

# Election 2010

## YOU DECIDE



### vote for more nurses and midwives

A comparison of the major political parties' policies on election issues affecting nurses and midwives and Australia's health system.









**W**ith the federal election due to be held on 21 August, the *ANJ* brings you a comparison of the major political parties' policy responses to a range of questions from the Australian Nursing Federation. The comparison is a summary of the answers received from the parties. To view the full response from the ALP, Liberal/National Coalition and The Greens

and a round-up of election issues of concern to nurses and midwives, visit the ANF website and click on the link to the federal election under Hot Topics. This election will be crucial in determining the future of Australia's health care system. You decide who is best positioned to take us forward as a nation.

**Lee Thomas**, ANF Federal Secretary

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS



ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
Does your party support multi-employer bargaining?	Supports the right to collective bargaining for all employees. The Fair Work Act now allows agreements involving multiple employers where this suits all parties and is their preference.  Provides special arrangements for employers who are technically separate but strongly interconnected. These single interest employer declarations allow employers such as public hospitals within one state, or aged care facilities run by a single organisation to bargain together as if they were a single enterprise.	Will not seek to change the Fair Work Act for three years of the next term of parliament. If changes are needed, will seek a mandate for them at the 2013 election.	Support multi-employer bargaining and recognise this as an essential component of ensuring fairness and stability across occupations.
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.

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
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.




## WORKFORCE

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
What is your position/policy on increasing nursing and midwifery workforce numbers to meet demand?	In government 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.




## 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.




## HEALTH CARE REFORM

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
<p>What will you do to improve funding/reform of the health system in Australia?</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

## CLIMATE CHANGE

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
<p>In government what will you do to combat the harmful effects of climate change in relation to the health care sector?</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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'.</p>

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

ANF	ALP 	Lib/Nat Coalition 	The Greens 
<p>What measures will your party take to close the gap in health outcomes and life expectancy between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians?</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>What action will you take to address the serious social problem of housing affordability and homelessness in Australia?</p>	<p>Invested \$4.9 billion in new funding to address homelessness with an additional \$400 million from the states and territories. These initiatives helped increase funding to homelessness services by 55% and construction of more than 80,000 affordable homes by 2012.</p>	<p>Will release a plan closer to the election, taking a holistic approach to homelessness. Will work towards reducing the levels of homelessness by working with the community and attacking the causes of homelessness.</p>	<p>Will rebuild the public housing sector and increase community housing stock. New housing developments required to include 20% low cost and public housing. Will review barriers to housing affordability, including tax concessions.</p>
<p>Do you support a compassionate and humane approach to refugees that complies with Australia's obligations under international law?</p>	<p>Will work towards an effective, sustainable, long term regional approach. Will work with regional neighbours and with the UN High Commission for Refugees to develop a regional processing centre for asylum seekers.</p>	<p>System of accepting people should be implemented in a context of rigorous border protection. It must be sustainable, orderly and fair to those in refugee camps around the world. Policies are consistent with Australia's obligations under international law.</p>	<p>Committed to a long-term, practical and humane approach to immigration that upholds Australia's commitments under international law and rejects policies of mandatory and indefinite detention, detention of children and off-shore processing. Will prioritise the processing of asylum claims and increase humanitarian intake from current 13,750 per year to 20,000.</p>

# Nurses and midwives vote for...



practical and effective efforts to deal with the increasing pressure felt within the Australian nursing...

## WORKFORCE

Australia's nurses and midwives want a nursing and midwifery workforce that is adequately skilled and properly resourced to meet increasing workload pressure and more complex care.

**Issues facing nurses and midwives include:**

- a critical skills shortage in some areas of nursing and midwifery; and
- unsustainable workloads forcing nurses and midwives to leave the profession.

**As Australia faces a federal election nurses and midwives call for**

- a national workforce strategy (including rural and remote areas) that provides the following:
  - > manageable workloads
  - > educational places to meet demand
  - > re-entry, refresher education
  - > fully funded clinical placements available in all states; and
  - > graduate nurse programs.



decent and fair health, safety, compensation and rehabilitation practices within Australian workplaces...

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Australia's nurses and midwives should be protected from injury and if injured should receive appropriate compensation.

**Issues facing nurses and midwives include:**

- workplace violence;
- needlestick injury; and
- manual handling injury, including back injury.

**As Australia faces a federal election nurses and midwives call for**

- fair OHS and workers' compensation laws and standards; and
- funding for programs to protect nurses and midwives from workplace violence, manual handling and needlestick injuries.



fair pay and working conditions and adequate workplace protection for all Australia's workers

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Every worker in Australia deserves to be treated with respect and equality and has the right to be represented by a union.

**Issues facing nurses and midwives include:**

- nursing and midwifery are professions comprised largely of women. Women workers generally earn around 18 per cent less than men;
- nurses and midwives in the private sector still experience barriers to collective bargaining; and
- an entrenched reluctance by some employers to negotiate fair wages.

**As Australia faces a federal election nurses and midwives call for**

- wages and conditions that recognise the value of nurses and midwives;
- recruitment and retention policies to attract nurses and midwives;
- improved industry bargaining;
- enhanced protections and roles for workplace delegates;
- policies to address the needs of women workers; and
- the abolition of the Australian Building and Construction Commission.



**all Australians gaining access to quality, comprehensive and accountable...**

## HEALTH CARE

All Australians are entitled to equitable access to quality health care. Australian nurses and midwives form the backbone of the health care system.

**Issues facing nurses and midwives include:**

- an ageing health workforce;
- inequities in health care delivery due to lack of access;
- the underutilisation of advanced nursing roles such as nurse practitioners;
- lack of primary health care services;
- lack of funding for mental health services; and
- lack of dental services under Medicare as part of a universal health system.

**As Australia faces a federal election nurses and midwives call for**

- prevention and greater emphasis on primary health care services;
- expansion of advanced nursing roles; and
- expanded mental health services.



**best practice and safe nursing care delivery in**

## AGED CARE

Older Australians have the right to quality care and families should be confident their loved ones are being compassionately and safely cared for by registered and enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing.

**Issues facing nurses and assistants in nursing include:**

- nurses working in aged care earn \$300 per week less than their public hospital colleagues;
- difficult to attract and retain adequate numbers of nursing staff to aged care;
- more residents with high care needs;
- no mandated staffing levels and skills mix; and
- a lack of funding transparency in the aged care sector.

**As Australia faces a federal election nurses and assistants in nursing call for**

- establishment of minimum staffing levels and the right skills mix;
- national licensing of all direct care staff;
- establishment of supplementary funding to achieve and maintain wage parity; and
- transparent funding arrangements.



**urgent action on climate change, fair and humane treatment of asylum seekers, good health and self-determination For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ...**

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

All Australians deserve equitable access to the basic human rights of health care based on need, adequate housing, freedom from persecution and discrimination, and a clean environment.

**Issues of concern to nurses and midwives:**

- poor health outcomes for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- the harmful impact of climate change;
- the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers; and
- homelessness and disadvantage among sections of the Australian community.

**As Australia faces a federal election nurses and midwives call for**

- action to close the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
- action to address and combat the harmful effects of climate change on the environment and health care sector;
- a compassionate and humane policy approach to refugees and asylum seekers; and
- action to ensure homeless and disadvantaged people have access to a range of health, education, housing and income support services.