

Political Intentions - 2001 Australian Federal Election

November 2001 Special Election Edition

The major political parties were given the opportunity to state their views on a number of significant issues by key organisations in the lead up to the 2001 Australian Federal Election . This special edition features the Parties' responses to surveys of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA); The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Australian Education Union (AEU). Also included is a section about which issues the peak lobbying bodies are wanting the parties to address. An Electorate and Candidate profile is followed by a link to the Women's Electoral Lobby's analysis of the political parties and their policies.

SURVEYS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Survey of Political Parties Position on Aid and Development for 2001 Election

A Survey of Political Parties Position on Aid and Development for 2001 Election was done by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid. ACFOA asked the major parties 20 questions to gauge their position on Australian Aid programs, Human Rights, Global Economics and building a more equal world and Reconciliation.

To view, link to: <http://www.acfoa.asn.au> where the Survey is listed.

ACOSS COMPARISON OF PARTY POLICIES

"Responding to the challenge: The responses of the major political parties to the ACOSS Federal Election 2001 priorities" - go to <http://www.acoss.org.au/info/2001/312.htm>

The Australian Council of Social Service today released a summary of the policies of the major parties on Australia's key social priorities based on their responses to an ACOSS survey. ACOSS President Andrew McCallum said: "ACOSS sought responses from each of the major parties on how they intend to deal with 24 major social policy challenges facing Australia, however voters have been left in the dark on some major issues."

The Coalition - a response that relies heavily on the past record of the Government:

* This is disappointing given key social indicators which show widening inequality. The failure of the Coalition to offer new policies beyond their commitments earlier this year in Australians Working Together that would substantially reduce unemployment is particularly worrying given that the number of Australians who

have been in receipt of unemployment benefits long-term is higher now than five years ago."

* The Coalition does, however, provide positive examples of its record in areas such as attempting to reduce the unmet need for community services for people with disabilities, making home care for older Australians a priority, and some progress is promised in these areas in their election platform."

The Labor Party - shows a willingness to address gaps in the provision of mainstream human services: * Labor's response to the ACOSS challenges includes proposals to strengthen our public health system, to find ways to make housing more affordable, to restructure social security payments, and to improve the relationship between the Government and the community welfare sector. Labor also advocates a substantial long-term strategy to boost education skills across the community. "

* However these policy commitments are not matched by financial commitments. For example, a very small commitment is made to training for unemployed people, despite "jobs" being a centrepiece of their platform."

The Australian Democrats - overall, a positive response with strong policies:

* In particular, the Democrats have very good policies to deal with reducing the number of people living in poverty. ACOSS welcomes the Democrats commitment to increase unemployment benefits and other social security allowance payments by around \$20 a week and to resist any tax cuts for high income earners until all social security payments have been raised to at least the level of the Poverty Line."

The Australian Greens - a brief, but very positive response. On education, the Australian Greens are calling for a \$4 billion boost to public education to bring total education spending in Australia up to the OECD average."

"This ACOSS comparison of the major parties' policies is necessarily a qualified one as it is based on their responses to the ACOSS survey and information and policies released to date."

"In keeping with the non-partisan stance of ACOSS, we will not be scoring or ranking the parties. Nor will we comment further on the parties until after the election. The full response of the parties is available from the ACOSS website. It is up to the voters to decide."

Source: ACOSS

Australian Political Party's Commitment to Women

The ALP, the Coalition, the Democrats and the Greens were each invited to provide a 500 word statement to the Australian Education Union (AEU) Federal Women's Conference outlining their commitments on issues of particular concern to women.

Included in this segment are statements from the The Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence MP for the Australian Labor Party; Senator Amanda Vanstone for the National/Liberal Coalition; Senator Natasha Stott Despoja for the Australian Democrats and Senator Bob Brown for the Greens. **Australian Political Party's Commitment to Women**

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AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

Thank you for the opportunity to wish you well for the AEU Federal Women's Conference 2001.

Labor's priorities for the next election are jobs, health and education.

We believe that these are the central issues with which our Federal Government ought to be concerned. Instead Australians have been burdened with an unfair and unnecessary tax in the GST along with dramatic funding cuts to the essential services provided by government.

