusta, trachoma rates have barely changed since that time. Expert estimates put between 20,000 and 30,000 Indigenous children afflicted with active trachoma, yet it is relatively simple and cost-effective to tackle. Having children wash their faces twice a day, providing good housing and sanitation, and an antibiotic treatment once a year will virtually eliminate trachoma.

The antibiotic Azithromycin is freely available under the PBS Schedule 100 for use in Aboriginal communities. However its distribution is limited and haphazard.

Surgery is required to address trichiasis, the blinding caused by inward growing eyelashes. This is outpatient type surgery which can be performed in a dentist's chair.

Labor will allocate \$5.5 million to eradicate trachoma by 2010. Labor's plan will provide for six 2-person health teams to locate those who need care and provide the drugs and treatment necessary to eliminate this disease. Labor's funding will also enable greater access to surgery for trichiasis and hygienists to support longer term health education efforts.

## **Hearing initiative**

Like people in poor countries, Indigenous Australians have too many ear infections. Aboriginal people can suffer ongoing chronic ear infections and deafness from a young age. This can leave them badly educated, socially disadvantaged and poor.

Middle ear infections early in life often lead to long lasting and repeated ear infections that can cause chronic eardrum holes (perforation). Poverty is a major cause of these problems. Deafness caused by these problems enables the cycle of poverty that helped the disease begin in the first place to continue.

Aboriginal people living in remote areas often have the worst hearing loss. By adulthood some form of hearing loss can affect up to 70 per cent of Aboriginal people. Experts have found that between 6 per cent and 80 per cent of Aboriginal children (the range is wide because this varies from community to community) can have significant hearing loss.

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Studies have shown that Aboriginal children are more likely to have middle ear infections and are less able to recover from them. One study indicated that fluid in the middle ear was found in 95 per cent of Aboriginal babies aged six to eight weeks.

Finding ear infections at an early stage in Aboriginal babies can be difficult because symptoms may not always be present. But health staff can be trained to look for signs and to examine ears with tools to help with diagnosis. This means that screening to help find ear infections early, as well as appropriate treatment, may help reduce ear disease in Aboriginal children.

As with a number of health issues which plague Indigenous Australians, environmental health is a major contributor to the current ear health situation in Indigenous communities. Access to clean water would prevent a large number of ear health problems in Indigenous communities.

Poverty, poor housing and overcrowding are important factors which increase the risk of infection. Improvement of the environment in which people live is the most important issue to prevent ear infections. Other strategies such as antibiotics or surgery will be less effective if the environment is not changed.

Labor will provide \$27.3 million over 4 years to a range of ear health initiatives including:

- Establishment of a prevention and treatment program for middle ear infections, especially in children aged 0-5 years.
- Extension of hearing services to CDEP recipients.
- Provision of additional funding for audiologists to visit remote communities.
- Increased funding for the Outreach Program operated by Australian Hearing Services.
- Improved accountability to ensure that Indigenous patients receive appropriate hearing devices and maintenance services for these.
- An information campaign for Indigenous people to increase awareness of hearing services available and improve the take up rate.
- Enhancement of the role of Aboriginal health workers in the delivery of ear health services.
- Better coordination of ear health services.

### **Improving dental health**

The dental health of Indigenous Australians, both children and adults, is significantly worse than that of other Australians, and is tied to poor general health, lack of water fluoridation and lack of access to dental services. The situation for adults is made worse by the high incidence of oral complications from diabetes.

Indigenous communities in rural and remote Australia find it very difficult to get dental staff to visit, and there are too many communities where expensive medical equipment sits unused. Indigenous children are more likely to have decayed, missing or filled teeth and there is a high rate of total tooth loss amongst Indigenous people over 65.

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Labor will provide specific funds through *Australian Dental Care* to enable dentists and dental auxiliaries to visit Indigenous communities on a regular basis. In order to ensure culturally appropriate services, specially trained Aboriginal dental care workers to assist in the provision of dental care and education will be provided.

