CANBERRA
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Canberra Business Council
Federal Election 2010 Policy Comparison

Committed to the Growth and Development of Canberra and the Capital Region

20 August 2010

Affiliated with

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Every election represents a choice.

Over the course of the 2010 Federal Election campaign Canberra Business Council has worked with the NSW Business Chamber, our NSW partner organization, to monitor the policy commitments of both major parties and the Greens. This document represents a summary of the policies that relate to business put out by the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal/National Coalition and the Greens.

Canberra Business Council and NSW Business Chamber are apolitical and we do not hint, suggest or recommend how you cast your vote. The attached policy comparison is provided to assist you as you make your decision about who you believe should govern Australia over the next three years.

Yours sincerely

C. Faulks

Chris Faulks
CEO

Both parties are offering very different agendas.

The Australian Labor Party is offering major investments in broadband, health and education. Through the proceeds of the new Mining Tax it is offering cuts to the company tax rate and other small business concessions, such as streamlined asset depreciation. The Government is also reminding Australians of its record during the GFC and Australia's emergence from the GFC.

The Coalition's policies in infrastructure and education are not as ambitious as the Government, but are arguing the virtue of living within our means. The Coalition remains opposed to an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) or a carbon tax and its determination to scrap the mining tax is unambiguous.

The Coalition's generous paid parental leave scheme will be paid for by a new 1.5% levy on businesses with more than $5 million in annual profits. The Coalition is reminding Australians of its economic record when last in government and in the current Government's failures in efficiently delivering the 'pink batts' and Building the Education Revolution (BER) programs.

The Greens, in campaigning for the Senate, have indicated that they will support the passage of the Mining Tax and make the establishment of a tax on carbon a condition of either side getting their support in the Senate.

There are positives in both party's agendas. Both recognise the need for fiscal restraint and in building the skills and infrastructure of Australia. Both sides have committed to bringing the Budget which is welcome. Both sides also decided to forsake over-commitments and inflated expectations, as we saw during the 2007 Election Campaign.

It is disappointing that both sides did not engage in a meaningful debate about improving the current Fair Work Legislation and the failure of both sides to address the most important issue for small business, namely small business access to finance, is even more regrettable. The silence of both parties on the issue of banking competition is also disappointing.

The difference between the major parties on national broadband does represent a major philosophical divide. On one hand, Australia must be at the forefront of technological innovation, but at the same time, experience has shown us that a competitive private sector does this better than a government monopoly. However, there is a compelling need for government investment.

Labor Policies

Taxation

>>Cut Company Tax rate to 29% from 1 July 2012 for small businesses, 1 July 2013 for larger businesses.
>>Introduce a 30% Mineral Resource Rent Tax (MRRT) on iron ore and coal projects.
>>Extend the 40% Petroleum Resource Rent Tax to all onshore and offshore oil and gas projects.
>>Provide instant write off for new small business assets costing up to $5000 from 2012-13.
>>Establish a new R&D credit, providing a 45% refundable credit for firms with an annual turnover of less than $20 million.
>>Introduce a new 50% tax discount for up to $1,000 of interest income from saving deposits held with any bank, building society or credit union, as well as interest on bonds, debentures and annuity products.
>>Introduce an optional standard personal tax return deduction, worth $500 in 2012-13 and $1,000 from 2013-14 onwards.

Fiscal Policy

>>Return the Federal Budget to surplus by 2012-13, three years ahead of schedule.

Superannuation

>>Increase the guaranteed superannuation employer contribution from 9% to 12% by 2020.
>>Extend Superannuation Guarantee Levy to cover employees up to 75 years of age.
>>Double the contributions cap to $50,000 from 2012-13 for people aged over 50 with balances under $500,000.
>>Provide a concession worth up to $500 for 3.5 million low income earners who currently get no superannuation concession for their compulsory savings.
>>Introduce simpler, streamlined "MySuper" account to replace existing default funds.

Labor Policies

Access to Finance

>>Support the 'four pillars' banking policy. No mergers among the big four banks.

