

Federal election 24th November 2007

'Vote as if women matter'

Vote as if women matter

Women are discriminated against in structural ways that continue decade after decade. Even in the 21st century, women have a greater struggle than men to achieve equal opportunity. Wages are still lower, universal maternity leave is a dream, childcare is not available to all who need it, and superannuation remains starkly inequitable for men and women retiring and about to retire in the next two decades.

What you can do!

Vote for political parties that have women's policies and a commitment to eliminating inequity between men and women.

Women make up 51% of the Australian population. We have had the vote in Federal elections since 1902. More than a century! Why haven't we used the vote to demand equal status?

If we think it matters that we do not have equal rights in this country, we could use our vote to make a difference.

If women mattered, we would care that:

- men's wages are approximately 51 per cent higher than women's. This is a result of both direct discrimination, and lower earnings for many female dominated occupations. Why **does** a childcare worker earn less than a caretaker?¹
- there are over 100,000 single mothers living in poverty. There are considerably more poor women in sole parent families than there are men (104,000 compared with 34,000)²
- average retirement pay-outs were expected to be \$130,000 for men and \$45,000 for women in 2006. Actual average account balances were \$56,400 for men and \$23,900 for women in 2004³

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- Australia is 1 of only 2 OECD Countries that do **not** have government funded paid maternity leave. In contrast, the United Kingdom offers 26 weeks⁴
- approximately 160,000 women want to work but are not looking because of issues relating to childcare, including shortage of childcare places, long waiting lists (especially for under 3 year olds) and increasing costs.⁵

1 http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/womens_rights_watch/ (Accessed 27.9.2007)

2 Ibid

3 Figures from Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia research cited in Corboy, A. (2007, September 29) System not so super. *The Age*. [Online]. Retrieved October 2, 2007

4 http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/womens_rights_watch/ (Accessed 27.9.2007)

5 Ibid

So which political parties have policies to address injustice for women?

The Greens

The Greens Women's policy outlines 6 Principles, 8 Goals and 14 Measures to address these (and more) inequities. See http://greens.org.au/about/policy/policy.php?policy_id=26 ⁶

Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats have a policy entitled 'Equality for Women', with sub-headings of 'Paid Maternity Leave', 'Pregnancy Counselling', 'Sexual and Reproductive Health', 'Status of Women' and 'Women's Health'. See http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/election_07_our_election_platform/#women

ALP

The ALP's policy is more nebulous. Women are grouped with youth and seniors. There are eight media releases listed, four of which relate to women: improving safety; 12 months unpaid leave for both parents after birth of a baby; and a women's budget statement. There is also mention of *Child Care and Families Policies* which repeated the same policies already outlined under Women, Youth and Seniors. See <http://www.alp.org.au/policy/index.php>

Liberal Party

The Liberal party does not appear to have a women's policy. See <http://www.liberal.org.au/> When we asked the local member's office staff, we were directed to the Office for Women site. The Office of Women itself has lost funding and been moved out of the Dept of PM under the Howard Govt⁷. See <http://www.ofw.facs.gov.au/>

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The record of the Howard Govt since 1996 on women's issues includes the following: Many key women's organisations were abolished or defunded, including the Women's Bureau in DEET; Women's Statistical Unit in ABS; the Women's Electoral Lobby; the Register of Women in the OSW. Since Howard came to power in 1996, the gap between men's and women's average full time earnings widened from \$163.30 in 1996, to \$195.40 in May 2004 to \$301 a week less than men in 2004⁸. The current difference in average weekly total earnings is \$891.20 for men and \$588.50 for women. This is a \$302 difference⁹. Despite the work of the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, a national scheme of paid maternity leave has not been adopted¹⁰.

National Party

The National party does not appear to have a women's policy. See <http://www.nationals.org.au/About/Policies/default.asp>

⁶ All websites accessed october 2 and 3, 2007

⁷ Summers, A (2003) The End of Equality. Random House Australia.

