

Labor and Liberal Disability Policies Fall Short

The Coalition for Disability Rights today welcomed the release of both the Labor and Liberal parties' disability policies, but said both commitments fell short of what was required to ensure a fair deal for people with a disability and their families.

CDR Spokeswoman, Sue Jackson said the Coalition was pleased that both parties had finally told the Victorian community what they will do for people with a disability and their families.

"However, we are particularly disappointed that neither party has provided commitments that will make any real dent in the shamefully long waiting lists and times for accommodation and that neither party has put forward a plan for eliminating those waiting lists.

"People with disabilities are waiting up to 15 years for residential services and many are cared for by parents in their seventies or eighties who are desperately worried about what will happen when they are no longer around," Ms Jackson said.

"While we acknowledge Labor's commitment to create 75 additional supported accommodation places for people with a disability, we believe this is an inadequate response. The 75 new places is equivalent to only around half of the likely increase in need predicted over the next four years," Ms Jackson said.

"Similarly the amount promised by the Liberal Party for supported accommodation will only really keep pace the forecast increase in the number of people coming onto the waiting list over the four year period."

"We welcome promises from both parties of funds to assist families with vehicle modifications so they can transport a family member with disability. This is an important first step in addressing an issue which restricts the capacity of people with disabilities and their families to get around and to participate in community life.

"Labor's promise to encourage greater housing accessibility is also an important first step."

"We welcome Labor's promise of additional support packages although more will need to be done in this area during the term of the next government.

"We are concerned that much of the Liberal's policy consists of broad statements of principle and promises about administrative reform rather than solid commitments to the investment needed to overcome the crisis in disability services," Ms Jackson said.

Authorised by Sue Jackson, Coalition for Disability Rights, 20 Nov 2006

Notes on accommodation costings of the ALP policy, by Michael Gourlay

Point 4 of the ALP policy includes \$15 million for both new Shared Supported Accommodation (\$10 million), as well as refurbishment and replacement of existing Community Residential Units (\$5 million). This is one off capital expenditure. By contrast, the Liberal policy commits \$40.4 million over 4 years to improve and develop shared supported accommodation facilities, based on \$9.7 million in Year 1 (2007-08) rising to \$10.5 million in Year 4 (2010-11). Based on this reading of the policies, one might 'score' the accommodation issue as Liberals \$40.4 million comprehensively thrashing the ALP \$15 million. An obvious question of the ALP is have they provided any recurrent funding to staff the \$10 million of new CRU's? When we asked the ALP this question they advised that a total of \$7 million per year for three years (2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11) in new recurrent funding for staffing for 75 accommodation places in the new CRUs had been built into the total of \$90 million they have committed over 4 years in Item 1 of their policy that covers aids and equipment and support packages. So the real accommodation 'score' over four years is Liberal \$40.4 million beats the ALP \$36.0 million (15+ 7+7+7) with the Liberals still in front by \$4.4 million. Just why the ALP didn't put all the accommodation related expenditure together in one item is a mystery. It has added an unnecessary layer of confusion to analysis of both accommodation and the aids and equipment/support packages initiatives.