As the election campaign begins, you will hear Kim Beazley talk a great deal about our themes, and with them the details on how Labor plans to fix our once great public hospitals, rebuild our schools as learning centres of excellence and create meaningful jobs for the Australian community.

We know that the GST has hit hardest those who are least able to afford it – young families, pensioners, charities, and people on low incomes. Labor fought the introduction of the GST every step of the way, but now that it is here we must make it fairer and simpler.

We'll make it fairer by removing the GST from some essential items, including women's sanitary products, and simpler by making it easier for small business to comply with their GST requirements.

John Howard seems to spend an awful lot of time telling Australians that there is nothing he can do about the problems which affect them. We've heard him say this about petrol prices, the living standards of older Australians and the demise of our regional centres and, most recently, the problems confronting Ansett.

Labor will take responsibility for the problems facing Australian women and some of the detail on how we'll do this has already been released.

We've have detailed proposals for:

- rebuilding Medicare through a 24 hour hotline and proposals for improving funding by working with state governments
- better monitoring of quality care in our nursing homes,
- scholarships for high achievers to improve the quality of our teachers
- and support for banking, telephone, postal and community services to assist the regions.

Labor will also ensure that women are 'front and centre' of the decision making of the Federal Government, including a revitalised Office of the Status of Women, improved structures for consulting women about their needs and improved support for women's community organisations so that their needs can be reflected in the action of governments at the Federal level.

We'll also look at a range of measures to assist Australians in balancing their work and family lives. A strengthened Industrial Relations Commission, acting as a fair and balanced umpire, a National Early Assistance Strategy for Children and an inquiry into working life will all be part of a future Labor Government's agenda.

Of course more details will be announced during the official election campaign but it's clear Labor is committed to protecting the rights of women and ensuring they are a key factor in the decision making process.

Labor will tackle the issues facing Australian women head on. We won't shy away from them and we won't try to force women back to the 1950s.

Labor understands the problems many women face in this new century and new millennium, and we have the policies and long term strategies to deliver solutions.

The Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence MP
Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation and Technology
Shadow Minister for the Status of Women
Federal Member for Fremantle

LIBERAL/NATIONAL COALITION

The Coalition has provided to the women of Australia the most female-friendly government this country has ever seen. And it is in that context that I am extremely proud of what has been achieved under this Government.

Women's employment is up, participation in the workforce is increasing and unemployment is down.

Women have broken the 80c in the dollar barrier and now earn 84.3 per cent of men's adult full-time average ordinary-time earnings.

In child care over the last four years, we've spent 30 per cent more in real terms than was spent in the last four years before we came to office and importantly, we have increased the flexibility of services available.

In education, women now make up 58% of under-graduate commencements, and 51 per cent of post-graduate commencements. There has been a spectacular increase of 43 per cent in women's participation in vocational education and training. We have also seen a massive increase in the number of women undertaking traineeships and apprenticeships.

Of course, with a sound economy, lower interest rates, lower taxes and increased family payments, there are more real dollars available for women to spend as they choose for themselves and their families.

In the 2002-02 Budget, an additional \$30 million over four years was provided to the Office of the Status of Women for four specific initiatives that will directly benefit Australian women:

National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault

\$16.5 million over four years for a national approach to combat sexual assault against women. The measure will establish partnerships with other governments, key organisations and service providers to develop, test and implement strategies that address the increasing incidence of sexual assault in the community. This will include campaigns to promote community awareness, sharing approaches to combat sexual assault and promote 'best practice' across jurisdiction and agencies, and funding of time limited projects.

National Leadership Initiative

\$2.4 million over four years to increase the participation of women in leadership positions and to promote leadership by women in other areas, particularly rural, indigenous, marginalised and disadvantaged women.

Women's Development Programme

\$5.6 million over four years to expand and enhance the engagement of women, women's organisations, and targeted research in government policy formulation. The programme will also support women's capacity building and mentoring activities.

Informed Choices for Australian Women

\$5.5 million over four years to develop a women's information strategy, including a data warehouse, research and policy publication series and web-based information for, and about, women. The Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women hosted the National Conference *Australian Women Speak* in August 2001. The conference explored economic-self-support and security for women, optimal status and position of women, eliminating violence in women's lives; and maintaining good health and wellbeing throughout women's lives.