⁸ (http://www.trishcrossin.com.au/html/media_2004_10_27.html) Accessed 3.10.2007

⁹ http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/womens_rights_watch/#pay (accessed 3.10. 2007))

¹⁰ Crabb, A, 'Government rejected family task force' in The Age, 13.2.2004

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/02/12/1076548160751.html> (accessed 14.10.2007)

What now?

Use your vote to tell government that women matter. Equality matters. OR take it up notch and influence election promises by asking your local member or candidates what they will do to address **lower pay for women or no national paid maternity leave or limited child care or lower superannuation payouts for women.**

Actions to take:

- Tell your candidates that you care about women's issues. Call, write or email and ask for their women's policy. See [below](#) for contact details for candidates in our region
- Take part in surveys
- Write letters to newspapers
- Ring talkback radio shows

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- Vote in electronic polls
- Pass on information to friends and people in your circle of influence. Never underestimate the ripple effect.

Candidate list for Hume region

House of Representatives

INDI

Standing Member

Sophie Mirabella - LP- 117 Murphy Street Wangaratta, Vic 3677. 0357215377-
sophie.mirabella.mp@aph.gov.au

Declared Candidates

Dr Helen Robinson- The Greens- 0429 453 180

begin_of_the_skype_highlighting 0429 453

180 end_of_the_skype_highlighting indi@greens.org.au

Zuvele Leschen – ALP- 280 McLees Rd Buffalo River Vic 3737. 0357542279-
zuvele@yahoo.com

MCEWAN

Standing Member

Fran Bailey-LP- 237 Maroondah Highway Healesville Vic 3777. 0359621255-
fran.baileymp@aph.gov.au

Declared Candidates

Rob Mitchell-ALP-PO Box 426 Diamond Creek Vic 3089

Steven Meacher- The Greens- PO Box 250 Healesville Vic 3777, 0447 330

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9008 end_of_the_skype_highlighting mcewen@greens.org.au

MURRAY

Standing Member

Sharman Stone- PO Box 884 Shepparton Vic 3632. 0358215371
sharman.stone.mp@aph.gov.au

Declared Candidates

Bob Scates-ALP-PO Box 95 Wedderburn Vic 3158 . 0357951879

bob.scates@alp.org.au

Ian Christoe- The Greens- murray@greens.org.au

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Senate Candidates 2007

Lyn Allison- Democrats- 1st Floor/62 Wellington Pde East Melbourne Vic 3002 – 94161880 senator.allison@aph.gov.au

Jacinta Collins –ALP- Unit 6/410 Burwood Hwy Wantrina South Vic 3152 – 0262775880 senator.jacinta.collins@aph.gov.au

Richard di Natalie –Greens- GPO Box 4589 Melbourne Vic 3001 – 96021141 richarddinatale@vic.greens.org.au

Mitch Fifield- Liberals- 42 Florence Street Mentone Vic 3194 – 95842455 senator.fifield@aph.gov.au

David Feeney-ALP-GPO Box 622 Kingston ACT 2604 -0261200800 david.feeney@cbr.alp.org.au

Gavin Marshall- ALP-376 Victoria Street North Melbourne 3051 – 93489699 senator.marshall@aph.gov.au

Gary Plumridge – Family First- 1 Little Ryrie Street Geelong Vic 3220- 0428522951 gary.plumridge@familyfirst.org.au

Scott Ryan-Liberals- 104 Exhibition Street Melbourne Vic 3000 – scott.ryan@vic.liberal.org.au

Helen Kroger- Liberals – 104 Exhibition Street Melbourne Vic 3000- helen.kroger@vic.liberal.org.au

Nick Steel- One Nation- (Details not available at of 17.10.2007)

Media Releases

Nicola Roxon MP

Shadow Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

Labor's policies on women's health

Labor's Shadow Minister for Health Nicola Roxon tonight outlined Federal Labor's vision for women's health policy when she participated in an expert discussion panel at the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health in Melbourne.

