

BRIEFING NOTE

2014 Victorian Election: Jobs, Education, Health and Social Policies and Pledges

Summary

The key election pledges made by the Coalition and Labor in relation to jobs, education and health in the lead up to the November 2014 State election with relevance to greater Melbourne are outlined below.

1. Jobs policies

The Coalition's jobs policy

Premier Denis Naphine announced the Coalition's jobs policy, *Victorian Jobs in the 21st Century*, on 7 October, a day after the Opposition announced its own.

The vast majority of announcements have been carried over from the 2014-15 State Budget, however the government's pledge to create 200,000 new jobs and statements around apprenticeships, training, international trade and vouchers for manufacturing businesses supplement its announcements made in the State Budget of last May.

Subsequent jobs-related announcements have included \$5.2 million towards enhancing women's access to employment opportunities.

Key points

- **Skills and Training** – The Coalition government is investing \$5.2 billion in skills and training, aiming to support training for 850,000 Victorians and apprenticeships for 60,000 students over the next four years. This package includes:
 - \$267.5 million to support TAFEs to adapt to changing student and employer needs (incl. \$67.5 million for the TAFE Structural Adjustment Fund);
 - A further \$42 million to fund future skills developed by TAFE institutes across Victoria;
 - \$30 million to extend the Victorian Training Guarantee to help automotive workers transition to other industries; and
 - \$12 million to improve career paths for young Victorians (incl. \$9 million for work experience for year 9 and 10 students who are at risk of dropping out of school).

- **Infrastructure** – In its 2014-15 State Budget, the Coalition government made a \$27 billion construction and infrastructure plan the central tenet of its budget and it is taking this pipeline to the November election. Key elements of this package with relation to jobs are:
 - \$8.5-\$11 billion for the Melbourne Rail Link project, which is aimed at relieving the bottleneck issues created by the City Loop as well as providing a rail link to the airport - creating an estimated 3,700 jobs;
 - \$8-\$10 billion for the East West Link – Western Section, which provides a twelve kilometre road connection from the East West Link – Eastern Section to the Western Ring Road - creating an estimated 6,500 jobs;

- **Business Growth** – The Coalition government has put forward a range of activities in its effort to stimulate the Victorian economy. It is aiming to realise this through a combination of domestic support as well as efforts to attract international investments. Most of these have been announced previously and below are some of the key initiatives:
 - \$30 million for a new Manufacturing, Innovation and Technology Fund, which will help businesses in the manufacturing sector to invest in innovative manufacturing processes and equipment through financial support of up to \$250,000;
 - A reduction in Payroll Tax by 0.05 percentage points to 4.85 per cent (implemented in July 2014 and built on the 2012 reduction from 4.95 to 4.90 per cent);
 - \$70 million to promote Melbourne and Victoria as a place to visit (incl. \$26 million and \$17 million for business events and marketing Melbourne respectively); and
 - \$12 million for a new Inbound and Outbound Trade Mission Program, which will connect Victorian businesses with high-growth export markets (incl. new Victorian Government Business Offices in Singapore and Latin America).

The Opposition's jobs policy

Opposition leader Daniel Andrews launched Labor's 'Back to Work' election policy on 6 October, a day before the opposition announced its own jobs creation policy.

The Labor policy pledges to create 100,000 jobs over the next two years at a cost of \$1 billion. It previously announced 10,000 construction jobs would be created through infrastructure projects including the Melbourne Metro rail project and its program of level crossing removals.

Key points

- **Payroll tax relief** – Targeted payroll tax relief is being proposed for companies that give jobs to the long-term unemployed, young people and retrenched workers in an effort to reduce unemployment. Under the proposed *Back To Work Act*, payroll tax rebates and credits would be provided through a \$100 million fund for companies hiring from these groups into full-time jobs. Companies would receive \$1,000 for every eligible worker.

- **Premier’s Jobs and Investment Panel** – An independent body of economic leaders will be established to provide direct advice to the Premier on deploying a fund of \$500 million over four years in ‘strategic investments’ to create jobs in Victoria.
- **Future Industries Fund** – A \$200 million Future Industries Fund offering grants of up to \$1 million each will be applied to drive six high-growth sectors:
 - medical technology and pharmaceuticals
 - new energy technology
 - food and fibre
 - transport, defence and construction technology
 - international education
 - professional services.
- **Regional Jobs Fund** – As part of a broader package for regional Victoria which is yet to be announced, Labor has pledged to establish a \$200 million investment fund to support jobs creation in regional Victoria.
- **International trade** – Four inbound missions to bring delegates from around the world to Victoria will be held in the first term of government, focusing on the six high-growth sectors. Three new government business offices will be established in South America, Singapore and Turkey.

2. Education policies

The Coalition’s education policy

The Coalition announced its *Smarter Victoria* policy on education on 17 November, but as noted in the media, most of the \$5.4 billion of initiatives were already announced and in the budget. The figure includes \$4.2 billion as part of the deal with the federal government under the Gonski package, with a further \$1.2 billion for new schools and school upgrades. Most of this latter figure (around \$800 million of it) represents new commitments.

