

# **GROWING JOBS, BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PROFITABILITY**

## **LABOR'S POSITIVE PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA**



**WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST**

**Labor**



# A MESSAGE FROM BILL SHORTEN

About 7.2 million people live in rural and regional Australia – and every one of them is fiercely proud of the communities they call home. Labor understands that life in regional and remote Australia is not always easy, but it comes with many rewards.

Australia prospers when our regions prosper. From cattle farms and wineries to wool, wheat and minerals, regional Australia generates a significant part of Australia's wealth.

In return, regional communities rightly expect the same high quality services and facilities that people in our major cities enjoy.

Labor's positive plans to invest in every Australian school by fully delivering the Gonski education reforms, protect Medicare to keep health care affordable and accessible, and grow jobs through more infrastructure and apprenticeships will all help to ensure this is the case.

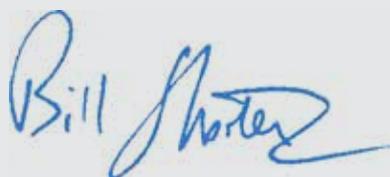
A major challenge for the years ahead is to grow local jobs and new economic activity in our regions so that young people don't have to leave home to get ahead, and communities can continue to thrive.

As we transition out of the mining investment boom and the rising consumer class of Asia creates new demand for our food and fibre products, Labor believes the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors will play a major role in driving the growth and job creation we need. Australia's strongest opportunities lie in moving up the value chain with a focus on high quality, high value products, not chasing a diminishing margin in an increasingly crowded market for bulk commodities.

We will strengthen these sectors through initiatives like our Food, Fibre and Advanced Materials Modernisation Grants, the creation of a National Recreational Fishing Council and the establishment of an Australian Institute for Biosecurity to safeguard Australia's valuable international reputation as a provider of clean, green and safe food. We will also boost trade, exports and investment so that regional communities can grow in prosperity along with the rest of our country.

Labor puts people first – no matter where they live in Australia. My team and I are committed to working every day to ensure people in rural and regional Australia get the opportunity to build a decent life.

I invite you to read more about Labor's positive policies at:  
[www.100positivepolicies.org.au](http://www.100positivepolicies.org.au).



**Bill Shorten**

# STRONG WORKFORCES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

People are the backbone of Australia's regional economies. Without new generations of Australians choosing life on the land, our regional cities and towns will slowly wither away. Labor wants to create more opportunities for industry-relevant education and training close to home so that young people, women and Indigenous Australians can discover the challenges and rewards of a life in agriculture.

## PROTECTING REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND TAFES

The number of people studying agricultural science disciplines is too low. According to the University of Queensland, there is strong demand for graduates in agribusiness, agricultural science and food science. But figures released by the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture reveal a widening gap between demand and supply of good quality graduates. National job advertisements for graduates in agriculture number between 4,000 and 4,500, yet only about 800 graduates complete agricultural studies across the country each year.

Those most likely to choose an agriculture-related course at university are those who have grown up in regional Australia. That's why Labor is fighting so hard to protect our regional universities and prevent regional students from paying \$100,000 for their degrees.

A Shorten Labor Government will introduce a Student Funding Guarantee to provide certainty to universities and remove the need for higher fees. Regional universities would be hit particularly hard under the Liberals' plan to deregulate fees because many do not have the same scale of enrolments or capacity to cross-subsidise teaching and research through other channels as city universities do.

Successful farm businesses don't just require workers with university degrees. Building a strong agricultural workforce will also require quality vocational education and training (VET) through strong local TAFEs and more apprentices skilled in practical trades.

The Liberals have cut \$2.5 billion from the skills portfolio, including \$1 billion from apprentice and trainee programs such as Tools for Your Trade and access and mentoring programs. These cuts have hit apprentices and trainees hard and resulted in the loss of over 120,000 apprentices since September 2013.

Labor will not make the same mistake because we know regional communities, and those right across Australia, cannot afford to see our skills base decline.

That is why Labor will invest in boosting apprenticeships, including by ensuring apprentices are employed on federally-funded infrastructure projects and creating 15,000 new apprentice-track training places. We will also reintroduce Tools for Your Trade - the successful apprentice support program axed by Tony Abbott, because we want to see more young people starting and completing apprenticeships - particularly in regional Australia.

The need for strong regional skills and training is also why Labor has announced a plan to back TAFE into the future by developing a National Priority Plan which will define its unique role and place it squarely as the public provider within the VET sector. TAFE offers access to training in many places across regional Australia where private providers do not reach, and we must ensure that continues to be the case into the future to build our skilled agricultural workforce.

