



30 April 2019

Maria Dimopoulos  
Harmony Alliance  
PO Box 1895  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Dimopoulos

Thank you for your correspondence and the opportunity to outline Labor's policies.

Gender equality for all Australian women is at the heart of the Labor mission. Achieving equality is a test of our national character and an essential building block for national prosperity.

A Shorten Labor Government will put achieving gender equality for Australian women at the centre of our priorities with a new National Gender Equality Strategy.

**1) What measures will your party take to promote **equality and multiculturalism** in Australia?**

Australia is a nation of 25 million stories from all corners of the globe and our diversity makes us one of the most multicultural countries on earth.

Labor is committed to greater inclusion and ensuring that all Australians know they are valued for their contribution.

Labor believes every Australian deserves the right to live free from racial and ethnic vilification. Modern Australia and multicultural Australia are the same thing. We will continue to fight for important protections against racial hate speech in Australia.

Labor strongly opposes the Liberals' out of touch proposal for changes to Australian citizenship law. Setting the bar at university-level english does not reflect the contribution migrants have made to our society across all walks of life, and we will not support the Liberals' view that if you don't have university-level english you don't deserve to be an Australian citizen. We also remain opposed to the Liberals' proposal to significantly extend the wait time for permanent residents to affirm their commitment to Australia through citizenship.

In government, Labor would enhance support for people in culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Australia by strengthening the Adult Migrant English Program, establishing a dedicated body - Multicultural Australia, better tailor settlement services to community needs and improve data collection, and by boosting support for community organisations.

Labor will have more to say about our commitments to a multicultural Australia in the lead up to the election.

**2) What measures will your party take to ensure women from migrant and refugee backgrounds are provided with equitable access to, and experience of, the Australian healthcare system, in order to achieve **equal health outcomes**?**

Labor believes in investing in health care so all Australians can access and afford the best possible quality of care. The Liberals have cut billions of dollars from hospitals under a funding formula doctors say will “doom our public hospital system to failure.”

Labor will invest an extra \$2.8 billion building new hospitals and wards, reducing elective surgery and emergency department waiting times, and restoring the core health funding cut by the Liberals.

We will invest more in Medicare and lift the Liberal’s rebate freeze within our first 50 days if elected.

Labor will also deliver the biggest cancer care package in Australian history – our Medicare Cancer Plan – with a \$2.3 billion investment to dramatically slash out-of-pocket costs for cancer patients. This will mean millions of free scans, millions of free consultations and cheaper medicines for cancer patients.

A Shorten Labor Government will make women’s health a national priority by committing to the Australian Women’s Health Charter and implementing a National Women’s Health Policy that addresses women’s health needs throughout their lives, and addresses gender, ethnicity and other social determinants of health.

Labor will tackle breast and ovarian cancer by:

- Investing \$47 million to cover the cost of breast cancer MRIs.
- Providing \$20 million to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute.
- Funding metastatic cancer nurses in 24 new locations.
- Providing \$12 million to Ovarian Cancer Australia, potentially preventing 2,500 cases of breast cancer and 800 cases of ovarian cancer.

We will deliver Australia’s first ever National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy so all Australian women can access safe, legal, affordable reproductive health services.

Labor will also invest in maternal health so mums and babies get the best start in life. Labor will make sure thousands of premature and underweight babies get access to life-saving donor breast milk with a \$15.2 million breastfeeding package. We’ll also invest \$5 million to drive down Australia’s still birth rate, which is higher in migrant and refugee communities.

**3) What measures will your party take to improve the **employment outcomes** of women from migrant and refugee backgrounds?**

Every worker, no matter where they have come from or what languages they speak, must be treated with fairness, dignity and respect in the workplace.

Labor believes that people who are looking for work need to be supported to develop the skills and experience they need for jobs in their local area, and helped to find secure, decent jobs.

Labor knows that the current system isn't working for unemployed people, businesses, or taxpayers. We believe that labour market programs should be geared towards making people more work-ready, helping them get the skills they need, and helping them to get a secure, decent job.