The Commonwealth has also made a major commitment in the important area of domestic violence by committing \$50 million to *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* to test innovative preventative measures and best practice to prevent and address domestic violence.

Current major initiatives for *Partnerships* include addressing the impact on children of domestic violence; strengthening programmes to ensure perpetrators of domestic violence put an end to the violence; and community education for mainstream, indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The National Indigenous Family Violence Grants Programme (\$6 million over four years) helps local indigenous communities to act to reduce family violence. A mentoring team helps grants recipients with advice on project management, self-documentation and self-evaluation.

Senator Amanda Vanstone
Minister for Family & Community Service
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women
Senator for South Australia

THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS

Over the period of the 2001 Election campaign the Australian Democrats will be launching new policies on education and women. These policies will continue the long tradition of the Australian Democrats in favour of a fairer education system for women and girls, and for a properly funded public education system that offers a quality education for all, regardless of income or gender.

The Australian Democrats have long resisted the notion of 'user pays' in education policy, and have fought hard against the introduction of fees, and education funding systems that disadvantage public schools.

The Australian Democrats have also long been led by women, and our party has actively supported a greater role for women in public life. We also recognise that, if girls and women are to make their mark, many things need to change in the world of education and work. Women remain disproportionately concentrated in particular occupations and industries, and this affects their pay and life chances. The Australian Democrats have also called for pre-school teachers (almost exclusively women) to receive pay rates that match primary school teachers.

It is also the case, that most women will find themselves balancing caring responsibilities with work, for significant portions of their working lives. But we know that it is getting harder – not easier – for many households to balance care and work. Many face growing insecurity, over-work or under-employment, and many Australian workplaces – despite much talk - are not family friendly especially in view of increasing actual hours of work.

'Work and Life' Policies

In recognition of this, the Australian Democrats first policy announcements in this election campaign have dealt with work and life. We have announced two new programs and four new policies designed to reduce the length of the working week, spread the work around, and to assist working families.

The Democrats see these issues as key 'work' issues for this decade. We propose two initiatives to ensure real progress. The first will stimulate real change in workplaces and fund innovative projects that reduce hours and create jobs, and the second creates a national system of paid maternity leave.

A 'Fair Hours Fund'

Workplaces that, by negotiation with their employees, can settle on arrangements that convert long hours jobs into new full-time or part-time jobs, will be rewarded with 50% wage subsidies for these new jobs. This will reduce long hours, create new jobs and reduce benefit payments. By spending \$244 million we can create 80,000 new jobs and take unemployment well below 6 per cent. And we can improve the working lives of many thousands of Australian families by reducing their long hours and systematic patterns of unreasonable paid and unpaid overtime.

Paid maternity leave

We propose Government funding of paid maternity leave for around 12 weeks at the federal minimum wage of \$412 for women in paid work, and encourage employers to top this up to women's individual normal earnings through local agreements. While paid maternity leave is only part of the picture in terms of work and family balance, it is an important benefit. Parental leave – for both women and men - to care for growing children and other dependents is also important. But paid maternity leave recognises that late pregnancy, birth and early maternity should be met with the opportunity for leave for all women who wish it. It is especially important for women on low incomes. Our scheme represents an important advance.

These two initiatives would assist many Australian families and households. The Democrats have also announced policies that deal with significant challenges in our labour market at present:

- Reduce working hours in the longer term to a 35 hour week;
- Increase job security by providing the right for casual employees to convert to permanent status if they wish after 12 months as casuals;
- Improved part-time work conditions so that part-time employees have full pro-rata conditions that compare to those of full-time employees;
- Work and family reviews of awards and agreements by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to ensure that they genuinely assist work and family balance.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja

Leader of the Australian Democrats & Senator for South Australia

THE GREENS

Equality for women is a core commitment of Green parties around the world. We have been honoured with the gifts and passion of so many outstanding women like Petra Kelly, co-founder of the German Greens; Ingrid Betancourt, courageous Greens presidential candidate in Colombia next year; and Christine Milne, Greens MP and first female leader of a political party in Tasmania, to name but a few. Six of our 10 elected MPs in Australia are women as are five of our eight Senate candidates in the coming election.