Dental services to the Indigenous population will be coordinated with primary care services and linked to the Primary Health Care Access Programs.

The varied state of public dental health services in areas with significant non-urban Indigenous communities means consultation will be required with state and territory governments and Indigenous health groups to set priorities and identify gaps in current services. Overall, there is a substantial shortage and the establishment of new teams will enable services to be delivered in regions where there are currently minimal or no public dental services.

Labor will allocate \$18 million over the forward estimates for these initiatives.

## **Indigenous education**

### **Indigenous higher education**

Indigenous Australians are significantly under represented in tertiary education compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

New university enrolments by Indigenous Australians declined by 14 per cent in just two years from 1999 to 2001, falling back to pre-1995 levels and wiping out steady gains made in enrolments during the mid-1990s.

The number of Indigenous students completing university studies peaked in 1998 before declining sharply in 1999 and is yet to return to previous levels.

Labor believes supporting Indigenous students to enrol in and complete tertiary education is fundamental to increasing employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Labor first called for the establishment of an Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, a proposal then adopted by the Howard Government. In government, Labor will work with the Council to address barriers to Indigenous tertiary participation.

Labor will expand higher education opportunities for Indigenous Australians by:

- Increasing funding for Indigenous higher education participation by \$30.5 million over the next four years. This will provide Indigenous students extra support to assist them to successfully complete their studies.
- Creating 600 scholarships worth \$10,000 per year for Indigenous university students over three years from 2005. This represents an investment of \$12.2 million over four years.
- Supporting the establishment of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council. In government, Labor will work with the Council to address barriers to Indigenous tertiary education participation. Labor will invest \$1.2 million over four years to assist the Council's work.

## **Indigenous school education**

One of Labor's key school funding priorities is increased funding for Indigenous primary and secondary education.

Federal programs for Indigenous education in schools will be strengthened by an increased investment in real terms of over 25 per cent.

A Federal Labor Government will:

- Address the critical needs of Indigenous students by providing \$22.5 million in additional resources over three years to support improved literacy and numeracy standards focused on the early years; better attendance and participation; and the development of print and Information and Communication Technology-based curriculum and teaching materials to support Indigenous students, including materials in Indigenous Australian languages.
- Encourage and support Indigenous teachers by building pathways to teaching for school students and for Indigenous education workers, such as teaching assistants and community liaison officers; support the development of institutes of Indigenous teaching; and support professional development programs for Indigenous teaching staff and for non-Indigenous teachers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These initiatives represent an investment of \$22.5 million over four years.
- Inject \$47 million over four years into new schools serving Indigenous students, especially in communities in isolated areas without access to primary or secondary schools; and develop and upgrade school buildings and ICT facilities for existing schools with a significant concentration of Indigenous students.

## **Supporting Indigenous Employment and Training**

### **Housing industry**

Labor wants Indigenous Australians to have the opportunity to train and work and build their own housing.

The shortage of housing and consequent overcrowding is a significant problem for many Indigenous communities.

Labor will help build more housing in Indigenous communities by boosting funding under the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP).

A Federal Labor Government will boost job opportunities in construction by using these CHIP funds to generate local employment and training.

State governments have used training conditions on government contracts to encourage a best practice approach to employment and training within private industry.

Labor will attach conditions to funding available under CHIP to create opportunities for employment and training for Indigenous Australians.

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Labor will invest \$6.3 million to create 250 apprenticeships every year by January 2009 as part of the Local Government and Indigenous Apprenticeship Program to help promote traditional trade based occupations and support local businesses.

The lack of training opportunities has meant that many Indigenous Australians are locked out of local trades based jobs and are not employed in the construction and maintenance of their own communities.

Labor will target these new apprenticeships in the construction and traditional trades to help fill local skill shortages, promote the building of Indigenous housing, and encourage local trade enterprises.