>>No promise made in relation to improving competition in the banking sector.

Banking

>>Ensure credit card accounts are not able to be drawn over their maximum limit unless the consumer specifically agrees to opt-in to the service.

>>Require that credit card repayments be allocated to higher interest balances first.

>>Apply interest payments in a standard way under an industry-standard agreement.

>>Ban unsolicited credit limit extension offers.

>>Provide consumers with a summary of key account features on application forms.

>>Require credit providers to inform consumers of the implications of making minimum repayments on their credit card bills.

Industrial Relations

>>Introduce a Fair Entitlements Guarantee that will protect workers' entitlements including: redundancy pay (up to a maximum of four weeks for each year of service), all annual leave, all long service leave and up to three months of unpaid wages. The Fair Entitlements Guarantee will be enshrined in legislation and replace the existing General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme (GEERS).

>>Implement the Securing Super reforms so that employees will receive information on their payslips about the amount of superannuation actually paid into their account and quarterly notification from their superannuation fund if regular payments cease.

Corporate Law

>>Equip ASIC with stronger powers to place companies into liquidation when they have been abandoned by their directors to ensure employees get swifter access to unpaid entitlements.

>>Crack down on companies that undertake 'phoenix' company behaviour where a business closes down one day and opens up the next day with a different name to avoid paying its obligations. Directors will be made personally liable for the debts of companies that have deceptively similar names to failed businesses previously run by the same directors.

Paid Parental Leave

>>Labor's paid parental leave scheme has been legislated and will commence on 1 January 2011 providing 18 weeks' parental leave pay at the federal minimum wage, around $544 a week.

Manufacturing

>>The *Clean 21* strategy will make Australian manufacturing more competitive through the following:

—A new Enterprise Connect Clean Technology Innovation Network will bring business advisers with specialist knowledge of clean technology together with companies, unions and researchers. The network will work with firms on ways to cut energy, water and material use; plan for change; and adopt new technologies that will reduce their environmental impact.

—The Linkage Research Training Awards Scheme will embed 200 of the best research students in industry settings. The Scheme will focus on emerging green industries and on projects that help existing industries reduce their environmental impact.

—Introduce a Clean 21 manufacturing priority for Round 14 of the Cooperative Research Centres Program, which will be conducted in 2011.

—A new $4 million Enterprise Connect Making Better Managers Program will lift management skills by providing tailored advice and services.

—Appoint a Built Environment Supplier Advocate to identify opportunities for local built environment companies and champion their interests in major projects and procurements, both at home and abroad, with a specific brief to focus on sustainability.

Broadband and Telecommunications

>>Build the National Broadband Network. The $43 billion broadband network will have a peak speed of 1 gigabit per second, baseline speed of 100 megabits per second available to 93% of the population and 12mbps for the remaining 7% of the population.

>>93% of the population will have fibre, 4% next generation wireless and the remaining 3% in remote areas will receive satellite coverage.

Labor Policies

Transport

>>Commit $2.1 billion to build the Parramatta to Epping Rail Link, construction scheduled for 2014 and complete in 2017.

>>Fund Inland Rail Link from Melbourne to Brisbane through Central West NSW. Link is expected to commence pre-construction works in 2014 and cost $4.7 billion over eight years.

>>Undertake a $20 million feasibility study into fast rail between Melbourne and Brisbane with a detailed study into Sydney to Newcastle as the first stage of the larger east coast network.

>>Establish a $6 billion regional infrastructure fund to address potential capacity constraints in resource regions by building new and better roads, rail and ports.

Housing Affordability

>>Build 15,000 affordable houses in regional cities through a $200 million affordable houses program. Up to $15 million per regional city that submits a successful application.

Climate Change/Environment

>>Shelve the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).

>>Convene a Citizens Assembly of 150 representatives to debate solutions to climate change.

>>Provide $1 billion over ten years to connect renewable energy sources to electricity grid.

>>Assist renewable energy companies with access to finance through a $100 million Renewable Energy Venture Capital Fund.

>>Commit to a 20% renewable energy target by 2020.