## **GROWING THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS IN AGRICULTURE**

Women are increasingly playing leading roles in farm businesses across Australia. They are moving well beyond traditional roles and into planning, planting, cultivating, cropping, testing, analysing and looking after animal welfare. Indigenous Australians are also combining traditional land management practices with newer agricultural techniques to get the most out of our land while protecting the natural environment.

As farm businesses become more complex and we seek to grow both productivity and output, the role of women and Indigenous Australians will become increasingly important. Their greater participation will also help to balance out the ageing of our agriculture workforce.

Labor is determined to further promote and support women in agriculture, and will lead by example across the government sector. We have identified a clear target of having 50 per cent of positions on government boards filled by women within the first term of a Shorten Labor Government. This would apply to our regional research and development corporations as well as bodies like the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority.

Increasing the visibility of women in these senior roles will provide pathways and role models for more Australian women to pursue careers in agriculture.

A Shorten Labor Government will also provide just over \$200 million over five years to double the number of Indigenous rangers under the Working for Country program, from 775 full-time equivalent rangers in 2016-17 to 1,550 by 2020-21.

This will ensure Indigenous rangers are able to continue and expand their work in the management of fire regimes, biodiversity, feral animals, weeds, land disturbance, cultural sites, heritage values, pollution and climate change impacts. It will also mean rangers are able to grow their role as role models in local communities, and further leverage the close relationship between Indigenous Australians and the environment to continue building our future agricultural workforce.

## **STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR REGIONS**

Mental health should be a priority for any government that puts the wellbeing of Australians first. It's also a productivity issue, with the mental health of our regional workforce being crucial to the success and growth of the sector.

In regional Australia, suicide rates amongst men are double those in urban areas. Farmers are 2.2 times more likely to die by suicide than the broader community. What's more, psychiatrists in the cities outnumber those in regional areas three to one.

Labor is committed to reducing suicides in Australia by 50 per cent over the next ten years.

A Shorten Labor Government will invest \$72 million to establish 12 suicide prevention initiatives – six urban, four regional and two remote – for place-based initiatives that are tailored to local community need.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples suffer mental illness at three times the rate of other Australians. Labor will also develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Plan to improve mental health and prevent suicides of Indigenous Australians.

**Labor's positive policies will help build a strong regional workforce and in turn, set regional communities up to thrive for generations to come.**

# BOOSTING LOCAL JOBS THROUGH TRADE, EXPORTS AND INVESTMENT

Since the 1980s, billions of people around the world have been lifted out of poverty by economic growth and development. Within the Asia Pacific region, this trend is transforming poor neighbours into potential customers at a very rapid rate.

An estimated 90 million people will join Indonesia's middle class by 2030; on current trends 70 per cent of China's population will also have risen to comfortable prosperity by that time. India's middle class is projected to grow from less than 50 million people today to over 475 million within the next 15 years. By 2030, two in three of the world's middle class people will live in Asia.

These new consumers like to spend and demand for a wide range of goods and services has skyrocketed as a result. In 2014 private consumption in China, India and Indonesia was already worth a combined US\$5.7 trillion – six times the value of Australian domestic consumption. Our local wineries, food producers and education providers have been early beneficiaries of this spending boom. But there are opportunities here for a much wider range of Australian businesses to create new jobs and find new markets.

We will need the right policy settings to fully realise the export potential of our services industries, manufacturers, food and fibre production and agriculture. That is what a Shorten Labor Government will deliver.

## **MAKING TRADE WORK FOR BUSINESS**

At present, less than 5 per cent of all Australian businesses are exporting overseas, making our economy far less trade-intensive than many comparable countries. Many businesses are not even considering exporting despite the opportunities in our region – *PwC's Passing Us By* report shows two-thirds of Australian businesses have no intention of exporting into Asian markets in the near future.

Opening up access to new markets through trade agreements is a critical first step in boosting exports. That's why a Shorten Labor Government will continue to seek high quality international trade agreements to improve market access for Australian exporters.

But governments need to do more than tackle the barriers imposed at the borders. It is also important to tackle the barriers would-be exporters face at home – such as lack of information and market research, shortages of skills and expertise, market failures in access to finance, a lack of contacts in export markets and the impact of freight costs and red tape in moving goods across borders.

That is why a Shorten Labor Government will:

### ■ **Tackle barriers to Australian exports**

We will adopt a strategic approach to improving market access for exporters by carrying out stock takes of trade barriers faced by Australian exporters, both at home and abroad, and produce a regular Trade Barriers Analysis.

### ■ **Reduce red tape for exporters**

We will tackle red tape barriers by working to ensure trade agreements contain easily understood and consistent rules of origin for determining whether Australian goods qualify for preferential access to key export markets.

