

# Federal election 2010

## YOU DECIDE



This brochure has been developed by the QNU to ensure you are best placed to decide which political party gets your vote this federal election.



It contains a comparison of the major political parties' policy responses to a range of issues you may find relevant to your work and life. It also contains responses from candidates of the major political parties in your electorate about the commitments they are prepared to make to address some of the critical issues affecting aged care.

We need a government in place who has a clear understanding of the issues facing QNU members, and why health is so important to each and every Australian. With the increasing shortage of nurses and midwives across our health system we also need a government who is committed to action on health issues.

On August 21 it is critical that you consider these issues when exercising your vote.

Gay Hawksworth  
QNU Secretary

Beth Mohle  
QNU Assistant Secretary

## CANDIDATE RESPONSES FOR THE ELECTORATE OF BLAIR

The following information has been provided by or for your local federal candidates in response to a QNU survey on aged care.

Each candidate was asked to outline how their party specifically intends to address each of the four objectives of our *Because We Care* campaign.

This information was provided to the QNU by Friday, 30 July 2010.

Every attempt has been made to match responses provided by the candidates to the four criteria outlined by the QNU.

QNU	Shayne Neumann MP (ALP)	Neil Zabel (Lib/Nat Coalition)	Dr Patricia Petersen (The Greens)
Providing the right balance of skills and nursing hours so that nursing and care staff can provide quality care for every resident.	The skills of aged care workers are an important part of providing high quality care. A re-elected Labor will continue training more than 25,600 aged care workers and over the next four years, provide an additional 31,000 aged care training places to build the aged care workforce. Labor also committed \$60 million in the 2010-11 budget to provide financial incentives of up to \$5,000 for aged care workers and nurses to undertake further studies to enhance their career.	A strong and well resourced nursing and midwifery workforce is fundamentally important to supporting Australia's health system. The Coalition is committed to providing new and flexible education and training opportunities and appropriate career progression pathways for nurses and midwives.	An effective healthcare system relies on a skilled and well-resourced workforce. The Greens want to see proper planning for Australia's health workforce. We are concerned that little or no national coordination or leadership, which has created a desperate shortage of appropriately skilled and qualified health practitioners, has hampered this. The Greens' health policy explicitly calls for an increase in student places in medical, dental and nursing schools, and allied health courses, to address the shortage of health professionals.




QNU	Shayne Neumann MP (ALP)	Neil Zabel (Lib/Nat Coalition)	Dr Patricia Petersen (The Greens)
Ensuring fair pay for aged care nurses and care staff who are paid up to \$300 per week less than nurses in the other sectors.	Federal Labor has increased funding for aged and community care to more than \$47 billion over the next four years. While the Federal Government has overarching policy and funding responsibility for aged care, wages and conditions for carers are negotiated directly with the employer. To ensure a fair deal for all workers, Federal Labor ended WorkChoices and introduced a fairer industrial relations system with collective bargaining at its heart. These reforms included special provisions for workers who had limited access to bargaining in the past like aged care workers.	The Coalition has a proud history of investing in Australia's nursing workforce. From 2005-2007 alone, the Coalition created an additional 3,700 commencing nursing places.	The Greens would close the wages gap by establishing an independent statutory authority to benchmark the true cost of providing care and oversee aged care funding reform. We firmly believe that aged care workers should receive the recognition and support they deserve for the important caring role they provide, and believe that the aged care funding formula needs to be reformed to ensure that aged care workers are paid fairly and equitably.
Recognising the professional skill of Assistants in Nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.	In the 2010-11 budget the Government committed \$3.5 million to explore the regulation of personal care workers and assistants in nursing in aged care. This will inform consideration of whether to include personal care workers in the National Regulation and Accreditation Scheme.	In aged care there are many dedicated and committed individuals doing an extraordinary job under difficult circumstances. The Coalition knows that nurses and assistants in nursing who work in aged care provide a high level of care and loyalty to frail older Australians and deserve appropriate recognition.	The Greens are the only party to date who have a detailed vision statement on aged care reform. We released a comprehensive discussion paper on aged care reform in May, which we have circulated widely to all of the key stakeholders in the aged care industry, seeking feedback on the ideas it proposes as a basis for formulating a comprehensive policy on aged care reform which will be released in August.
Guaranteeing that taxpayer funding is used for nursing care for each resident.	The Government has created more than 10,000 new aged care places. Federal Labor has also asked the Productivity Commission to undertake a public inquiry into aged care. This will examine future workforce requirements and develop options to ensure the sector continues to have a suitably qualified, skilled and adequately remunerated workforce. Further research is being undertaken to explore the right number and skills-mix of staff to provide care and to further develop workforce strategies.	Funding for health and ageing under the Coalition increased from approximately \$20 billion in 1995-96 to over \$50 billion in 2007. The Coalition will be consultative and work with the aged care sector to deliver certainty. The sector will have a strong voice with government and we will listen to the experts. The bureaucracy and red tape must be addressed, and older Australians deserve more face to face care.	The Greens would ensure provision of high quality care by benchmarking the true cost of care and delivering funding reform so that that the aged care funding instrument of the future would guarantee care quality through the allocation of an appropriate mix of qualified staff. We would improve the transparency of aged care funding and depoliticise it by handing responsibility to an independent statutory authority.

## MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY POLICY COMPARISONS




### HEALTH CARE REFORM

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
What will you do to improve funding/reform of the health system in Australia?	Committed to building a better health and hospital system. Labor has delivered the biggest reforms to the health system since the introduction of Medicare. Committed to continuing the reform process that has seen more doctors and nurses in the system. Reforms to date have also made it easier to receive high quality primary care services in local communities (\$7.4 billion). An investment of \$466.7 million over next two years to establish e-health system.	Committed to providing additional resources for health and hospitals and to direct action to provide better models of care and alleviate pressure on our public hospitals. Will provide \$1.5 billion in mental health funding. Will work with health providers and the business community to build e-health capacity.	The Greens will promote early intervention and reduce the burden of chronic disease. Health and hospital networks should be organised to support primary health care. Support establishment of an e-health system.




**AGED CARE**

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
How will your party close the wages gap in aged care?	Productivity Commission established to undertake a public inquiry into aged care to examine the future workforce requirements and develop options to ensure the sector continues to have a suitably qualified and remunerated workforce.	Details of aged care policy will be issued prior to the election.	Committed to closing the wages gap by establishing an independent statutory authority to benchmark the true cost of providing care and oversee aged care funding reform.
How will your party provide the right skills mix and staff numbers to ensure high quality care in aged care facilities?	Productivity Commission to undertake a comprehensive inquiry into aged care. Part of this work will include options to ensure a skilled workforce into the future. Research being undertaken to explore the right number and skills mix of staff to provide care.	Will work consultatively with the sector to deliver certainty and engagement.	Ensure an aged care funding instrument that would guarantee care quality through the allocation of an appropriate mix of qualified staff.
What is your vision for aged care in 2020 including policy initiatives to enhance the employment of nurses in aged care into the future?	Will drive further reform in aged care if re-elected. Taking full policy and funding responsibility for aged care and has a vision for a national system.	The provision of good quality care for senior Australians is a priority for the Coalition. The sector will have a strong voice and a Coalition government would listen to the experts. Details to be provided prior to the election.	The Greens are concerned about the ongoing viability and sustainability of the aged care sector, the inadequate wages and conditions of aged care workers and nursing staff. The Greens have released a detailed vision statement on aged care and will release a policy in August.




