

THE TURNBULL COALITION TEAM

CCHQ 2016



27 June 2016

Ms Prue Warrilow
National Convenor
Australian Community Children's Services
Via e-mail: secretariat@ausccs.org.au

Dear Prue,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing your members. On behalf of the Coalition Members of Parliament and candidates I am pleased to respond to your survey.

Australia's future depends on how well we can continue to grow and shape our economy.

Only the Liberal and National Parties have an **economic plan** to do that and ensure Australia's future.

We have a clear plan to transition the economy from the mining and investment boom to a stronger and more diverse economy.

The key elements of our national economic plan for jobs and growth are:

- An Innovation and Science programme bringing Australian ideas to market. This means greater investment and more jobs and opportunities for our young people;
- A New Defence Industry plan that will secure an advanced defence manufacturing industry in Australia. This will create thousands of new hi-tech, higher paying jobs;
- Export Trade Deals that will generate more than 19,000 new export opportunities. These will create many more jobs for our urban and regional families;
- New Tax Incentives, which will include tax cuts for more small businesses. More than two million businesses can benefit, to deliver more growth and jobs; and
- A Strong New Economy with more than 200,000 jobs expected to be created.

Our national economic plan and management is already paying dividends. Last year our economy continued to grow creating almost 300,000 new jobs, many of them in small business.

We cannot put economic growth and the jobs that come with it at risk with a return to Labor and their debt and deficits, high taxing, big spending ideas.

Only a Liberal and National Party Government can protect Australia's future.

Once announced, our policies will be available at www.liberal.org.au and www.nationals.org.au.

Thank you for communicating the Coalition's commitments to your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Nutt', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tony Nutt
National Campaign Director

COALITION RESPONSE TO AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Turnbull Coalition remains committed to providing parents with more choice and opportunity to work, and providing children with access to high quality early education, through the *Jobs for Families* child care package announced in the 2015-16 Budget. This package will create a simpler, more affordable, accessible and flexible child care system by investing more than \$40 billion in child care support over the next four years.

The Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) is an important industry stakeholder representing a vital portion of the sector.

The Coalition appreciates ACCS's contribution to the development of the Coalition's child care package. We acknowledge your participation in the Productivity Commission Inquiry, the Regulatory Impact Statement and other consultations, and we are grateful for your ongoing insights and input. It has been particularly worthwhile having Prue Warrilow represent ACCS on the Ministerial Advisory Council during the development of the child care package.

Through its child care package, the Coalition is making responsible choices in its National Economic Plan to support jobs and growth, and boost the economy by directing spending where it is needed and most effective.

- 1. Increase the fee subsidy to 90 per cent of the full costs of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for low income families and 100 per cent of the full costs for children who are experiencing vulnerability or are at risk.**

The Turnbull Coalition remains committed to implementing its landmark child care package, including the additional investment of more than \$3 billion.

We have clearly outlined our fully-funded, long term reform plan which delivers support for children and families, and a sustainable system for taxpayers and the sector.

Our package includes an 85 per cent subsidy for those earning the least, reducing to a 20 per cent subsidy for those who earn the most.

The Coalition realises that additional support is needed for children at risk of serious abuse or neglect, families experiencing temporary financial hardship and grandparents on income support who are the primary carers of their grandchildren.

The Additional Child Care Subsidy will provide additional fee assistance to these disadvantaged and vulnerable families meeting 100 per cent of their child care fees (up to 120 per cent of the relevant fee cap) – in most cases that is free child care irrespective of their family's income. These families will also either be exempt from the activity test or have much reduced and simpler activity requirements.

While Labor has committed to increasing the child care benefit (CCB) and child care rebate (CCR) in January 2017, they have not identified how they will pay for it.

The Productivity Commission Inquiry into child care has been in the public domain for over a year, yet Labor has no plans beyond the current cash splash. It is not clear what Labor will do to rein in the unsustainable costs. Labor's child care spokesperson has even admitted Labor has no idea on long term reform.

The child care sector has been calling for reform for some time, yet Bill Shorten's policy will not deliver the reform that is needed.

In contrast to Labor's unfunded, rehashed promises, the Coalition has a fully-funded package that strikes the right balance between targeted child care support for hard working families who depend upon it, a generous safety net to protect those most vulnerable in our community and ongoing support for high quality early learning.

Prime Minister Turnbull has made it clear. If Labor passes the savings needed to fund our package, we will implement it as soon as possible. If Labor fails to pass the savings, all provisions of the child care package, as introduced in legislation on 2 December 2015, will be increased by CPI for implementation in July 2018.

2. All children, including those of non-working parents, are eligible for subsidised ECEC for at least 2 days per week – from a minimum of 18 hours up to 24 hours per week reflecting the operating hours of the service.

Australia's investment in early childhood education and care over the next four years will be around \$40 billion – this is the single largest investment in early learning and child care that this country has ever seen.

The Turnbull Coalition's child care package is fundamentally fair – it will provide the greatest hours of support in child care to the families who work the longest hours, and the greatest subsidy and financial support to the families who earn the least.