Several surveys and reports show that many Australian businesses are not utilising market access opportunities available to them. The complexity and costs of complying with rules of origin are one of the discouraging factors. While there are no quick fixes, a Labor Government will work with Australia's trading partners to streamline and harmonise existing rules of origin across trade agreements.

### ■ **Facilitate trade in our region**

Labor will work with key Asian trading partners to help them implement trade facilitation reforms which will encourage more two-way trade by reducing costs and improving efficiency. The World Trade Organisation's Trade Facilitation Agreement negotiated in 2013 has the potential to significantly reduce trade costs.

But many developing countries need technical assistance and capacity building support to implement these reforms. A Shorten Labor Government will better target Australia's "aid for trade" funding towards helping developing economies to implement these reforms.

## **IMPROVING MARKETING AND BRANDING**

Australia is known for the quality and safety of our food products. Our freedom from many pests and diseases, the environmental stewardship of our farmers and land managers and our world-class food safety management system all contribute to this strong global reputation.

Emphasising the quality of Australian food and finding ways to more clearly identify our clean, green and environmentally friendly credentials will allow exporters to benefit from our valuable national brand. Labor will work with industry to deliver strong international branding to build upon Australia's reputation as a leader in the production of premium food and to increase export opportunities.

## **STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE ON INVESTMENT**

To take full advantage of the Asian "dining boom" and other global export opportunities, it has been estimated Australia will need \$600 billion of capital investment in the years to 2050.

That means our agriculture sector will need to secure investment of \$26 billion a year on top of the \$16 billion currently invested. This is a big gap to close, and to achieve it we will need to look to emerging and non-traditional sources of foreign investment, particularly within our region.

The foreign investment screening changes introduced by the Abbott-Turnbull Government run directly counter to the goal of attracting more investment from new sources. The Government has imposed new foreign investment screening thresholds of \$55 million for investment in agribusiness and \$15 million (cumulative) for investment in agricultural land. These changes have been the subject of widespread criticism from business, including the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

These business groups have rightly pointed out that this is no way to encourage investment. In addition to driving away investment when we need it, these changes will undermine, rather than build, the public support that is essential to making foreign investment work.

That is why Labor will restore consistency in screening thresholds by bringing all agricultural land application thresholds into line with those in our trade agreements with Thailand and Singapore. This \$50 million threshold strikes the right balance between maintaining the strength of the screening system and keeping red tape in check. We will also review the current regime's discriminatory treatment of investments in non-sensitive sectors by investors from Singapore, Thailand and non-FTA trading partners and the treatment of agricultural land.

Furthermore, a Shorten Labor Government will make the foreign land investment register public so that every Australian can see who is buying agricultural land, and where. Labor started work on this register when last in office, but this has not been delivered because the Abbott-Turnbull Government broke an election promise to match this by creating a transparent register of its own.

*Trade, exports and foreign investment represent huge opportunities to grow jobs and make Australia's regions more prosperous. Labor will put the right rules and structures in place to ensure regional Australians benefit, while protecting our environment and resources in the process.*



# RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION FOR BETTER PRODUCTIVITY

Australia's agriculture sector has a world-class research and development system. The current co-funding architecture is a proud Labor legacy.

Research, development, extension, adoption and innovation will be critical to our success in lifting productivity, farming smarter and more sustainably, and securing greater value and return for our limited natural resources.

Further, our growers and producers contribute to our national research and development effort through compulsory levies, so they deserve to know they are receiving value for money.

A Labor Government will review the work and funding arrangements of our agriculture-based research and development institutions to ensure they are operating efficiently, focusing on productivity and delivering value for money.

Our performance in research and development has been strong but less impressive in extension and innovation. In particular, there is scope for a greater allocation of resources to cross-sectoral work where more than one commodity group is the beneficiary.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of biosecurity. We can't lift productivity across the agricultural sector if we are not seriously tackling some of the things that hold it back: weeds; invasive species; pest animals and disease.

## **AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR BIOSECURITY**

Labor will establish an Australian Institute for Biosecurity to manage the challenges of pest animals, weeds and plant disease incursions on the land and in our waterways and oceans. This initiative will allow the Government, as a major investor in RD&E, to identify and address research gaps relating to long-term sustainability and cross-sectoral issues.

The Institute's primary role will be to maintain and build on the existing network of research and industry partners across plant, animal, aquaculture and marine biosecurity. It will support sustainable RD&E projects and identify pathways to enduring long-term strategic management beyond the current 5 to 10-year approach.

The Institute will also deal with the challenges of environmental biosecurity while protecting the livelihood of our farmers and graziers, and those who make their living from the aquaculture and marine industries.