Labor's policy will give Indigenous Australians the opportunity to train and work within their own communities.

Flexible and innovative training delivery will be promoted and partnerships with local businesses and trades people encouraged to deliver local training.

**Supporting Indigenous young people**

Labor will invest \$5 million over four years to fund 80 Training Mentors as part of the *Youth Guarantee: Learn or Earn* policy to help Indigenous schools keep young Indigenous people in school and build partnerships with local business to help get a job or apprenticeship before they leave school.

Indigenous Training Mentors will work with young people at risk of leaving school and link them up with employment and training opportunities or encourage them to stay at school.

The Training Mentors will also work with local businesses implementing the Training Partnership Fund and help mentor new local apprentices.

**Indigenous tourism**

Australia meets only half the market demand for Indigenous tourism experiences.

That's why Labor ensured Indigenous tourism skills are represented on the Board of the new national marketing body Tourism Australia.

Realising the full potential of Indigenous tourism through culturally appropriate and economically sustainable development won't just improve Australia's responsiveness to market demand – it will create prosperity for Indigenous communities.

The Howard Government's lack of regard for Indigenous tourism is evident in the paltry funding allocated to the Indigenous Tourism Business Ready Program under the Tourism White Paper.

A Federal Labor Government will triple the funding available to the Indigenous Tourism Business Ready Program and allocate \$9 million over the next three years.

Increased funding for this program will be re-directed from the Howard Government's failed See Australia domestic tourism marketing campaign.

## **Indigenous justice**

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services**

A Federal Labor Government will abandon the Howard Government's ill-conceived tender of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

The Howard Government plans to further restrict Indigenous Australians' access to justice by tendering out services to the lowest bidder.

The government's poorly developed proposal could result in even higher levels of incarceration and increased risk of deaths in custody.

The proposed arrangements are contrary to the key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody – aimed at keeping Indigenous people out of jail and alive.

Recently announced revisions to the tender guidelines and timetable do not address key concerns about the impact of the tender proposal.

All state and territory Attorneys-General have opposed the tender plan.

Labor will scrap the current tender process and engage in consultation with existing service providers on how to deliver the best legal services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To inform consultation on new arrangements Labor will undertake a legal needs analysis for Indigenous people, including a comprehensive analysis of the needs of Indigenous women.

### **Indigenous deaths in custody**

Labor re-affirms its commitment to the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and will undertake a national audit of progress by the states and territories.

### **Opposition to mandatory sentencing**

A Federal Labor Government will maintain Federal Labor's opposition to mandatory sentencing for juveniles.

## **Indigenous housing**

A Federal Labor Government will address Indigenous housing disadvantage by boosting Indigenous housing and infrastructure funding by \$75.5 million over the next three years through the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP).

Additional funding will support the construction, purchase, maintenance and upgrade of housing, and improve essential services for rural and remote communities, including water, sewerage and power.

Under a Federal Labor Government, Indigenous communities will be involved in decisions about local housing and infrastructure planning and delivery.

Housing and infrastructure funding will be linked to improved training and employment outcomes.

## **Indigenous languages**

A Federal Labor Government will develop a National Indigenous Languages Policy to protect, preserve and reinvigorate Indigenous languages.

In recognition of the fact that about 14 per cent of Indigenous Australians speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language as their main language, Labor will also undertake a national audit of interpreting services to ensure Indigenous Australians can access services within the justice and health systems.

Funding of \$1 million will be allocated to this task in 2005-06.

## **Indigenous leadership**

Capacity building and leadership development is crucial to the future of Indigenous Australia.

A Federal Labor Government will allocate \$3 million over three years to a National Indigenous Leadership Fund to support the work of existing and future Indigenous leadership organisations and projects.

State and territory government and community and private sector contributions to the fund will be sought to partner the Commonwealth in this initiative.

Labor's new National Mentoring Foundation will also incorporate an Indigenous leadership component.

