



INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES POLICY

APRIL 2019

Background

Labor recognises and understands the unique circumstances and particular needs of residents of the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs) as part of Northern Australia. There is a need for special arrangements between the Commonwealth and the IOTs to suit the needs of islanders. Labor believes the potential of citizens who live in Australia's External Territories access to:

- Fair and equitable opportunities similar to that in Australian states and mainland territories;
- economic, social and cultural development strategies that appropriately address the needs and circumstances of each territory including environmental protection and dealing with climate change;

A Shorten Labor Government is committed to a clear strategy for the enduring security of the IOTs, based on consultation with the community, to improve the future for all residents of this unique part of Australia.

GOVERNANCE

- Labor will identify all delegated and legislated powers vested in the Administrator and the current reporting arrangements between departmental officials, the Administrator and the Minister.
- Labor will review the role and responsibilities of the Administrator including the reporting process to the Minister. This review will be undertaken in consultation with Indian Ocean citizens. It will include consideration of the Administrator having a formal process of engagement with the Indian Ocean Shire Councils. It will also review the role of the Administrator in working with organisations set up to represent the views and attitudes of the Indian Ocean Territories to insure that the role of the Administrator is advisory only and that these organisations are chaired by Indian Ocean citizens and that they are representative.
- Labor will request the Australian National Audit Office to examine Service Delivery Arrangements between the Commonwealth and Western Australian agencies to determine whether:
 - services are coordinated effectively;
 - agreements are adequately monitored; and
 - outcomes achieve value for money.
- Undertake a strategic assessment under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to determine the crown land that should be set aside in perpetuity for the preservation of the natural environment and the crown land that should be opened up for development.
- Labor will develop a Crown land management framework for the Indian Ocean Territories. As part of this Labor will investigate whether Crown land disposal ordinances are warranted to facilitate the lease and sale of Crown land in the Indian Ocean Territories and if required, establish them as a matter of urgency.
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- Any such ordinances created be integrated with the broader IOT land planning framework, including Crown land management plans and town planning schemes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Labor in Government will in its first term of office-

Develop a whole of government economic development plan for both islands;

Create an Indian Ocean Economic Development Authority

- to develop the plan for Government consideration; and
 - implement the Government approved plan.
- Provide island communities with a direct voice in identified economic development options through representation on the Indian Ocean Economic Development Authority of whom both Shires will be invited to have a representative on, typically their Shire President or another Elected Member.

Key Components of the Christmas Island Economic Plan

While the Economic Development Plan to be developed will identify a range of initiatives to grow the local economy, Labor will-

- Permit the Christmas Island Resort to operate a casino on the island
- Support the co-existence of mining, tourism, horticulture, aquaculture, technology and other relevant economic opportunities
- Better resource a planned tourism strategy which drives the development of multiple tourism products including, gaming, sport and recreation, the environment, mining, culture, heritage and the arts
- Implement a systematic infrastructure strategy that will facilitate economic and tourism opportunities
- Resource programs that build the skills and capabilities of the community to enable the best possible local participation in the jobs and business opportunities that arise from economic development, with an emphasis on leadership development, vocational skills, and business start-ups and development capability.
- Commission a comprehensive geological survey on Christmas Island to inform land development and responsible water management exploring options to partner with Phosphate Resources Limited.

Access to Land

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act makes provision for strategic assessments to be undertaken to resolve potential conflicts over the use of land. The protection of the island environmental values are of critical importance to Labor. Accordingly, Labor intends to introduce a coherent land management policy that sets aside land required for the protection of the environment, while concurrently facilitating the development of other land not required for that purpose. To that end an incoming Labor Government will-

- Undertake a strategic assessment under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to determine the crown land that should be set aside in perpetuity for the preservation of the natural

environment and the crown land that should be opened up for development.

- **Environment and Ecotourism**

The opportunity to develop the ecotourism industry on Christmas Island revolves around the ongoing protection of the unique native species.

Research reveals native species have been severely impacted by invasive species like feral cats, black rats, yellow crazy ants and so on.

The feral cat eradication programme partly funded by government and partly funded by the mining company has had a profound positive impact on the preservation of the native bird species and flying fox population. However such programs have to run on an ongoing basis if the native species are to be protected.

- Labor will fund the strategies that target key invasive species as identified in the 2010 Beeton Report

Key Components of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Economic Plan

While the Economic Development Plan to be developed will identify a range of initiatives to grow the local economy, Labor will-

- Examine measures to address fuel security on Home Island to secure an ongoing supply of both diesel and unleaded fuel.
- Transfer to the Cocos Council, the former Quarantine station for residential, recreational and commercial purposes. Council as a priority to lease back to the Commonwealth any land needs they may have before approaching others.
- Transfer, on a long-term lease basis, the following Crown land assets on West Island to the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands for development:
 - the four commercially zoned parcels on Emden Walk;
 - the Light Industrial Area bounded by the Sydney Highway, Fremantle Road and Alexander Street; and
 - the land suitable for retail at lot 193 William Keeling Crescent.
- Engage a legal specialist to review the land trust on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to determine legal ownership and control of all land with a view to reforming or replacing it to better deliver on the original mandate of the 1984 Agreement.
- New arrangements must be informed by agreement with trust beneficiaries, define the responsibilities and obligations of trustees to the people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and subject to probity considerations, enable land to be leased or entered into consortia with the land trust in support of economic development.
- Monies received from land trust leases to return to the land trust to support its own ongoing costs; land trust to be able to disburse the funds as it sees fit to deliver on the 1984 mandate.