The Institute for Biosecurity will develop a strategic work plan to ensure the long-term health of Australia's agricultural sector, animal industries and natural environment.

## **MANAGING YELLOW CRAZY ANTS**

Yellow Crazy Ants pose a significant risk to agricultural industries such as the sugar cane industry, and industries such as tourism in Queensland's Wet Tropics. They are a serious environmental and agricultural pest, recognised among the world's 100 most invasive species.

A Shorten Labor Government will inject \$7.5 million to contain and reduce the Yellow Crazy Ant population in the Wet Tropics of Queensland.

In 2013, Labor provided \$2 million over five years to the Wet Tropics Management Authority through the Caring for Our Country Program to eradicate a large infestation of Yellow Crazy Ants of up to 400ha.

This treatment has successfully reduced ant numbers and has minimised further spread, but more needs to be done. Labor's additional \$7.5 million commitment will help control the spread of these pests to protect the industries currently threatened by them.

## **AUSTRALIAN TROPICAL MARINE AND AQUACULTURE CENTRE**

Labor will also boost local jobs and science in our regional cities by contributing to the establishment of a new industry-facing aquaculture research facility in central Townsville.

We will contribute \$31.7 million to drive deeper collaboration between the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University, with these funds to go towards the establishment of JCU's \$100 million Australian Tropical Marine and Aquaculture Centre.

Labor will make this investment in the centre to support its development as a new industry-oriented research and commercialisation facility. It will leverage Townsville's significant scientific expertise in marine science and aquaculture, helping to grow the industry and deliver new discoveries in sustainable food production and marine resource management.

The aquaculture industry represents a transformative opportunity for Townsville with great economic potential. Growing this industry will not only create jobs, but also support the Asia Pacific region and the potential flow-on effects to educational and science tourism.

## **AUSTRALIAN PESTICIDES AND VETERINARY MEDICINES AUTHORITY**

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority plays a crucial role in registering and regulating the products farmers rely on to improve productivity and keep their herds healthy.

Barnaby Joyce plans to disrupt the authority's work by relocating it from its traditional home in Canberra to Armidale, in his own electorate. Not only is this an incredible waste of taxpayer money, but it will significantly diminish the authority's operational capacity.

Its 200-strong workforce is made up of highly qualified professionals and scientists, who live in Canberra, work in Canberra and send their children to Canberra schools.

It is well known that the authority will lose the majority of its professional staff if this forced relocation takes place. This will be a disaster for our farmers who will lose access to critically important crop protection chemicals and animal medicines. That is why the National Farmers Federation, Animal Medicines Australia, CropLife Australia and the Veterinary Manufacturers and Distributors Association have all opposed the authority's move.

Labor will not proceed with Barnaby Joyce's half-baked plan to move the authority for no good reason. We will ensure it continues its good work in Canberra with the highly skilled workforce needed to support proper farm science.

## **FOOD AND FIBRE INNOVATION**

Australia's food and fibre producers are key drivers of wealth in Australia's regions. But these sectors are now at a crossroads.

For much of Australia's history they have been best known as producers of largely homogenous but good quality commodities. This has left them exposed as price-takers in increasingly competitive global commodity markets.

Productivity is also in decline as changing weather patterns threaten the viability of previously productive land; our farm workforce ages; and road, rail and port infrastructure fails to keep pace with growing demand.

One of Australia's key competitive advantages is our reputation as a supplier of clean, green, high quality and safe food. So the most successful strategy for Australia's food production sector will be the pursuit of new markets for high quality, high value and niche products through innovation.

Some of our producers have already started down this path: developing wheat that is specifically suited to Japan's udon noodle market; new fruit varieties for Asian tastes; value-added dairy products and marbled wagyu in which the fat is relatively healthy. There is an opportunity for our fibre producers to do likewise by developing innovative, high quality materials for specialist applications like defence and industry.

That is why Labor will support more producers and manufacturers to deliver product innovation through our Food, Fibre and Advanced Materials Modernisation Grants program.

This competitive merit-based grants program will match investments by producers and manufacturers in projects to improve the efficiency of their operations and increase investment in innovation and new technologies, including energy efficient capital equipment and low emissions technologies.

These grants are a direct response to industry concerns about the difficulty in accessing finance to invest in capital improvements to production and manufacturing facilities that lower costs and improve the competitiveness of Australian industries.

Total funding of \$54.2 million over four years will be available to deliver the grants. The program will offer a range of flexible grants of up to \$5 million on a matched funding basis.

Along with this targeted measure, Labor will continue to build industry and research linkages and ensure Australia's world-class scientific research infrastructure is deployed to best effect to grow local jobs and investment in these critical industries, utilising the formidable strengths of the CSIRO, our universities and the Cooperative Research Centres program.