## **Indigenous children**

In addition to targeted health initiatives for ear and eye health, Labor will develop a comprehensive Aboriginal Child Welfare and Development Strategy targeting early childhood development and will announce detailed measures later in the election campaign.

## **Repatriation of Indigenous artefacts and remains**

A Federal Labor Government will actively seek the repatriation of Indigenous artefacts and remains removed and repositied in overseas collections without Indigenous consent.

## **Supporting Indigenous heritage**

A Federal Labor Government will allocate funding of \$2 million over three years to advance the digitalisation of the collection held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

## **Indigenous broadcasting**

The Howard Government has broken its promise to develop and strengthen the Indigenous broadcasting sector.

A Federal Labor Government will develop an indigenous broadcasting policy informed by the findings of the current review of Indigenous television services.

## **Native title**

### **Review of the Native Title Act**

A Federal Labor Government will review the Native Title Act to ensure it's workability. Labor will not amend the Act without comprehensive consultation with Indigenous Australians, miners, pastoralists and other governments.

The Native Title Act requires native title holders to establish a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) to manage their native title rights and interests.

While these bodies manage the outcome of native title determinations, and are charged with important functions, they receive no funding.

Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) and the Indigenous Land Corporation are restricted in their capacity to provide assistance to PBCs.

Labor's review of the Native Title Act will consider PBCs' operational funding needs.

### **Native Title Representative Bodies**

The effective operation of the native title system is important for all land users.

Yet the Howard Government has failed to heed repeated warnings that inadequate funding for NTRBs is impacting on the functionality of Australia's native title system.

Earlier this year, the Kimberley Land Council was forced to withdraw as the representative of Indigenous respondents and a respondent in its own right to the Djabera Djabera native title determination application.

Labor will not permit the native title system to crumble because NTRBs cannot fulfil their statutory obligations.

Labor will increase operational funding for NTRBs by \$10 million over four years, commencing in 2005-06, funded from savings from a means test and cap applied to third party funding.

### **Third parties**

Labor is concerned about the significant growth in funding to facilitate the participation of non-native title claimants – or third parties – in inquiries, mediations and proceedings under the Native Title Act.

Under the Howard Government, third party funding has grown from \$1.2 million in 1996-97 to \$10.3 million in 2002-03. Over the same period, funding for Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) has grown just 30 per cent, from \$40.8 million to \$53.2 million, with most of the increase attributable to short term funding for capacity building.

Third parties seeking assistance are not subject to hardship or means tests, whereas strict conditions apply to the funding of NTRBs.

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The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has found:

*The Commonwealth funding support provided to non-claimants and the funding of NTRBs reflects the consistent pattern of inequality within the native title system which fails to provide equal or even adequate support to the rights and interests of native title holders.*

Native Title Report 2003, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004

Labor will means test funding to third parties, and cap overall funding, to restore balance to the native title system.

## **Indigenous Land Corporation**

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) was established in 1995 to assist dispossessed Indigenous Australians to acquire land. The establishment of the National Land Fund was the second component of the Commonwealth's response to the High Court's Mabo decision.

Labor will act to improve transparency of ILC decision-making about land acquisition and divestment.

## **Torres Strait autonomy**

The Howard Government has failed to fulfil its commitment to the Torres Strait to introduce legislation providing for greater autonomy for the region.

A Labor Government will introduce a Torres Strait Bill to provide for greater autonomy including a more democratic Torres Strait Regional Authority.

## **Land rights**

Labor reaffirms its recognition of the rights of traditional owners under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act.

The Howard Government has promised reform of the Land Rights Act but failed to deliver on its commitment.

Labor recognises the need for reform and will act with the informed consent of traditional owners and effective consultation with all stakeholders.

## **Aboriginals Benefit Account**

A Federal Labor Government will review the operation of the Aboriginals Benefit Account Reserve to ensure payments for the benefit of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory are not delayed or withheld without explanation.