Key points

- School upgrades – upgrades to 250-400 schools over four years, including matching Labor’s commitment for \$120 million for capital works in Catholic and independent schools in growth and low socio-economic areas
- 11 new schools in growth areas in Melbourne and regional Victoria through public private partnerships (\$223 million), and a new secondary school in Prahran
- Language learning – \$11.4 million to encourage students to learn a second language
- A 3D printer for every Victorian secondary school (\$12.5 million), first aid training for all year 9 students and a kindergarten rebate
- Leadership camps - \$12 million.

The Opposition's education policy

Labor launched its education policy *Back to School* in October, announcing \$1.3 billion of new initiatives, and in recent weeks has expanded on its education announcements, including the introduction of 'Victoria: the education state' number plates.

Key points

- TAFE rescue package to reopen closed campuses - \$320 million
- New techs – 10 new technical secondary schools (\$150 million) to be run by TAFE and industry
- Camps, schools and excursion fund (\$150 million)
- \$120 million boost to low-fee Catholic and independent schools
- \$510 million for new and upgraded government school buildings
- \$50 million to upgrade and build kindergartens
- 11 new schools, including \$50 million for eight new schools in the outer suburbs (Mernda, Point Cook, Taylor's Hill, Tarneit, Wollert, Armstrong Creek, Officer and Craigieburn) and \$36.5 million for new schools in Richmond, South Melbourne and Footscray
- Uniforms and shoes for struggling families (\$15.5 million)
- Daily breakfast program ('Foodbank') providing breakfast for 25,000 children at 500 government primary schools (\$13.5 million)
- \$0.5 million for eye testing and glasses in 250 disadvantaged schools.

Related pledges include:

- \$2 million for music education in Victorian schools
- 200 new maths and science teachers to be trained (\$26 million).

3. Health policies

The Coalition's health policy

The Coalition released its policy on tackling obesity and chronic illness, *Healthy Together Victoria*, in November. There have been a number of other announcements of new funding pledges.

Key points

- \$994 million over four years to increase hospital beds
- An additional \$127.2 million to tackle obesity and chronic illnesses, including \$32 million for anti-smoking programs and tobacco control initiatives
- \$80 million for technology upgrades at hospitals and health services
- \$38 million for treatment and support services
- An additional 800 hospital beds
- \$20 million commitment to expand neonatal intensive care unit capacity
- \$5 million to plan health services in Melbourne's western growth corridor

- New ambulance stations at Mernda, Mooroolbark, Wedderburn, Karingal and recruitment of an additional 150 paramedics
- \$34 million for hospital safety
- A range of funding boosts to hospitals, including \$177 million for children's emergency at Monash Health
- \$66 million to expand palliative care services
- \$11 million to support Victorians with hearing loss and expand the Vision 2020 Australia's Vision Initiative
- \$7.1 million for early intervention services to children with disabilities
- An additional \$77.5 million for cancer prevention and research
- \$56.8 million to boost alcohol and drug treatment.

Labor's health pledges

Key points

- A \$200 million rescue fund to open beds and theatres dormant in Victorian hospitals over four years
- Ending Victoria's ambulance service dispute with a \$100 million plan to establish a Response Time Rescue Fund (\$60 million), \$20 million to upgrade ambulance stations and \$20 million to upgrade vehicles and equipment
- Expansion of Angliss and Casey hospitals and new hospitals at Sunshine and Monash University
- Labor has released a mental health policy promising \$10 million to upgrade mental health facilities.

Related pledges include:

- \$1.6 million to reintroduce whooping cough vaccinations for newborns
- Provision of 1,000 defibrillators to Victorian sporting clubs
- \$60 million for the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery at St Vincent's, Australia's first research and education centre for biomedical engineering
- Victoria to become the first state in Australia to have nurse to patient and midwife to patient ratios enshrined in legislation
- \$15 million for new booze and drug buses and \$0.5 million for grassroots community action on drugs.

4. Social housing and social cohesion

Coalition pledges

The government has announced:

- Increased funding to support social cohesion initiatives by \$1 million in 2015 (\$6.48 million already committed to the Promoting Harmony program). The additional funding will go

towards a Cultural Diversity Week, Viva Victoria Festival, the Premier's Multicultural Gala Dinner and interfaith and multifaith networks and projects.

- \$13.4 million over the next four years to promote multiculturalism and assist community based organisations to meet and hold festivals celebrating Victoria's multicultural communities
- Introduction of a multicultural charter
- \$6 million for Kids under Cover, to fight youth homelessness – 120 new units to help 200 at risk youths
- \$16 million to protect Aboriginal heritage and promote reconciliation.

Labor pledges

- Rental reforms to provide better protection to tenants of caravan parks and moveable dwellings, and change the law to accommodate long term leasing of private rental housing
- Piloting the use of inclusionary zoning as a new affordable housing initiative for land sold by the government for development, requiring a share of new construction to be set aside as affordable housing for first home owners and low income families
- Improvement to building regulations for seniors and the disabled
- \$0.5 million seed funding for The Big Issue's Homes for Homes project to raise funds to house the homeless
- Legislate a 'fit and proper person' test for rooming house operators, and address standards for rooming houses and \$10 million for capital upgrades to rooming houses
- Australia's first Royal Commission into family violence
- \$5 million to address mental health
- Address LGBTI discrimination through appointment of gender and sexuality commissioner, revisions to legislation and other measures.