Key to protecting Australia's reputation as a provider of clean, green and safe food is the adequate funding and management of the departments and agencies charged with maintaining the integrity and success of our biosecurity system.

When last in government, Labor initiated the Beale Review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. The review led to the modernising of the Quarantine Act in line with its recommendations. But we are concerned that recent budget cuts are undermining the capacity to keep our biosecurity arrangements strong. A Shorten Labor Government will closely examine the work and capacity of the Department of Agriculture and associated agencies to ensure they are capable of protecting Australia's valuable biosecurity and clean, green reputation.

Also crucial to the protection of our reputation is the capacity to quickly respond to events which threaten our reputation and brand. This is why Australia needs a modern and comprehensive traceability system which allows the seller to trace products back to their source and along every point on the value chain. Technology is making the prospects of a comprehensive electronic satellite-based system more feasible and a Shorten Labor Government will work with the private sector to build a stronger traceability capacity.

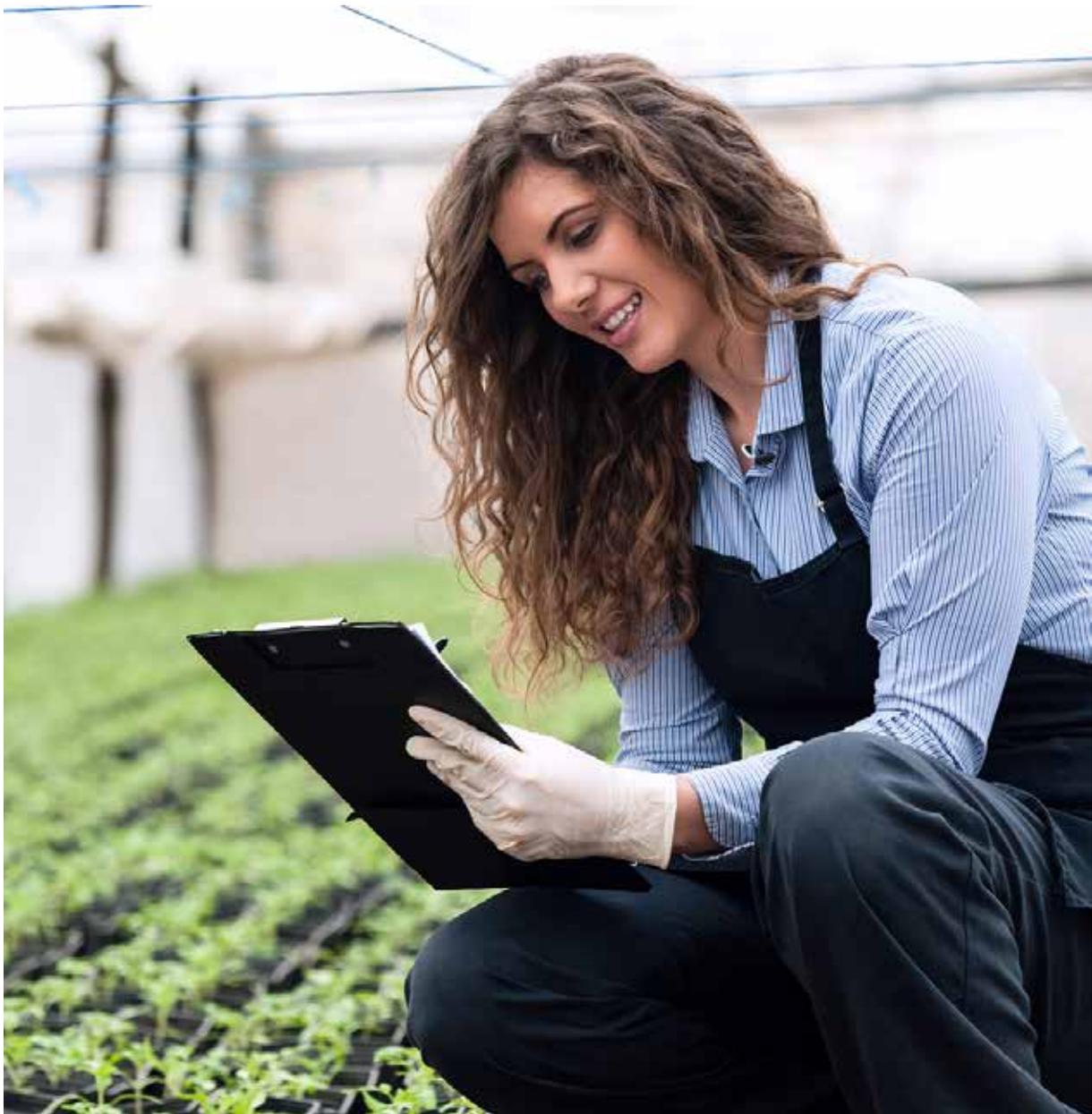
## REGIONAL INNOVATION HUBS

Australia's agricultural sector will reap serious benefits from integrating science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)-led innovations into on-farm production. From farmers increasing their output through real-time monitoring of water and fertilizer use to fibre producers developing new specialty products, innovation will improve output and create more jobs in agribusiness just as much as in every other sector of the economy.

