

Victorian State Election 2006
Summary Analysis by the CEO of the Association for Children with Disability

This page provides you with my answer to the following question:

- Of the two major parties (the ALP and the Liberals), in relation to policies specifically designed to assist children with a disability and their families, which one has the better policies?

The answer is the ALP/Labor, by a significant and clear margin.

Over the past year, we have been active in educating political decision makers from both the major parties about 'the disability swing factor' and challenging them to do their best to win the many votes there are to be won through good disability policies (see article from May 2006 NoticeBoard enclosed).

I am surprised and disappointed with the poor quality of the Liberals' policy. It is not that the ALP policies are all that brilliant. It shouldn't have been too hard for the Liberals to better the ALP policies. In a couple of specific policy areas the Liberal policies are better than the ALP, such as their schools related 'Plan to Deliver Opportunity for Our Children' policy which makes a start in addressing the long standing disability funding discrimination against families of children with a disability who want their children to go to a non-government school, an issue on which the ALP was again disappointingly silent. But in overall terms, the Liberals have fallen disappointingly short of giving the ALP a run for their money on disability policy.

One thing both parties got right is the inclusion of policies relating to vehicle modifications for families of children and young adults with a disability. The amount budgeted for this is not huge (and further advocacy will be required on this issue whoever wins government), but it is great to see the beginnings of a decent level of vehicle modifications assistance included by both parties. For further background, see Margaret Watson's *Scratching the surface* story on page 13 of the July 2006 edition of NoticeBoard, and also Anne-Maree Newbold's article, *The right aids and equipment* on pages 13-14 of the November 2006 edition.

Finally, in relation to the Upper House (the newly structured Legislative Council) in addition to the two major parties, in most areas you will have the choice of a range of other so called 'minor' parties, including: The Greens; Family First; People Power and the Nationals. The good news there is that all of the above minor parties have demonstrated significant interest in disability issues, and all have significant written policies relating to disability issues and/or 'family carers'.

Our election advocacy has been focussed on the policies of the two major parties that may form government. We have not attempted to evaluate the policies of the minor parties. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that after the election we will see a range of minor parties represented in the Upper House. I am confident that a minor party presence in the Upper House will be good for disability policy in the future.

Michael Gourlay, CEO, Association for Children with a Disability

For more information, check party websites:

The Greens www.greens.org.au
Family First www.familyfirst.org.au
People Power www.peoplepower.org.au
The Nationals www.vic.nationals.org.au
The ALP/Labor www.alpvictoria.com
The Liberals www.vic.liberal.org.au