Almost one million Australian families will benefit as a result of the *Jobs for Families* child care package. Low and middle income families will benefit the most from the package.

Families on incomes of between \$65,000 and \$170,000 will be, on average, around \$30 a week better off – that's \$1,500 a year.

An activity test will ensure that taxpayers' support for child care is targeted to those who depend on child care to work, or work additional hours.

We want families to choose their child care around their work, rather than limit their work hours to suit their child care. It is estimated that the package will allow more than 230,000 families to increase their involvement in paid employment.

The Coalition's reforms include abolishing the \$7,500 Child Care Rebate (CCR) cap to ensure low and middle income families aren't limited by a cap on the amount of child care they can access. Families earning more than around \$185,000 will also benefit from an increased cap of \$10,000.

As part of our Child Care Safety Net, we will support families earning less than \$65,000 who do not meet the activity test by providing up to 24 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. That is the equivalent to two weekly six-hour sessions and will be subsidised at the highest 85 per cent rate (an increase on the current 72 per cent).

The Turnbull Coalition's child care package strikes the right balance between targeted child care support for hard working families who depend upon it, a generous safety net to protect those most vulnerable in our community and ongoing support for high quality early learning through \$843 million for 15 hours of preschool a week in the year before school.

3. Build a skilled and professional early childhood workforce – no HECS, free TAFE

With regard to the higher education loan programme (HELP), Australia has one of the most generous student loan schemes in the world, with no upfront tuition fees and no real rate of interest charged on the loan. An individual only starts paying back their loan from the taxpayer once their salary reaches a certain level.

The Coalition is investing a record \$16.7 billion in higher education this year. Our system is fair and generous but the Coalition is the only party at this election prepared to keep it that way.

As you will be aware, to support implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF) for Early Childhood Education and Care, Governments entered into the National Partnership Agreement on TAFE Fee Waivers for Child Care Qualifications in 2009 to reimburse states and territories for fees forgone in calendar years 2010 to 2014.

Through the National Partnership, States and Territories waived regulated fees for students undertaking diploma level child care qualifications to facilitate the increased number of qualified staff required by the sector to meet the requirements of the NQF. From January 2014, long day care services were required to have half of their educators holding, or actively working towards, an approved diploma level education and care qualification or above, with the remainder to have, or be actively working towards, at least an approved Certificate III level education and care qualification.

Total expenditure for the National Partnership was \$115 million. Data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research indicated that some 72,462 new student enrolments occurred over from 2010-2014. In some instances, Federal funding was paid to States and Territories regardless of whether those courses were completed.

The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning recommended that early childhood education and care employers "should accept primary responsibility for the funding and support of ongoing professional development" (recommendation 8.2) and the Coalition Government has taken that advice on board.

4. No children and their families in detention in Australia or off-shore

While in Government, Labor lost control of Australia's borders. Due to Labor's border chaos and dysfunction, 50,000 people arrived illegally on 800 boats and 1,200 people died at sea. Under Labor, over 8,000 children were put into detention. Sadly, at the height of Labor's policy failure in July 2013, 1,992 children were in detention.

It is important to remember that when the Howard Government left office in 2007 there were no illegal maritime arrivals (IMA) children in held detention.

The Coalition has worked determinedly to remove every child from detention. We are proud that, due to our border protection policies, there are now no children in detention.

This achievement, in addition to stopping the boats, ending the deaths at sea and closing 17 detention centres, illustrates that only the Coalition can secure the border and restore integrity to Australia's immigration system.

Contrary to media reports, community detention is not a 'bureaucratic sleight of hand'. Community detention allows people to live in the community rather than in a detention facility, while their immigration status is resolved. People in community detention live in residential housing in suburbs throughout a number of cities, not in detention facilities as has been claimed. This is not a new arrangement; community detention has been well established over a number of years.

People in community detention can move about freely in the community and receive visitors at their homes if they wish.

The Regional Processing Centres (RPC) in Nauru is managed and administered by the Governments of Nauru.

From 5 October 2015, the Government of Nauru extended the existing open centre arrangements in the RPC to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That means that transferees are now free to come and go from the RPC at any time. This freedom of movement enables transferees to engage with and develop relationships in the Nauruan community. The Coalition Government welcomed this development.

This change is being supported with additional safety, security and law enforcement measures. The Australian Federal Police has an ongoing role in providing advice and capacity building to the Nauru Police Force, particularly in the area of complex investigations.

The Coalition Government takes seriously the need to protect children who are in immigration detention from any abuse, neglect or exploitation and to assist the Government of Nauru to protect children in the Nauru RPC. Arrangements in relation to allegations of child abuse in Nauru, including reporting, investigation and the laying of any criminal charges are within the jurisdiction of Nauru.

As announced on 9 May 2015, the Government established a Child Protection Panel to provide independent advice on child protection matters. The Panel will work to strengthen policies and procedures to ensure the ongoing safety and welfare of children in the immigration system and RPCs.

The RPC on Manus Island is managed and administered by the Governments of Papua New Guinea. There are no children in detention on Manus Island.