Instead of ticking boxes, employment service providers should be getting to the bottom of what's stopping unemployed people getting work, building relationships with employers, and getting a better understanding of the local labour market.

People receiving payments need help to look for work and deal with the underlying impediments to getting work – like homelessness, domestic violence, or coming from a non-english speaking background.

Under Labor, mutual obligation and any compliance measures that go with it, will be aimed at helping people to get off income support and into sustainable work.

**4) What measures will your party take to improve **access to education** for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds?**

Labor will ensure that when migrants and their families come to Australia, they are able to fully participate in Australian life – this means access to free public education for children, English language support and work rights for dependents.

Labor is committed to strengthening the Adult Migrant English Program so it's more effective with more services available.

We will also invest an extra \$8 million in community language schools so more Australian children get the chance to learn other languages. Community language schools contribute to Australia's standing as a successful multicultural nation – they help preserve and celebrate cultures and traditions and promote diversity, inclusion and respect.

Investing in education is critical to building an economy that works for everyone.

Labor will provide an extra \$14 billion over 10 years to deliver the biggest school investment in Australian history, ensuring every child in every school gets the funding they need to succeed.

We will also invest \$1.7 million to extend the national preschool program so it covers three and four-year-olds. This means 15 hours of quality early learning per week for every child in the two years before they start school, ensuring they get the best start to their education.

Labor wants Australia to be a country with a strong economy and secure, well-paid jobs – that's why we're investing in TAFE, apprenticeships and universities.

A Shorten Labor Government will waive upfront TAFE fees for 100,000 students and create 150,000 new apprenticeship places. We will also end the Liberals' cap on Commonwealth supported university places and help 200,000 more young Australians attend university over the next decade.

To make sure all Australians get the chance to study at university, including students who are the first in their family to go to university, or who come from migrant or refugee backgrounds, Labor will invest an extra \$174 million in a University Pathway Fund.

**5) What measures will your party take to ensure the availability of **safe and adequate housing** for all women from migrant and refugee backgrounds?**

Labor believes affordable and secure housing is essential to wellbeing, participation and social inclusion, and that all Australians have a right to safe, affordable and appropriate housing throughout their lives.

Housing affordability and increasing homelessness are significant social and economic challenges that must be addressed, requiring national leadership and the Commonwealth has a substantial role to play.

A Shorten Labor Government will build 250,000 new affordable rental homes over the next decade in partnership with the community housing sector for Australians on low and moderate incomes.

In November 2018, Labor announced \$18 million for Safe at Home Grants to help people affected by violence stay safe in their own home.

Labor will invest in an \$88 million Safe Housing Fund to deliver transitional housing for women and children escaping violence, older women at risk of homelessness and young people exiting out-of-home care as they move between crisis accommodation and a long term home.

A Shorten Labor Government will also launch a national refuge build, doubling the Liberals' funding for refuges and emergency housing, with an extra \$60 million to deliver new refuges, upgrades, accessibility improvements and better facilities for children across the country.

Labor will also re-establish the National Housing Supply Council and appoint a dedicated Federal Housing and Homelessness Minister.

**6) What measures will your party take to improve **access to early childhood care** for children from migrant and refugee backgrounds?**

A Shorten Labor Government will deliver massive cost-of-living relief for nearly one million Australian families struggling with the costs of child care with a \$4 billion investment in early education. A Shorten Labor Government will put more money back in working parents' pockets for 887,000 Australian families.

We will increase the subsidy rate from 85 per cent to 100 per cent up to the hourly fee cap (currently \$11.77 per hour for long day care) for families earning up to \$69,000 who meet the activity test requirements. This will make child care free, or almost free, for up to 372,000 families.

Labor will also crack down on excessive fee increases and review the system for vulnerable children to make sure vulnerable and low-income families and children aren't falling through the cracks.

This is on top of Labor's \$1.7 billion National Preschool and Kindy Program which will provide 15 hours preschool in the two years before school. For the first time, every three-year-old in Australia will be able to access 15 hours of subsidised world class preschool, so they can get the best start to learning.