That is why Labor will establish up to 20 new Regional Innovation Hubs across Australia. The locations will be chosen based on applications from consortia that must include: a regional university or TAFE; one or more local governments; and a local business organisation – such as a Chamber of Commerce – or a group of local businesses.

Each hub will receive funding of up to \$500,000 per year for three years, which must be matched at least dollar-for-dollar with funding from the consortium or other sources. This will be used to provide seed funding to projects and companies that are commercialising research or developing new products that respond to opportunities in Australia's agricultural sector.

*Innovation in food and fibre production and right across the agricultural sector will see Australia build on our strengths for improved productivity and profitability. Labor's new investments in research and regional producers will support this important work so that regional communities can reap the benefits.*



# IMPROVING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The productive capacity of Australian agriculture will be driven by both human and physical capital. That is why infrastructure is critical to our future prosperity.

Boosting investment in infrastructure expands our economic opportunities. In the same way a company invests in its capital stock to underpin future growth, Australia needs to invest in the stock of physical capital to underpin future prosperity, boost productivity and improve our competitiveness. A Shorten Labor Government will ensure we do.

## BETTER ROAD AND RAIL

Labor has a strong record of ensuring that our agricultural industry is well served by efficient road and rail that facilitates the swift passage of goods to local and export markets.

In government, we produced the nation's first National Land Freight Strategy and National Ports Strategy, setting up the apparatus for better planning and co-ordination of delivery of infrastructure to ensure individual projects are properly integrated into a national network.

Between 2007 and 2013 the former Labor Government doubled federal road funding and built critical regional roads including major upgrades of the Hume, Pacific, Bruce and Great Western Highways.

On rail, we invested \$3 billion upgrading 4000 kilometres of the National Freight Network through the Australian Rail Track Corporation. This cut the average freight trip from Brisbane to Melbourne by seven hours and shrunk the journey from the nation's east to west coasts by nine hours.

Importantly, Labor also committed \$900 million to the proposed Inland Rail link between Brisbane and Melbourne, including \$600 million worth of investment upgrading parts of the existing network that will form part of the project and \$300 million to continue work.

A Shorten Labor Government will continue to invest in critical economic infrastructure across our regions, including the following projects:

- Victorian Regional Transport package - VIC - \$350 million.
- Midland Highway - TAS - \$100 million.
- Gladstone Port Access Road - QLD - \$80 million.
- Capricorn Highway - QLD - \$75 million.
- Northern Territory Infrastructure Package - NT - \$58 million.
- Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road - QLD - \$30 million.

## A FIRST-CLASS NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

Labor's National Broadband Network was designed to bridge the great divide between our cities and regions. Malcolm Turnbull's second-rate NBN is short-changing regional Australians, including those on the land.

Labor will pick up the pieces and work towards providing the broadband services regional Australia deserves because we understand the most important piece of infrastructure for our 21st century economy is a first-rate, fibre NBN.

The original Labor NBN would have delivered optic fibre to 93 per cent of homes and businesses, including 70 per cent of regional cities and towns. The original NBN also delivered universal wholesale pricing, meaning that people in the bush paid the same wholesale price for broadband as people in our big cities.

In 2013, Malcolm Turnbull scrapped Labor's world class fibre-to-the-premises NBN. Instead the Liberals are building a slower, second-rate copper NBN that will leave Australia behind and hamstringing regional businesses into the future.

Malcolm Turnbull also moved to axe universal wholesale pricing, meaning people in the bush will pay more for broadband than people in our cities. Under the Liberals, homes and businesses on the NBN satellites have to pay much more than people in our cities just to get the average household download allowance.

A Shorten Labor Government will phase out Malcolm Turnbull's second-rate copper NBN and scale up the rollout of fibre-to-the-premises. This will deliver fibre-to-the-premises to up to two million homes and businesses across the country.

Regional Australia will benefit most from Labor's NBN policy. Gladstone, Emerald, North Mackay, Geelong, Seymour, Bega, Cooma, Batemans Bay, St Georges Basin, Ballina, Lismore, Grafton, Queenstown—these are just a few of the cities and towns that under Labor will get a first-rate, fibre optic NBN instead of Malcolm Turnbull's second-rate copper NBN. Labor will also review wholesale pricing on the satellite to make it fair again.

