

# Policy



# Coalition



# ALP

## The Business Environment

Achievements include:

- interest rates amongst the lowest on record since the late 1960's
- company tax rate reduced from 36 per cent to 30 per cent
- unemployment is 5.6 per cent compared to 8.3 per cent when Labor left office in 1996
- tax reform in 2000 recent announcement of additional tax relief.

Commitments in government will be:

- delivering budget surpluses in each year and reducing net debt
- reducing tax as a proportion of GDP
- reducing spending as a proportion of GDP.

## Small Business Policy

Key elements include:

- from 1 January 2005 business will not be required to provide employees with a report of their superannuation
- annual reporting of GST for businesses with a turnover of less than \$50,000
- legislation to protect small businesses from redundancy pay obligations
- a small business debt initiative that will allow a schedule of debt repayment of tax liabilities.

Key elements are to:

- simplify red tape and minimise the compliance costs of government regulation through the establishment of a Red Tape Reduction Office
- increased threshold defining small business from \$3 million to \$10 million and strengthening the predatory pricing provisions
- create a Small Business Advocate as an independent public statutory office to act as a voice within Government.

## Housing Policy

\$4.75 billion allocated nationally for safe, affordable public housing with individual bilateral agreements between the various states and territories being signed during June and July 2004. Key elements include:

- maintain the public and community housing sectors
- promote innovative approaches to provide additional resources into public and community housing
- ensure housing assistance supports social and economic participation.

The ALP will appoint a Housing Minister and a National Housing Advisory Council, which will be required to develop a national strategy for affordable housing within 12 months. and developed in consultation with the states, the private sector, housing consumers, unions, and non-government organisations

ALP will boost funds to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement by \$325 million over the first three years of a new four year agreement, aiming to deliver around 11,350 new homes for low-income families.

## Environment

Initiative's of the Government's Securing Australia's Energy Future statement include:

- an overhaul of the fuel excise system
- the provision of \$75 million for solar cities trials in urban areas to demonstrate a new energy scenario
- an objective is to ensure that Australians have reliable access to competitively priced energy and environmental issues are well-managed.

Committed to ensuring that future housing incorporates principles of ecologically sustainable development into the design and building process, with a focus on improving energy and water use of new homes.

Under a housing strategy, all housing units will be built according to mandatory national energy and water efficiency building standards, equivalent to five stars. A target introduction date of 2008 will allow for the development of appropriate performance requirements within the building standards.

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## Infrastructure

Infrastructure policy focus is on transport with the AusLink program announcing a \$3.6 billion increase in the Government's land transport funding. Major national projects will include the duplication of the Pacific Highway by 2016 and the Hume Highway by 2012.

Committed to setting strategic agendas under the Working Together for a Better Australia policy that include issues critical to the nation's future, such as infrastructure, housing, urban development, and the environment.

Through COAG the issues of population, congestion

and infrastructure in Australia will be high on the agenda, and the Commonwealth and states will work toward producing a National Infrastructure Plan.

## Industrial Relations

A formal statement on IR election policies not yet released: however, key elements of past statements include:

- fundamental preference for employment conditions and wages to be negotiated in individual workplaces
- support for continued workplace reform, particularly award simplification
- removal of Small Business from unfair dismissal laws
- upholding freedom of choice and freedom of association including right to belong to a union or not belong to a union
- retention of Australian Workplace Agreements ( AWAs )
- support for continuance of independent contracting as an alternative to Award employment
- creation of a Australian Building and Construction Commission to uphold rule of law in the construction industry
- pursuing options to implement a simpler and more unified national workplace relations system.

An intent to implement a seven-point plan to reform the Trade Practices Act to give small business a fair go and strengthen the ACCC. Other key IR policy for the ALP includes:

- a proposed new payroll tax to fund a national employee entitlements scheme
- increase in funding for an increased industrial inspectorate
- abolishment of AWA's but allowance for existing AWA's to expire
- abolishing the Building Industry Taskforce and establishing a tripartite building industry consultation body
- a commitment to national OH&S standards and tripartite consultation at a national level.

**Note: This information has been sourced from publicly released statements. Further information can be found at [www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au), [www.labor.org.au](http://www.labor.org.au) and the Australian Government portal [www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au)**