**CLIMATE CHANGE**

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
In government what will you do to combat the harmful effects of climate change in relation to the health care sector?	Ratified Kyoto Protocol. Will build on community consensus to put a price on carbon in future. Will take action to increase use of renewable energy and reduce carbon emissions.	Committed to a 5% emissions reduction. Will create \$2.5 billion emissions reduction fund to support carbon reduction. Will commit \$2 million for major study into use of High Voltage Direct Current.	Policies and programs for better designed homes, quarantine practices, awareness campaigns, vaccination programs, mosquito control measures. Prevention measures by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Detail contained in 'Greens Safe Climate Bill'.

**WORKFORCE**

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
What is your position/ policy on increasing nursing and midwifery workforce numbers to meet demand?	Government has funded an additional 1,134 nursing and midwifery university places and increased vocational education places for enrolled nurses. Since 2007 funded more than 900 aged care nursing scholarships and more than 1,700 enrolled nurse training places.	From 2005 to 2007 the Coalition created 3,700 commencing nursing places. No current commitment provided on future workforce.	Support an increase in nursing student places to address the current shortage.
How will your party improve the education and training system for nurses and midwives, including initiatives to provide adequate clinical placements for nursing and midwifery students?	As part of the National Health and Hospitals Network reform plan, investing \$523 million to boost the nursing and midwifery workforce. This includes funding for training and education. Invested \$1.1 billion through a health workforce reform package which includes increasing undergraduate clinical training and supervision capacity.	New and flexible education and training opportunities and appropriate career progression pathways for nurses and midwives.	Work with stakeholders, including the ANF, to ensure the education and training systems for nurses and midwives meet necessary requirements and provide opportunities for practical experience.

**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
Will your party make changes to unfair dismissal legislation?	Support employees right to be protected from being sacked unfairly. Under Fair Work Australia once employees have gone through a probation period of six months (or 12 months for small business) they have a right to challenge an unfair dismissal.	Will not seek to change the Fair Work Act for three years of the next term of parliament.	Support unfair dismissal laws. Support strengthening unfair dismissal laws to strengthen the rights of employees.
What is your position/policy on individual work contracts?	Oppose 'take-it-or-leave-it' individual contracts. Under Labor no work contract can undercut the safety net of the modern award system.	Would not seek to change the Fair Work Act for three years of the next term of parliament.	Oppose individual workplace contracts.
What is your position/policy on improving health and safety laws for workers?	Committed to establishing harmonised national OHS legislation in place by January 2012. This reform will result in consistent and better safety standards across Australia, and will prevent future state government's weakening safety laws.	No commitment on OHS laws.	Support, in principle, the harmonisation of OHS laws across the nation and want to ensure they improve standards.
What is your policy on improving superannuation contributions?	Will increase superannuation guarantee rate from 9 to 12% if re-elected.	No commitment on increasing superannuation.	Support increasing compulsory contributions to at least 12%.
Does your party support pay equity for women workers?	Support pay equity for women. Through the Fair Work Act, strengthened equal remuneration provisions to include the right of employees to equal pay for work of equal or comparative value.	No commitment on support for pay equity.	Committed to pay equity and support the recommendations of the 'Making it Fair' report.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
What measures will your party take to close the gap in health outcomes and life expectancy between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians?	In 2008 six targets established to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage in life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational attainment and employment outcomes. \$1.2 billion in 2010 Budget for Indigenous health programs and other programs for Indigenous people.	Environmental health a prime focus. Building appropriate houses and reducing overcrowding is critical in providing a healthy environment. The Coalition will release an Indigenous policy closer to the election.	First political party to join the Close the Gap coalition. Supported Aboriginal health and social service providers in criticising the negative impacts of the NT intervention. Advocated for the provision of renal services for Aboriginal elders in central Australia to tackle chronic disease.



**Want to know more?**

Visit our website at [www.qnu.org.au/election2010](http://www.qnu.org.au/election2010) for comprehensive federal election coverage:

- » Complete responses from the candidates in your electorate
- » Comprehensive responses provided by the major political parties
- » See our television advertisements

**Need to contact the QNU?**

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