Communities in the bush will always be better served by Labor when it comes to the NBN.

## **IMPROVING MOBILE SERVICES**

Labor understands that a lack of mobile phone services is holding our regions back. That is why a Shorten Labor Government will continue to invest in the roll out of mobile services in regional Australia.

We will allocate a further \$60 million to the Mobile Black Spot Program. Importantly too, we will ensure this money is spent where it is needed, not where it does the most good for Liberal and National MPs.

Of the 499 mobile towers funded in Round 1 of the Mobile Black Spot Program, 416 are in Liberal and Nationals' electorates. There have also been some glaring omissions, with locations that should have been funded but were not. For example, the electorate of McEwen is one of the most fire-prone in the country and there are 95 identified blackspots across the region. Despite this, McEwen received just two of the 499 towers funded from Round 1 of the Mobile Black Spots Program.

Labor is committed to ensuring that regional Australians have access to the mobile phone services they need. This is critical infrastructure that saves lives in an emergency and is also central to running successful agricultural businesses from our regions.

**Infrastructure is one of the areas where regional Australians notice the gap between the services they receive and those on offer in our big cities most acutely. Labor will work to close this gap because we understand the difference it makes both to quality of life and productivity in our regions.**

## **STRONGER PEST MANAGEMENT**

It is critical we protect Queensland graziers from the threat wild dogs pose to their livelihoods. That is why a Shorten Labor Government will invest \$5 million to expand wild dog fencing across Western Queensland.

This funding matches the Queensland Government's additional \$5 million funding to bring sheep back to Western Queensland.

Labor is the only party that will help our resilient farmers in Western Queensland protect and replenish stock numbers that have been in decline because of severe drought and wild dogs. Queensland graziers are well aware both the former State and current Federal Liberal-National Governments have not done enough to combat this plague.

This funding will ensure the success of the much larger wild dog control program with the ultimate goal of returning sheep in big numbers into Western Queensland, which will be good for farmers and good for sustainable agriculture productivity.

The extra funding will also benefit local contractors, particularly fencing contractors and agricultural supply companies.



# TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change will severely impact on those families, farmers and businesses that depend on natural resources like agriculture, forestry and fisheries for their livelihoods.

That's because climate change means longer droughts in parts of Australia, which are estimated to cost Australia \$7.3 billion annually from 2020, reducing GDP by 1 per cent a year. Such droughts will be broken by more damaging floods, more frequent bushfires and more severe storms.

Beyond the flashpoints of these events, there are the creeping, incremental consequences:

- A massive decline in agricultural production.
- Irretrievable damage to the Great Barrier Reef.
- Widespread shortages of urban water supply.
- Spikes in global food prices.
- Increases in heat-related deaths and increased airborne disease.
- Heightened instability in the coastal megacities of our region.

The farming sector has made the most substantial contribution to emissions reduction in Australia over the past twenty years; largely through the land clearing restrictions placed on the sector at the State level as well as the successful Carbon Farming Initiative implemented by the last Labor Government.

It is in the national interest that the sector be able to exploit the new, enhanced export opportunities in a way that is consistent with responsible land management. The forestry and agricultural sector represents Australia's largest opportunity in coming years to sequester carbon pollution – through soil carbon methods, reforestation, avoided deforestation and more.

That is why a Shorten Labor Government will continue to support the sector in these areas and will exclude agriculture from our proposed Emissions Trading Scheme.

Australia's land sector emissions were around 135 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e in 1990 or around one quarter of the national total; in 2014, they were just 14 million tonnes. That huge reduction was overwhelmingly due to land clearing restrictions introduced in Queensland over time between 1999 and 2009 (some of which were supported by John Howard who understood the benefits in achieving the Kyoto commitment).

Not only was this reduction enormously important from a climate perspective; it also had a huge impact on biodiversity in the region.

That is why a Shorten Labor Government will also introduce a "climate trigger" in federal legislation to allow the Federal Government to regulate broadscale land clearing. In government, we will also explore other ways of ensuring that State land clearing laws are consistent with Australia's international obligations and commitments; including by re-invigorating COAG's National Vegetation Management Framework.

A changing climate is making farming more challenging as drought events become more regular and protracted. We can't have a productivity agenda without a sustainability agenda.

Government has a role to play in helping farmers make the adjustment to hotter and drier conditions. That is why a Shorten Labor Government will resurrect Commonwealth, State and Territory dialogue of the kind previously carried out through the Council of Australian Government's Standing Committee on Primary Industries, and put drought assistance reform at the top of its agenda.