>>Require all new coal-fired power stations to meet best practice emissions standards, and be Carbon Capture and Storage-ready (CCS-ready).

>>Provide $394 million to support motorists to purchase new, low-emission, fuel-efficient vehicles. Households will be able to receive a $2,000 rebate towards a new vehicle by trading in their pre-1995 car for scrapping. Rebate will operate over four years from 1 January 2011 to the end of 2014 and capped at 200,000 vehicles.

>>Allow businesses that invest in eligible assets or capital works to improve the energy efficiency of their existing buildings –from 2 stars or lower to 4 stars or higher

– to apply for a one-off bonus tax deduction (from1 July 2011). The incentive will enable businesses to claim a bonus tax deduction of 50 per cent of the cost of the eligible assets or capital works.

>>Reward businesses that cut carbon emissions before establishment of market trading system. Businesses who cut emissions during this time will be allowed to use their historic emissions baseline (higher emission level).

>>Introduce new mandatory carbon dioxide emission standards for all new light vehicles, including cars, from 2015. Average mandatory emission standards of 190 g/km by 2015 and 155 g/km by 2024 would be the starting point for further consultation.

>>Work with the 56 regional natural resource management groups to develop a National Green Corridors Plan to prepare native plants and animals, as well as agricultural landscapes for climate change.

Marine Protection

>>Establish a comprehensive network of marine parks through the following steps:

—Continue consultation process to establish a shared vision for ocean health, ocean use and ocean protection, and the identification of new economic opportunities.

—Establish a representative network of marine parks by 2012, protecting key areas in Federal waters, right around the country.

—Use a scientifically driven process that determines the location and size of marine parks.

—Provide the highest level of conservation protection for the most sensitive and special areas.

—Continue to allow sustainable fishing in other areas that will benefit from the healthy fish stocks that the marine park network supports.

—Release within three months a draft plan for the South West Marine Bioregion, which extends from Kangaroo Island in South Australia to Kalbarri in Western Australia.

—Finalise the remainder of the marine bioregional plans - North, Northwest and East - by December 2011.

Labor Policies

—Provide an appropriate program budget to support the marine bioregional planning program nationally, including :

—Assistance for displaced activities - a Federal policy to provide assistance to those industries affected by greater marine protection will be released within the first three months of the next term of government.

—Funding for management, enforcement and education - the necessary resources for the effective management of marine protected areas and shore based community programs.

>>Review Australia 's national environment law and the recommendations of Dr Allan Hawke's review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

>>Make it an offence to import illegally logged timber into Australia.

>>Improve the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Australia. This will mean that approved chemicals will be available sooner and chemicals that are banned will be taken off the shelves faster.

—Commence a new Carbon Farming Initiative and allow Australian farmers and landholders to participate in international markets for carbon credits. The Federal Government will help facilitate the sale of carbon credits on domestic and international markets. Farmers and landholders will benefit from a new income stream, and the environment will benefit from reduced pollution.

Education/Skills

>>Develop a new senior qualification, the Australian Baccalaureate. The Australian Baccalaureate will be a new voluntary qualification that provides senior students with access to a credential of international standing – similar to national certificates like the British 'A' Levels and French Baccalaureate. The Australian Baccalaureate will sit alongside existing senior secondary school qualifications as a voluntary credential that will build off the National Curriculum.

>>Roll-out of the *Empowering Local Schools* reform will commence with 1,000 schools during 2012 and 2013, with schools gaining responsibility for the following core elements, tailored to the needs of each school. This will include:

—Enhanced school governance arrangements, giving school councils or boards responsibility for strategic planning, and oversight of the school's operations and finances.

—Responsibility for finance and the school budget, which will initially involve a single budget for staffing. Schools will then move to a one-line school budget that allows them to fully manage the allocation of all resources, to meet the needs of students at each school.

—Management of the school staffing profile, including support staff, which will involve determining the right mix of staff, recruitment and staff selection.

—Principals will have a greater role in staff performance management within existing enterprise bargaining arrangements.

>>Provide reward payments to the schools that deliver the greatest improvements across a range of areas. Individual Australian primary schools that show most improvement will receive $75,000 and high schools will receive $100,000. Reward payments will be provided for 500 schools in 2013, based on improvement in the 2012 school year, and will be provided to 1000 schools based on improvement in 2013.

>>Introduce performance pay for teachers in 2014, based on teacher performance in 2013. About 25,000 of the best classroom teachers would receive a performance bonus of around $8000 each year.

>>Establish *Teach Next* program to encourage professionals with expertise in maths and science to consider a career in teaching. The program would provide a specialized intensive training of around eight weeks duration that will enable them to quickly move into the classroom.

>>Students from Years 9 to 12 will be offered a new National Trade Cadetship as an option under the National Curriculum from 2012. This Cadetship will be delivered through their local Trades Training Centre and through other eligible venues. There will be two streams of National Trade Cadetship available:

—National Trade Cadetship - Foundation which will focus on essential work readiness skills and laying the foundation for further training; and —National Trade Cadetship - Pre-Apprentice which will focus on specific trade or occupation area

Labor Policies

>>Invest $25 million to ensure school students gain experience and confidence in a real work environment as part of the National Trade Cadetship being delivered in Trades Training Centres. Up to 50,000 additional structured work experience places will be provided, with the first cohort of students undertaking a National Trade Cadetship commences in 2012.

>>Provide trade apprentices with up to an additional $1,700 tax exempt bonus as they reach milestones in their training from 1 January 2011. The Trades Apprentice Income Bonus means that trade apprentices will receive a $5,500 tax exempt bonus over the course of their training. Trade apprentices who reach milestones each year they will get an additional:

- $200 - bringing the 12 month payment to $1,000.
- $200 - bringing the 24 month payment to $1,000.
- $500 - bringing the 36 month payment to $1,200.
- $800 - bringing the completion bonus to $1,500.

Older Workers

>>Provide a $6,500 improved Work Bonus for age pensioners who choose to do part time work. The new Work Bonus will allow age pensioners to earn up to $250 a fortnight without it being assessed as income under the income test.

>>Provide $4,000 worth of training and assessment to support 7,500 mature age workers to skill up.

>>Establish a dedicated Age Discrimination Commissioner. The new commissioner will advocate for the rights of older Australians, educate the community and industry and handle complaints under the Age Discrimination Act.

Employment Support

>>Offer relocation assistance to long term unemployed Australians who relocate to take up a job. Relocation assistance would be $6,000 for those moving to a regional area and $3,000 for those moving to a metropolitan area. Families with dependent children would be provided an additional $3,000 to help with those costs. As part of this package, employers would receive a $2,500 financial incentive for taking on a relocated jobseeker. This subsidy would be for $500 per week for the first five weeks. Proposal would be trialled with the provision of assistance for up to 2,000 eligible job seekers over two years from 1 January 2011.

Murray-Darling Basin

>>Until the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is released and finalised by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, the Federal Government will continue to roll out $4.4 billion in new, efficient irrigation systems under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program.

>>The Government will continue to buy back water, under the $3.1 billion Restoring the Balance in the Murray- Darling Basin plan, with new tenders to commence following the release of the consultation Guide to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Coalition Policies

Taxation

>>Cut Company Tax to 28.5% for small businesses (taxable income below $5 million) from 1 July 2013.

>>Keep Company Tax at 30% for businesses with taxable incomes above $5 million per year from 1 July 2013 (the cut of rate by 1.5% to be offset by the Paid Parental Leave Levy of 1.5%).

>>Not proceed with the tax initiatives such as Small Business Asset Write-off and simplified pooling, phasing down of interest withholding tax for financial institutions, and other concessions announced as part of the Henry Review.

>>No Mineral Resource Rent Tax (MRRT).

>>Introduce a Tax Receipt for PAYE taxpayers that provide details on how their tax money has been spent.

>>Publicly release all Henry Tax Review Information including all the costings, modelling and other data underlying the Henry review recommendations.

>>Develop a Taxation White Paper.

>>Small business representation on the Board of Taxation.

Fiscal Policy

>>Return the Federal Budget to surplus by 2012-13.

>>Strengthen the fiscal position of the Commonwealth by cutting $45 billion in spending. Programs identified for cuts include:

—National Broadband Network
—Renewable Energy Future Fund
—Productivity Places program
—Trade Training Centres Program
—The Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute
—Green Car Innovation Fund
—Carbon Capture and Storage Flagships Program
—Green Building Fund
—Petrol Commissioner
—MySkills website

Industrial Relations

>>No changes to the Fair Work Australia legislation in the coming term.

Employment Participation

>>Introduce a new Job Commitment Bonus to encourage young Australians who are long-term unemployed on NewStart Allowance or Youth Allowance to take a job and keep it. The Job Commitment Bonus will be $2,500 for those who remain off welfare for 12 months, and $4,000 for those remain in a job for 24 months.

>>Provide unemployed jobseekers on NewStart Allowance a payment of up to $6,000 if they move to a regional area to take up a job offer.

>>Offer a payment of up to $3,000, available for all unemployed jobseekers on NewStart Allowance in areas of high unemployment, if they move to a metropolitan area to take up a job offer. In addition, employers will receive a subsidy of $2,500 for employing an eligible jobseeker, paid at $500 per week for the first five weeks of employment.

>>Introduce a $3250 Seniors Employment Incentive Payment for employers that hire mature workers aged 50 or older. The Incentive Payment will be paid to employers who hire a jobseeker who is currently unemployed or out of the workforce, registered with Centrelink and on benefits.

Tourism

>>Expand Australia's tourism research capabilities by establishing a tourism research foundation costing $8 million over four years.

>>Provide grants of up to $100,000 p.a. towards regional tourism organisations across Australia.

>>Establish a $40 million Tourism Infrastructure and Development Fund to fund projects that help the development of local tourism products.

>>Invest an additional $10.5 million to increase the marketing capacity of Business Events Australia.

Superannuation

>>Not increase the Superannuation Guarantee Levy above the current rate of 9%.

>>Not proceed with the increase in the maximum age for employer SGL contributions from 70 years of age to 75.

Coalition Policies

Small Business

>>Extend 'Unfair Contract' protections for small business.
>>Retain current laws relating to the treatment of personal service income.
>>Not proceed with the Small Business Asset Write-off proposal announced by the current Government.
>>Establish a dedicated small business advocate - the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.
>>Direct the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman and the ACCC to develop best practice guidelines to explain and encourage 'fair commercial conduct'.
>>Give Cabinet status to the Small Business portfolio.
>>Require the Minister for Small Business to make an annual statement to Parliament regarding progress in opening up Commonwealth contracts to small business.
>>Require the Australian Accounting Standards Board to justify additional disclosure and compliance obligations. Requirements from the AASB represent a significant area of compliance for small business.

Paid Parental Leave Scheme

>>Provide mothers with 26 weeks paid parental leave, at full replacement wage (up to a maximum salary of $150,000 per annum) or the Federal Minimum Wage, whichever is greater.
>>Include in the parental leave payment, superannuation contributions at the mandatory rate of nine per cent.
>>Allow two out of the 26 weeks to be dedicated paternity leave to be used simultaneously or separately to the mother's leave, paid at the father's replacement wage (up to a maximum of $150,000 per annum) or the Federal Minimum Wage, whichever is greater, plus superannuation.
>>Administer the scheme through the Family Assistance Office rather than through employers.
>>Fund the scheme via a 1.5 percent levy on companies with taxable incomes in excess of $5 million. The levy will apply only to taxable income above $5 million.

Child Care

>>Re-introduce indexation of the Child Care Rebate – will provide parents up to $300 a year.
>>Not proceed with the new National Rating System for child care and early childhood education services.
>>Review the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care to ensure it take account of cost and workforce impacts on the child care sector.
>>Re-establish the Federal Planning and Advisory Committee. The Committee will assess whether the establishment or expansion of child care centres in a particular location is warranted and can be justified by demonstrated need in the catchment area.

Climate Change

>>No Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) or Carbon Polution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).
>>No tax on carbon.
>>Will reduce CO_2 emissions by 5 per cent by 2020 based on 1990 levels.
>>Establish an Emissions Reduction Fund to support CO_2 emissions reduction activity by business and industry. The Fund will call for tenders for projects that will reduce CO_2 emissions; deliver additional practical environmental benefits; not result in price increases to consumers; protect Australian jobs; and not otherwise proceed without Fund assistance. The Fund will commence operation in 2011-12 with an initial allocation of $300 million, increasing to $500 million in 2012-13, $750 million in 2013-14 and $1 billion by 2014-15.
>>Commit to a 'once in a century' replenishment of national soils and farmlands. Support up to 85 million tonnes per annum of CO_2 abatement through soil carbons by 2020.
>>Provide financial incentives through the Emissions Reduction Fund to the oldest and most inefficient power stations to reduce their emissions.
>>Provide $60 million to develop the La Trobe Valley, Hunter and Central Queensland regions as Clean Energy Employment Hubs to drive additional clean energy research and development.

Coalition Policies

Migration

>>Develop a White Paper on Immigration. The White Paper will be released by the end of 2010 with a final paper to be completed by May 2011.

>>Establish a Productivity and Sustainability Commission to advise Government on population growth bands considered sustainable. This advice will provide the framework for setting migration programmes.

>>Reduce Australia's annual rate of population growth to 1.4%. This will require reducing the annual rate of net overseas migration from 298,924 in 2008-09 to no more than 170,000 per year by 2013-14.

>>Ensure two-thirds of all permanent migrants will be for the purposes of skilled migration.

>>Quarantine the level of employer nominated skills migration and temporary business visas (457s) to at least current levels.

>>Liberalise arrangements for temporary business visas (457s) subject to clear standards, to make them more accessible to business, especially small businesses, and business in regional areas with proven skills shortage needs.

>>Support skills needs in regional areas by encouraging the settlement (on either a temporary or permanent basis) of new arrivals in regional and rural areas. Queensland and Western Australia will be afforded a high priority for permanent and temporary skilled visa applications.

Building Education Revolution (BER) Program

>>Redirect unspent BER 'school halls' funds away from state education departments and give funds directly to each school.

>>Allow schools to decide what infrastructure they need and what will help them enhance the education of students.

>>Allow each school to self-manage projects in order to deliver better value.

>>Let schools keep the money they save for investment in other worthy projects or for more comprehensive infrastructure.

Marine Protection

>>Halt the current Marine Bioregional Planning process. The process will be restructured to address community and industry concerns.

>>Shift responsibility for the design, development and consultation of the displacement policy to a Ministerial panel to be joint-chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and Arts.

>>Require peer reviewed scientific evidence of threats to marine biodiversity to be made available to all stakeholders, including affected communities and industries, before any decision is made on future Marine Protected Areas (particularly any no-take zone).

>>Establish the boundaries and management plans of Marine Protected Areas in consultation with industry.

Infrastructure

>>Boost investment in infrastructure through the establishment of an Infrastructure Partnership Bonds Scheme. These 10 year bonds will receive concessional tax treatment in the form of a 10 per cent tax rebate irrespective of the tax status or rate of the taxpayer.

>>Undertake a feasibility study into high speed rail to consider the viability of possible passenger routes along Australia's east coast between Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane, and between Sydney and Newcastle.

>>Begin the upgrade of the Bell's Line of Road across the Blue Mountains.

>>Provide Federal Funding towards construction of an Inland rail line from Melbourne to Brisbane through the Central West of NSW. The project, with an estimated cost of $4.7 billion,16 will be undertaken in partnership with the private sector.

>>Complete the north and south dedicated rail freight lines through Sydney.

>>Abolish the State Infrastructure Fund announced by the Federal Government as part of its response to the Henry Review into Taxation.

Energy Sector

>>Release an Energy White Paper.

>>Examine the viability of providing a new exploration incentive for solar thermal and geothermal projects.

>>Re-establish the agreement to enable the sale of uranium to India for peaceful, energy generation purposes.

>>Examine the potential of thorium as an energy source for export.

Coalition Policies

Broadband and Telecommunications

>>Scrap the proposed Federal Government Internet Filter.

>>Establish a National Broadband Commission to design and manage a competitive selection process to select the private sector companies which will execute the various programmes in the Coalition's Broadband and Telecommunications.

>>Fund a $6.3 billion broadband network with a peak speed of 100 megabits per second, baseline speed of 12 mbps. 97% covered by wireless, revamped copper, pay TV cables and satellite.

>>Instruct the National Broadband Commission to create a National Broadband Database to gather and make publicly available high quality information about the availability of broadband services on a premises by premises basis across Australia.

>>Prioritise regional and remote areas underserviced by broadband through a $750 million program. The program will significantly increase the number of households which can receive a DSL service or high speed equivalent.

>>Commit up to $2 billion of Funding for New Fixed Wireless Broadband Networks – this funding will be equally split between city and regional areas.

>>Fund new satellite services for the 3% of the population in remote areas not covered by other technology.

>>Invest up to $2.75 billion in creating a fibre optic 'backbone" by 2017.

>>Allow the ACCC to set access pricing to support broadband competition.

>>Strengthen consumer protections through a major review of the Universal Service Obligation.

>>Undertake a review into mandating that all 'greenfields' connections must be fibre. Any new arrangements would be in place from 1 January 2012 at the earliest.

>>Maintain the Do Not Call Register but oppose extending it to business phone numbers.

>>Target mobile phone coverage blackspots through a $30 million grants program targeting blackspots in urban and rural areas.

Access to Finance

>>Support the 'four pillars' banking policy. No mergers among the big four banks.

>>No promise made in relation to improving competition in the banking sector.

Minerals

>>Abolish the proposed Mineral Resource Rent Tax (MRRT)

>>Introduce an Exploration Development Program. The proposed $150 million program will encourage further exploration of Australia's mineral wealth. The Program will focus on the small and mid-tier exploration sectors and be funded through redirecting $150 million from the Carbon Capture and Storage Flagships (CCSF) programme.

>>Direct $45 million from the CCSF to accelerate the development of carbon capture through biological sequestration technologies.

>>Invest $8 million in a pilot biofuel lignocellulose plant.

>>Provide $4 million towards testing the suitability of a competitive biodiesel blend of diesel for heavy vehicles.

>>Upgrade the security of Australia's offshore oil and gas facilities. A Coalition Government would work with industry to upgrade the security for Australia's offshore oil and gas platforms.

Defence Industry

>>Establish a Defence Industry Advocate (DIA) to assist the Australian defence industry in its dealings with the Defence Material Organisation (DMO). The DIA would have access to the services of senior mediators, including retired judges and experienced defence procurement practitioners who would help resolve disputes in relation to tender and contractual matters at no cost to industry.

Ports

>>Restore $58 million in funding for cargo screening at ports and airports.

>>Provide $35 million additional funding to increase cargo screening capacity.

Coalition Policies

Murray-Darling Basin

>>Deliver the stalled 2007 ten point national plan for the Murray-Darling Basin.
>>Release the Draft Basin Plan within two weeks of election.
>>Proceed with implementation of the Basin Plan without delay, according to the processes outlined in the *Water Act 2007*.
>>Commence works to reengineer Menindee Lakes within twelve months.
>>Publicly release timelines and targets for the delivery of all state water savings projects.
>>Re-plumb irrigation infrastructure, committing an additional $300 million in on-farm infrastructure.
>>Undertake water buybacks in a manner consistent with the Basin Plan.
>>Release new guidelines for the process of water buybacks.
>>Commission an urgent study of the economic and social impacts of the Draft Basin Plan.
>>Expand the scope and funding of the Strengthening Basin Communities program.
>>Honour obligations to compensate irrigators for reductions in entitlements.
>>Create a $500 million fund to secure future water supplies.