The Aboriginals Benefit Account Reserve receives amounts equal to the amounts of royalties received by the Commonwealth or the Northern Territory Government in respect of mining interests in Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

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**Opportunity for all Indigenous Australians**

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Section 64(4) of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act provides for discretionary payments from the Aboriginals Benefit Account Reserve “for the benefit of Aboriginals living in the Northern Territory.”

The Howard Government has delayed consideration of applications for disbursements from the Reserve and withheld payments.

Labor has called for the release of Aboriginal money for the benefit of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. In government, Labor will review the scheme to ensure its operation conforms with the intent of the legislation and meets the needs of the Northern Territory’s Aboriginal people.

## **Aboriginal corporations and associations**

The Howard Government has failed to implement reform of the Aboriginal Corporations and Associations Act.

Despite announcing an intention to act on a long completed review in January 2004, the Howard Government’s policy inertia stalled any reform.

A Labor Government will reform the Act to incorporate modern corporate governance and accountability requirements and better serve the interests of almost 3,000 registered Indigenous corporations.

## **Social Justice Commissioner**

A Federal Labor Government will abandon the Howard Government’s plan to axe the office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Social Justice Commissioner.

Federal Parliament created the Social Justice Commissioner’s office in 1992 in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

In addition to retaining the Commissioner’s position, Labor will legislate to require a government response to the annual Social Justice and Native Title Reports and ask the Commissioner to report annually on progress towards Reconciliation.

## **Other initiatives**

Labor will make further Indigenous affairs policy announcements in other portfolio areas over the course of the 2004 Federal Election campaign.

**Opportunity for all Indigenous Australians**

## Labor's Opportunity for all Indigenous Australians is fully funded and costed

<i>\$ million</i>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Indigenous Health</b>					
Eradicate trachoma	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	<b>5.5</b>
Middle-ear Infection	1.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	<b>10.5</b>
CDEP	2.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	<b>12.5</b>
Audiologist travel	0.08	0.15	0.15	0.15	<b>0.5</b>
Information Campaign	0.25	0.5	0.5	0.5	<b>1.8</b>
Aboriginal health workers	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	<b>2.0</b>
Improving dental health	0	5	5	8	<b>18.0</b>
<b>Indigenous Higher Education</b>					
Indigenous support fund	5	5.2	10	10.3	<b>30.5</b>
Indigenous scholarships	0	2	4.1	6.1	<b>12.2</b>
Higher Education Advisory Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Better schools for Indigenous Australians</b>					
Literacy, attendance and ICT	0	2.5	7.5	12.5	<b>22.5</b>
Pathways for Indigenous teachers	0	2.5	7.5	12.5	<b>22.5</b>
Capital works and ICT upgrades	5	11	13.5	17.5	<b>47.0</b>
<b>Supporting Indigenous Employment and Training</b>					
Construction and traditional trade apprenticeships	0	0	3.15	3.15	<b>6.3</b>
<b>Supporting Indigenous youth</b>	0	1.6	1.7	1.7	<b>5</b>
<b>Indigenous Tourism</b>					
Increase funding for the Indigenous Tourism Business Ready Program	0	3.0	3.0	3.0	<b>9.0</b>
<b>Community Development Employment Program</b>					
Increase funding for Community Development Employment Program	5	15	20	20	<b>60</b>
<b>Indigenous Housing</b>					
Increased funding for the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program	0	19.5	26.1	29.9	<b>75.5</b>
<b>Indigenous languages</b>					
National Indigenous Languages Policy	0	1.0	0	0	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Indigenous leadership</b>					
National Indigenous Leadership Fund	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Supporting Indigenous Heritage</b>					
AIATSIS collection digitalisation	0	0.6	0.7	0.7	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Native Title</b>					
Native Title Representative Bodies	0	3.4	3.4	3.4	<b>10.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.63</b>	<b>82.75</b>	<b>116.1</b>	<b>139.2</b>	<b>358.7</b>