The Greens are about the future - not just the three years before the next poll, but the long-term. Charting a secure future means closing the gap between rich and poor on the Earth. In the short term it means the United Nations should coordinate the community of nations in bringing those responsible for the US terror attack to justice before an international court. It means treating asylum-seekers, fleeing terror, with humanity and generosity.

It also means putting young people's needs and prospects at the heart of our politics. Several young Greens are elected to local government and standing as candidates for the coming election. Our policy is that young people from the age of 16 years should have the right to vote and hold public office if they choose.

We strongly support public education at all levels and recognise its particular importance for women and girls. We challenge Labor to return Australia to the OECD average of spending by similar nations – that means injecting an extra \$4 billion per annum into public education (schools, universities, TAFE and adult learning). We say reverse Mr Howard's tax cuts to the big corporations and restore corporate tax rates to 34%; that's \$3 billion. And if Labor carries out the bipartisan promise to tax trust funds, ducked by Mr Howard, there is the other \$1 billion for public education.

The 'reform' of the industrial relations system, which we opposed consistently, is a disaster for women. It cuts away industrial protections in favour of employer flexibility and the gap between men's and women's pay is beginning to widen once more. We support pay equity for women. We support women's right to work and receive pay equity; paid maternity leave is a necessity and quality child care should be readily available to workers at low cost.

Other Greens policies include:

- Women's right to make informed choices about their lives; we oppose the changes to sex discrimination legislation allowing the states to determine which women have access to IVF.
- Restoration of funding to WEL and women's units in the public service which were cut by the Howard government.
- A positive role for education to create a better and more peaceful society by developing our understanding of gender issues and eradicating discrimination against women. We would oppose any simplistic 'catch-up' legislation arising from the Senate Inquiry into the Education of Boys for this reason.

- Programmes to encourage girls to continue sporting and recreational pursuits beyond early secondary schooling.
- National funding for Safecare, the innovative West Australian approach to prevent child sexual abuse.
- Abolition of the GST and, in the meantime, helping small business and community groups with the compliance burden by allowing those with a turnover of less than \$2 million per annum to keep the first \$1000 of GST collected.
- Decisive action to save the climate, protect the forests and keep our food, air and water clean and safe.

Senator Bob Brown
Leader of the Greens and Senator for Tasmania

Source: AEU Federal Women's Conference

PEAK BODIES COMMENT

Peak Bodies Comment

Peak bodies around Australia have their say on the issues that party policy and campaigning should address. The list of peak bodies include:

- Aged and Community Services Australia
- Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Australian Consumers Association
- Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Australian Education Union
- National Farmers' Federation
- Tourism Taskforce
- Catholic Welfare Australia
- National Union of Students

To view this list by the ABC go to:

<http://abc.net.au/public/elections/2001fed/peakbodies/default.htm>

Source: ABC

PROFILE OF CANDIDATES AND ELECTORATES

Candidates A-Z Index

Full list of the candidates standing in this election:

<http://abc.net.au/public/elections/2001fed/electorates/candindex.htm>

Electoralates A-Z Index

Profiles, history, 1993 results, comments from Antony Green, ABC's election analyst:

<http://abc.net.au/public/elections/2001fed/electorates/nameindex.htm>

Electoral Pendulum Table

A Table showing federal seats classified from safest to most marginal for both the government and the opposition.

<http://abc.net.au/public/elections/2001fed/electorates/pendulum.htm>

Source: ABC

Strategic Voting

Women's Electoral Lobby 2001 Federal Election Campaign

The Women's Electoral Lobby has been focusing on five areas: work and family, child-care, GST/superannuation, education and health. You may like to visit the WEL website www.wel.org.au to check out their political 'whether reports'.

The WEL website also has information about how to use your vote to make a statement and the value of voting below the line in the Senate:

<http://www.wel.org.au/election2001/vote/strat.shtml>

Source: WEL

Indigenous Election Issues and Candidates

Leading up to the elections *Speaking Out* on ABC Local Radio Sunday nights 9-10pm has featured Indigenous issues and Indigenous candidates for the Federal Elections. If you are wondering what all the major parties platforms are on Indigenous issues that go to the Speaking Out Election Special:

<http://www.abc.net.au/message/speaking/articles/elections.htm>