With 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurring before the age of five, investing in quality early education is one of the smartest investments our nation can make.

**7) What measures will your party take to prevent violence against women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and to support victims/survivors?**

A Shorten Labor Government will make a record Commonwealth investment of over \$660 million in the Fourth Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, more than doubling current funding and committing to long term change.

Labor's package includes commitments that specifically address violence against migrant and refugee women and women on temporary visas.

Women from migrant and multicultural backgrounds or on temporary visas often face additional barriers in reporting domestic violence, leaving violent relationships and accessing culturally competent services.

A Shorten Labor Government will deliver a new 10-year National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children – with a dedicated national strategy for culturally and linguistically diverse women.

Labor will invest \$62 million in Local Community Prevention and Front-Line Service Grants – including a dedicated funding stream for culturally and linguistically diverse women.

Other measures to protect women from migrant and refugee backgrounds include:

- Flexible support packages. Labor will invest \$60 million in 20,000 Flexible Support Packages of up to \$10,000 to support people escaping family violence in practical ways that help them the most – such as rent, furniture, transport, medication, home security and transport costs – which temporary visa holders will be able to access.
- Tackling forced marriage. Labor will invest \$13.6 million to tackle forced marriage and introduce forced marriage protection orders and a Commonwealth Forced Marriage Unit to assist victims.
- Recognising economic abuse. Labor will change the law to ensure economic abuse is a recognised form of family violence, and that dowry abuse can be one of many kinds of financial abuse.
- Supporting women on temporary visas. Labor will review immigration and social security arrangements and invest \$5 million in services and interpreters.

You can read more about Labor's family violence commitments at <https://alp.org.au/policies/preventing-family-violence/>.

**8) What is your vision for Australia's migration program, in particular regarding pathways to permanency, citizenship backlogs, family visa processing times and humanitarian commitments?**

Labor is committed to developing policies that enable and promote the participation of migrants and refugees in society by recognising the value of Australia's diversity and removing barriers to access and participation.

Labor will adopt a long-term approach when setting annual immigration levels. Permanent migrants provide a stable, effective and targeted source of skilled workers. Labor will encourage employers to sponsor temporary visa holders for permanent residency where the visa holders are working under successful arrangements and have priority skills which are in shortage in Australia.

A Shorten Labor Government will deliver a fairer Long Stay Parent visa so that Australian families from migrant and multicultural backgrounds can reunite with their loved ones. The visa is uncapped, available for both sets of parents and is one quarter of the cost of the Liberals' visa.

As Australia's migrant and multicultural communities re-establish their lives in Australia, the ability for families to reunite with parents and grandparents still overseas is highly restrictive and expensive. Labor's Long Stay Parent visa will make it easier for migrant families to temporarily reunite with their parents:

<b>Labor's Fairer Long Stay Parent visa</b>	<b>The Liberals' unfair Temporary Sponsored Parent visa</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncapped.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visas capped to 15,000 places.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families can reunite with both sets of parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited to one set of parents per household.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$2,500 for a five year visa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$10,000 for a five year visa.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$1,250 for a three year visa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$5,000 for a three year visa.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew in Australia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can't be renewed in Australia.</li> </ul>

In respect to the global humanitarian crisis, Labor believes Australia can, and should, play its part by helping to resettle our fair share of genuine refugees and is committed to progressively increase Australia's annual humanitarian intake to 27,000.

Additionally, Labor's planned reform of the Community Sponsored Refugee Program will, over time, allow up to 5,000 refugees to resettle in Australia annually. If elected, Labor will also appoint a Special Envoy for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Issues. We will abolish Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas, which leave asylum seekers in a state of limbo, and place those found to be refugees on permanent protection visas.

Labor is committed to ensuring people seeking asylum will have means-tested access to funded migration assistance, and to appropriate social services, including income, crisis housing, healthcare, mental health, community, education and English as a Second Language support during the assessment of the claim for protection – following the Liberals' savage Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) cuts.

Yours sincerely

**Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters**

[www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)

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