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“Labor is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all women in Australia, and implementing policies to encourage the health system to be more responsive to the needs of women.

“Women are the majority of health consumers, the majority of health service providers and the majority of carers in the Australian community.

“Women use Medicare services twice as much as men largely because of pregnancy and child birth, and because they are more likely to live longer and therefore experience conditions common to old age.

“Further, as the primary care givers in the Australian community, women more often experience the hardships and cost arising from the intersection between our primary care, hospital and aged care sectors.

“We understand that some health issues – such as gynaecological cancers and pregnancy related conditions – only affect women, and that other health issues - such as osteoporosis and stroke - affect more women than men.

“Labor recognises that by improving the health of all Australian women we will improve the health of the whole community,” said Ms Roxon.

“A Rudd Labor Government will develop - in consultation with State and Territory governments, health service providers, consumers and advocacy groups – a national policy on women’s health that will encourage specific health services for women and will actively promote participation of women in health decision making and management.

“The Howard Government have had no strategy for women’s health over the past 11 years – Labor’s national policy on women’s health will be the most significant development in this area since Australia launched its first National Women’s Health Policy under a previous Labor Government in 1989.”

A range of Labor’s recent health initiatives will particularly impact on women’s health:

- With nearly 4 in 5 women suffering from at least one long term ill-health condition, and women experience higher prevalence asthma, hypertensive disease, chronic sinusitis and arthritis than men, Labor’s pledge to shift the focus of our health system towards a greater focus on preventative health, enhanced health promotion and greater attention to monitoring and managing Australia’s escalating burden of chronic disease will particularly impact on women’s health.
- Labor’s \$600 million elective surgery plan will slash waiting lists for hip, knee, and hernia procedures.

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- Labor's \$220 million commitment to *GP Super Clinics* will bring health professionals – doctors, specialists, allied health – together in the one place, substantially improving the accessibility and convenience of health services for women and their families.
- Labor's \$85 million commitment to combat postnatal depression will see the introduction of routine screening of mothers, together with the provision of better support and treatment for mothers, both in the lead up to the birth but particularly in those critical early weeks and months.
- Labor's \$135 million National Cancer Plan includes:
 - \$15 million for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Centre;
 - \$15 million for independent clinical trials of drugs and research into cancer treatment;
 - \$25 million to screen 50 year olds for bowel cancer;
 - \$15 million in the construction of a new Children's Cancer Centre at the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH), Adelaide; and
 - \$50 million to establish a Comprehensive Cancer Centre in Sydney.

Labor has also matched the Coalition's commitment to providing \$41 million over 4 years for breast prostheses, specialist breast cancer nurses, and additional funding towards the National Centre for Gynaecological Cancers.

- As part of Labor's \$260 million indigenous health package, Labor has committed \$92 million for comprehensive indigenous child and maternal health services and \$10 million for accommodation services for indigenous women who travel from remote to urban and regional centres to have their babies.
- Labor's \$6 million commitment to support the Specialist Obstetrician Locum Scheme on a continuing basis, and expand it to provide support to GP proceduralists, will improve obstetrician services to women in rural areas.
- Labor is committed to national maternity services planning to ensure a range of birthing options and support services – such as community nurses and midwives – are available across Australia, to ensure that women have appropriate care both in the antenatal and postnatal period.
- Labor wants to support parents to ensure that their children get off to the best start in life. In consultation with experts, Labor will develop a Healthy Kids Check, so that kids starting school receive an assessment of their basic health such as teeth, hearing, balance and sight – and

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produce a Healthy Habits for Life guide, providing practical information to help parents assist their children to develop healthy habits for life.

- In the first instalment of Federal Labor's dental policy, we have committed \$290 million to 1 million consultations and treatments through public dental services.

“Labor’s national policy on women’s health will ensure the Commonwealth identifies and develops solutions specific to the health needs of women.”

29 October 2007

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