



18 May 2022

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Dear Ms Brown and Mr Kassisieh,

Thank you for the election questionnaire you have sent to the Australian Labor Party. Thank you also for your invitation for Labor to participate in your jointly-hosted National LGBTIQ+ Election Forum, at which the Opposition was represented by Senator the Hon Penny Wong.

Labor believes all Australians deserve the same human rights, equality, respect and safety as each other.

Indeed, Labor is the primary architect of the anti-discrimination law framework in Australia. We will continue to defend and enhance that framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose, accessible and promotes equality. We will seek to enhance protections in a way that brings Australians together, drawing on the bonds of our common humanity, as expressed in the human rights treaties that Australia has ratified and that Labor continues to champion.

A recent illustration of that was when Shadow Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones wrote to the Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar in support of Equality Australia and LGBTIQ+ Health Australia's call to count LGBTIQ+ Australians in the Census.

We are a diverse nation and we need to respect every Australian for who they are. We don't want to see anyone treated unfairly.

Ambassador for Human Rights

An elected Albanese Labor Government will appoint an Ambassador for Human Rights to restore Australia's leadership on human rights around the world. The Ambassador will advance rights and protections for people living with a disability, ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBTIQ+ individuals and bolster Australia's support for the UN human rights architecture and international law.

Health and crisis support

Labor will work closely with LGBTIQ+ Australians and advocates to develop policy that will ensure equality before the law and strengthen Medicare so that LGBTIQ+ Australians have full access to our treasured universal healthcare system. An Albanese Labor Government will undertake a consultation on the unique health issues and barriers to access that LGBTIQ+ Australians may face. We would welcome Equality Australia's participation in this consultation.

In particular, an elected Albanese Labor Government will boost Q Life's peer support workforce to help them reach more LGBTIQ+ Australians in crisis. Labor's commitment will enable Q Life to employ four permanent team leaders (one across each service delivery organisation) to boost recruitment, training and retention of volunteer peer support workers, with the goal of increasing Q Life's call answer rate by 10 percent.

An Albanese Labor Government will also accelerate efforts to end Australia's HIV epidemic. If elected, we will establish a Ministerial Taskforce of community representatives, medical experts and officials will be charged with removing bottlenecks and driving progress to end HIV transmission.

Labor notes the Australian Human Rights Commission's 2021 report "Ensuring health and bodily integrity." An incoming Albanese Labor Government would examine the recommendations closely, in consultation with the Intersex community and advocates.

Mental health

There is bipartisan support, and Labor will honour, the mental health commitments made in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Commonwealth budgets, as well as those made in the context of bilateral mental health agreements with states.

Further, an elected Albanese Labor Government will strengthen our headspace networks, particularly in regional Australia, providing clinical and non-clinical services in under-resourced areas.

As a further boost to regional mental telehealth services, Labor will reinstate the 50 per cent Medicare loading for regional telehealth psychiatry mental health consultations that was abolished by the Morrison Government during the Omicron wave of the COVID pandemic.

Labor will deliver a \$200 million Student Wellbeing Boost to get students' mental health and wellbeing back on track. This will mean more school counsellors and psychologists, and extra funding for camps, excursions, as well as sporting and social activities that improve kids' wellbeing. Labor will also develop a voluntary mental health check tool so primary school students who are struggling can get extra help.

Specific mental health needs for the LGBTIQ+ community will be examined as part of the aforementioned LGBTIQ+ health consultation.

Religious discrimination

Following the recent debate on the Morrison Government's Religious Discrimination Bill, Anthony Albanese committed that a future Labor Government will:

- Prevent discrimination against people of faith, including anti-vilification protections.
- Act to protect all students from discrimination on any grounds.
- Protect teachers from discrimination at work, whilst maintaining the right of religious schools to preference people of their faith in the selection of staff.

Anthony Albanese and Labor see the extension of our anti-discrimination laws to include people of faith as an opportunity to unite the nation, rather than to divide it. Labor has consistently said that in doing so we must not diminish protections for other people in our society.

Family violence

An Albanese Labor Government will provide dedicated funding to LGBTIQ+ community organisations to employ specialist domestic violence workers, ensuring LGBTIQ+ people receive appropriate family and domestic violence support. LGBTIQ+ people face diverse complexities of gender and violence which are best addressed through community based and peer-led organisations already working with LGBTIQ+ people. To assist addressing this, an Albanese Labor Government will fund 15 workers in LGBTIQ+ community organisations to help people experiencing domestic and family violence. This means 1,200 people who would have been turned away will now get help at one of the most vulnerable times in their life.

Conversion practices

You have raised the issue of conversion practices. Labor opposes these damaging and discredited practices and notes the progress in banning them made by the Victorian Andrews Labor Government and the Queensland Palaszczuk Labor Government.

We appreciate that your election questionnaire includes a series of specific issues. However, we are not in a position to work through detailed policy proposal or to consult fully upon them with the wider Australian community on the eve of an election.

The Morrison-Joyce Government has ignored the LGBTIQ+ community and the services they need completely. An elected Albanese Labor Government would welcome the opportunity to consult further with you on these important matters to ensure a fair and inclusive Australia.

Yours sincerely

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