# PRIORITY SECTORS

## FORESTRY

Australia's forestry sector employs around 70,000 Australians, predominantly in the regions. The forest, wood and paper products industry is also Australia's sixth largest manufacturing industry with an annual turnover of around \$21 billion.

There is rightly much talk about Australia's transition from the "Mining Boom" to the Asia Pacific's "Dining Boom". But there is also an emerging "Fibre Boom", driven by growing demand in Asia and at home, and the advent of innovations like Cross Laminated Timber and wood-to-plastics technologies. Wood is a renewable product that stores carbon. Increasingly it will displace energy intensive steel and cement products in the construction industry.

A Shorten Labor Government's priorities in the forestry sector will be to:

- Lift the R&D effort.
- Expand our plantation estate by working with private landholders, including farmers and Indigenous communities in the locations where plantations are most viable.
- Bring the forest sector into the Carbon Farming Initiative as a means of incentivising investment in plantations.
- Identify key forestry infrastructure to lift productivity.
- Lift Australian content in government procurement.

## FISHERIES

As a country with an extensive coastline, fresh fish and seafood are an important part of our identity. While millions of Australians enjoy recreational fishing, most of us also rely on commercial fishing and aquaculture for the fish and seafood we consume.

Productive and sustainable fisheries depend on the health of our marine ecosystems.

Australia has the world's third largest marine area and we produce many high value species, such as lobster and abalone, for which there is strong demand in Asian markets. Our fisheries sector has long been moving up the value curve.

However, because of limited nutrient upwelling and low nutrient run-off from the Australian landmass our surrounding seas are typically nutrient poor and not very productive by international standards. Worldwide, aquaculture is the fastest growing primary industry sector. It now accounts for more than half the world's seafood supply. Australia's clean, clear waters are ideal for aquaculture products, such as salmon, tuna, oysters, prawns, abalone and mussels.

Labor believes significant scope exists to increase our aquaculture production to create jobs and strengthen regional industries in places like Townsville. Our key tasks will be to:

- Lift productivity and refine production techniques through investment in aquaculture research.
- Provide national leadership and planning for growth value industries such as the oyster industry.
- Develop a national aquaculture policy that encourages community acceptance of the industry whilst simplifying aquaculture regulation and promoting sustainable development.

Australia's five million recreational fishers also make a significant contribution to our regional economies. Too often though, they are not properly consulted when Federal Governments are making decisions which can impact on them.

A Shorten Labor Government will provide \$100,000 to establish a National Recreational Fishing Council that will give our recreational fishers a seat the decision making table. Chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Council will include representatives of both recreational fishers and relevant government departments.

The Council will tackle issues like small pelagic fisheries management, boating and fishing infrastructure, conservation, access to national marine parks, national Gone Fishing Day and other issues of concern to recreational fishers.

## **WELFARE IN ANIMAL PRODUCTION**

Protecting animal welfare and boosting agricultural profitability aren't competing aims – they support one another. The growing demand for high quality food produced in an ethical way means Australia's agricultural producers must embrace the highest animal welfare standards to stay internationally competitive.

When last in government, Labor put in place a comprehensive animal welfare strategy and took a lead role in coordinating this through the Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the Standing Council on Primary Industries (SCoPI).

Since coming to office, the Abbott-Turnbull Government has abolished both the advisory committee and the SCoPI. Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce has also washed his hands of delivering the animal welfare strategy, instead shifting responsibility for this to an external industry body. This has left a vacuum of leadership and direction when it comes to protecting and improving animal welfare in this country.

Labor will step up where the Abbott-Turnbull Government has failed by re-establishing national leadership on animal welfare in Australia. A Shorten Labor Government will:

- Establish an independent Inspector-General of Animal Welfare.
- Re-build State and Territory cooperation on animal welfare matters, including by establishing an independent Office of Animal Welfare.
- Renew the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.
- Review the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System.
- Provide more transparency and accountability.
- Ban animal testing for cosmetics within Australia and the importation or sale of new products tested on animals overseas.

In delivering our plan to better protect animal welfare, Labor will consult with State and Territory Governments and stakeholders across primary industry to ensure these policies promote international competitiveness for producers and do not undercut it.

# A UNITED LABOR TEAM WILL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

From the day Bill Shorten became Leader, Labor's team has remained united, with a single-minded commitment to deliver those policies that put people first. A healthcare system underpinned by Medicare. An education system that gives every child in every school more individual attention – Public, Catholic or Independent. University and TAFE that is accessible for all.

**WE HAVE PUT FORWARD OUR POSITIVE PLANS.  
WE ARE UNITED. WE ARE READY.**



**WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST**

