

Fair and Safe Workplaces

ACT Labor's Statement of Principles

ACT Labor believes every worker has the right to expect safety and fairness at work. In order to build a better city and a stronger community, we must ensure that all workers enjoy a safe work environment and have access to fair and reasonable conditions of employment.

In 2008, ACT Labor passed work safety laws that ensure the health and safety of all employees. The Liberals and the Greens voted against this legislation and tried to deny workers the right to safer workplaces.

This is unsurprising considering the Liberal Leader has described Australian workers as 'never having it so good' as they did under WorkChoices – a draconian and unfair industrial relations system.

Only ACT Labor has the demonstrated track record of protecting the rights and interest of workers in the Territory. We have successfully re-built the industrial relations system from the ruins left by the Carnell Liberal Government. Public sector wages have grown from the low levels they were held to by the Liberals and safety has been re-established as a Government priority after it was ignored for so long by the previous Liberal Government.

But there is still more to do. Australian working families have recently survived an ideologically driven attack from the Liberal party, an attack supported by the ACT Liberal Leader and his colleagues. Unlike the Opposition, ACT Labor is committed to building a fairer industrial relations system that does not strip workers of their fundamental right to sick leave, penalty rates and bargaining power. The Canberra Liberals have not changed. They are the same party that sought to strip away workers basic rights in 2007, and they'll do it again in government.

ACT Labor views fairness in the workplace as a way of further enhancing our strong economy. We have fostered an industrial relations system which encourages employers and employees to work together for safety and fairness so that workers and employers can share in the returns of our strong economy.

ACT Labor will continue to foster a system which protects fairness and safety in Canberra's workplaces.

OUR COMMITMENT TO FAIR AND SAFE WORKPLACES

Working together for a fair system

The extreme industrial relations system imposed by John Howard and the Canberra Liberals is systematically being replaced by Labor Governments with a fairer system which balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees.

ACT Labor will:

- Continue to contribute to the national debate on industrial relations and protect the rights of ACT employers and workers as a new, fairer industrial relations system is developed and implemented.
- Strive to develop local workplace legislation that keeps us 'ahead of the pack' in having the safest workplaces in Australia.
- Oppose any moves by the Liberals to implement the extreme 'Workchoices' agenda at a local level

Working Together

Industrial relations is an area which requires the effective co-operation of all stakeholders. ACT Labor has demonstrated that we can mediate and manage the divergent views and opinions of industrial relations stakeholders to ensure the best outcome for all. If re-elected we will continue to ensure Government, Business and Unions work together to achieve the best outcome for all Canberrans.

Rewarding our public servants

ACT Labor believes that individuals who commit their professional time to the service of the public should be valued and rewarded. We have demonstrated this commitment through improved remuneration and conditions for public servants during our time in office and this will continue should we be re-elected. Only a re-elected Labor team is committed to delivering fair wages and safe workplaces for public servants.

ACT Labor will:

- Ensure fair and reasonable wage growth in all areas of the public sector including frontline services like police, teachers and nurses.
- Build safe workplaces so that public servants can be assured they will return home to their families at the end of the day with their health intact.
- Continue to find innovative ways to protect the vital work-life balance that has made the ACT public service a model employer under the ACT Labor Government.

Supporting families in the workplace

ACT Labor believes in the importance of finding an appropriate balance between work and family. We know many workers are struggling to find this balance and recognise that more needs to be done to retain employees and give them the flexibility they need when raising a family.

ACT Labor:

- Will increase paid maternity leave for ACT Public servants from 14 weeks to 18 weeks at a cost of \$6 million over 4 years.
- Doubling paid paternity leave to two weeks at a cost of \$1.06 million over 4 years.
- Supports the recommendation of the Productivity Commission and the associated commitment of the Federal Labor Government to a federally funded paid maternity leave providing a base entitlement of 18 weeks paid maternity leave and 2 weeks paid paternity leave.
- Will ensure that ACT Public sector maternity leave entitlements are maintained with the introduction of a federal scheme.

Industrial Relations advice for our vibrant community sector

ACT Labor is working in partnership with community organisations to grow the sector. During the last term, ACT Labor established the community sector taskforce to assess the challenges facing the sector in the future.

Following the findings of this review, ACT Labor will provide funding of \$500,000 to provide community organisations with specialist industrial relations advice to help them navigate the new Federal industrial relations system. This will focus on increasing the use of collective agreements across the sector, improving education for employers and employees and provide information and promote awareness of industrial rights and responsibilities for organisations and their staff.

This is combined with the development of a portable long service leave scheme which ACT Labor announced as part of the 2008-09 Budget.

Safe Workplaces

Ensuring the safety of all workers is a priority for ACT Labor. This has been demonstrated by the significant reform undertaken since 2001 which has made the ACT the safest jurisdiction in Australia in which to work. The new work safety legislation will further re-enforce this record.

ACT Labor will:

- Ensure sufficient resources are devoted to the implementation of the new work safety legislation to ensure that the most modern and innovative OHS legislation in the country functions effectively.
- Continue to support the work of the independent OHS commissioner in educating the community, business and workers about the importance of health and safety in the workplace.

Worker's Compensation

In the unfortunate circumstance of a worker being injured in the workplace, they should be entitled to fair and reasonable compensation. ACT Labor recently received a comprehensive review of the ACT private sector workers' compensation scheme from a panel of independent consultants. It will be a priority of a re-elected ACT Labor Government to work with all stakeholders to implement appropriate recommendations of this review to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme.