



Shadow Minister for Health and Medicare

01 April 2019

Marilyn Beaumont OAM
National Board Chairperson
Po Box 282 Kyneton, Victoria 3444
Via Email: marilyn1379@gmail.com

Dear Marilyn,

Thank you for your email on the Australian Women's Health Charter 2019.

Labor has a proud record of working with the Australian Women's Health Network, and we welcome this opportunity to outline our policies to improve the health and wellbeing of Australian women.

Labor strongly endorses the Charter's principles, and we have outlined our policy responses below.

Proposal 1: A New National Women's Health Policy which places gender into all Commonwealth portfolio areas and is underpinned by a Social Determinants Framework

Labor is strongly committed to implementing a National Women's Health Policy that addresses women's health needs throughout their life-cycle and addresses gender and other determinants of health.

The last Labor Government developed such a policy – the National Women's Health Policy 2010 – in close collaboration with the AWHN.

As you know, the current Government is developing a new National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030. The current Government has not included Labor in the development of the Strategy, and we were disappointed that the draft Strategy was more focussed on particular conditions than wellness and the social determinants of health.

Assuming the final Strategy is released before the upcoming election, a Labor Government will consider improvements in consultation with AWHN and others. For example, it is unlikely that sexual and reproductive health issues (see below) will be adequately reflected in the current Government's Strategy.

The AWHN is right to note that cross-portfolio collaboration will be key to the implementation of a new plan. Labor looks forward to working with you on this.

Proposal 2: Within a national women's health policy as a first priority develop a national women's sexual and reproductive health policy

As you know, we have recently announced that a Shorten Labor Government will deliver Australia's first ever National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, to make sure all Australian women can access legal, safe and affordable reproductive health services.

Through this Strategy, Labor will improve access to both contraception and termination services.

In particular, we will improve access to long-acting removable contraceptives (LARCs) and contraceptive pills.

We will also improve access to safe, legal ways to end a pregnancy.

As part of this commitment, Labor will fund a national telephone referral service, giving women the information they need to access services and a new online community of practice to support medical practitioners.

Labor will also work to address the out of pocket costs that deter women accessing medical terminations, as well as the patchwork of laws that see many women forced to travel long distances or interstate to access services.

We will do this by using, for the first time, Commonwealth-State hospital funding agreements to set out our expectation that termination services will be provided consistently in public hospitals.

Labor will also work closely with the states to reform abortion laws.

Proposal 3: Government Funded Independent Women's Health Peak

Labor understands the important work that the AWHN carries out as Australia's only independent peak body for women's health.

The AHWN is dedicated to the health and wellbeing of women in Australia. You have worked for decades on issues such as informed choice around sexual health and contraception, and domestic violence prevention.

Despite AHWN's terrific work, the Liberals cut all your funding.

As you know, Labor has committed to restore this funding so the AHWN can continue its work on behalf of all Australian women.

Proposal 4: Establish Women's Equity Committees in all Federal Government Departments

A Shorten Labor Government will ensure that all parts of the Australian Commonwealth actively consider gender impacts in policy development and budgeting.

Labor will place the Office for Women at the centre of a new program of gender-responsive policy making. The Office for Women will form a hub of technical expertise and will provide oversight of all policies that impact on the social and economic wellbeing and participation of Australian women.

Labor will introduce a gender impact assessment on all Cabinet submissions and new policy proposals identified by the Office for Women to assess how policies will impact on women and gender equality objectives.

Labor will bring back the annual Women's Budget Statement to assess the impact of new budget measures on women and examine how the allocation of public resources affects gender equality.

Federal government departments will be required to set and report on gender indicators across all portfolio areas. The Office for Women will work with the Secretaries' Equality and Diversity Council to ensure that all public service leaders' key performance indicators specifically include diversity.

Finally, Labor will report on progress against the gender equality targets and indicators through an annual update to Parliament and will provide greater transparency about the impact of government policies and budgets on women.

Proposal 5: Funded National Conversation & Sustainable Ongoing Funding

In 2017, Labor's Status of Women Caucus Committee held the Setting the Agenda national conversation on gender equality.

This Committee heard from thousands of women around Australia who attended community meetings, took part in an online survey, made a submission or whose views were represented as members of women's organisations. Thirty-five community meetings, workshops and roundtables were held with more than 500 women across every state and territory and in cities, rural and regional areas.

To ensure women's voices are heard by Government, Labor will boost funding to the six National Women's Alliances, which represent over 180 women's organisations.

The Alliances will continue to take the lead in bringing forward the views, voices and issues of Australian women, in particular women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

A Labor Government will also reconvene a Ministerial Council on Gender Equality with relevant Ministers in state and territory governments to ensure collaboration and cooperation on the national agenda to eliminate inequality. The Ministerial Council will include a meeting with the Annual Forum of National Women's Alliances to enable better information sharing on issues affecting women at all levels of government.

Thank you again for your email, and for the important work the AWHN carries out on behalf of all Australian women.

Yours sincerely,



Tanya Plibersek



Catherine King