

**Welcome to the April issue of the Cunningham Examiner:**

Its purpose is to keep you updated on issues affecting our local community.

I want to hear from you too. If you want to promote a community event or just make a comment, my contact details are:

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**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES**

**Medicare Safety Net – are you registered?**

Many families are not aware that they need to register for the Medicare Safety Net if their medical costs are high.

Currently, the Medicare Safety net is benefiting those who need it least, according to data compiled by the Health Insurance Commission.

The Medicare Safety Net means that once you reach a safety net threshold, visits to your doctor or having tests may end up costing you less.

**ALL FAMILIES AND COUPLES NEED TO REGISTER.** Even if all your family members are listed on your Medicare card you still need to register for the safety net. Only Medicare services received outside of hospital are counted towards the safety net threshold.

For more information phone 132 011 or visit [www.medicare.gov.au](http://www.medicare.gov.au) and follow the links to the Medicare Safety Net information.



**\$4.7 billion high-speed broadband revolution**

As the Howard Government and Telstra continue to fight each other, Australia's broadband availability and speed lags behind the rest of the world.

A Rudd Labor Government will invest \$4.7 billion in a high-speed broadband network. This new network will connect 98% of Australians to high speed broadband at rates up to 40 times faster than most current speeds.

Benefits include:

- Phone bills for small business slashed and STD rates for business abolished;
- Enhanced business services for tele and video conferencing;
- Improved medical and education services via e-education and e-health; and
- New high definition, multi-channel and interactive TV services.

This new high-speed broadband national network will be delivered by a joint partnership with the private sector over 5 years.

The National Broadband Plan is vital to boost productivity growth and build long term economic prosperity. It will:

- Generate up to \$30 billion in additional economic activity each year;
- Help small business and industry compete and expand;
- Create new markets and thousands of new jobs for Australians; and
- Increase media diversity.

**Medicare Safety Net Summary**

Threshold	Who it is for	How it is calculated	Benefit
\$519.50* costs	Commonwealth concession card holders Families receiving FTB(A)	Out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital services	80% of out-of-pocket
\$1039* costs	All Medicare card holders	Out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital services	80% of out-of-pocket
\$358.90*	All Medicare card holders	Based on gap amount for out-of-hospital services	100% of scheduled fee

\*This figure is adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) on 1 January each year.

Out-of-pocket costs for the \$519.50 and \$1039 thresholds – the difference between the Medicare benefit and what your doctor charges you.

Gap amount for the \$358.90 threshold – the difference between the Medicare benefit and the schedule fee.

Schedule fee – a fee for service set by the Australian Government.

# A New Direction in Education

**A good, quality education provided by well-paid, qualified teachers in the best local school communities is crucial for our children's future.**

Education and training are also vital to improve Australia's productivity, generate innovative new ideas, expand business and create jobs. Labor's Federal Leader Kevin Rudd is committed to an education revolution and has announced a series of bold initiatives, including:

- Invest \$450 million to provide four-year olds with 15 hours a week of high quality early childhood education;
- Provide \$111 million to encourage young Australians to both study and teach maths and science;
- Set up a National Curriculum Board to develop a national curriculum for all students from Kindergarten to Year 12 in the key subjects of Maths, English, History and the Sciences;
- Commit \$62.5 million to encourage Government, Independent and Catholic schools to share educational facilities like science and language labs; and
- Ensure all children starting school receive a health and early skills assessment so they get off to the best start in life.

## **National action to improve literacy and numeracy**

A Rudd Labor Government will also introduce a **National Action Plan on Literacy and Numeracy** to boost the skills of Australian school children. In schools, the plan will:

- Develop a national curriculum that includes specific literacy and numeracy standards;
- Strengthen children's literacy and numeracy development in their pre-school years through a universal year of early childhood education and care for all four year olds;
- Improve the leadership and capacity of individual schools through specialist literacy and numeracy teachers, coaches or coordinators;
- Provide homework centres for extra support; and

- Implement a Healthy Kids Check and an Australian Early Development Index and use these assessments to help develop Individual Learning Plans focused on literacy and numeracy for all Australian children from Year 1 onwards.

## **For teachers, the plan will:**

- Ensure all trainee teachers meet necessary literacy and numeracy skills and standards;
- Include modules on the teaching of numeracy and literacy, including phonics, in all teacher training courses;
- Require professional development in literacy and numeracy; and
- Provide extra literacy and numeracy teaching resources.

## **For parents, the plan will:**

- Develop educational material on the value of reading and other positive activities; and
- Increase parental involvement to consolidate good work done in the classroom.



*Improving literacy and numeracy are vital for Australia's future prosperity.*

## **Helping refugees in our local community**

**SCARF – STRATEGIC COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEE FAMILIES – HELPS PERMANENT RESIDENT STATUS, REFUGEES RESETTLE IN THE ILLAWARRA.**

SCARF IS AN INDEPENDENT, NOT-FOR-PROFIT, COMMUNITY BASED INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION

The distress of refugee entrants can be helped by empowering them with personal mentoring, education and workplace experience programmes and the provision of training grants.



**SCARF PARTICULARLY NEEDS VOLUNTEERS TO:**

- Tutor in Homework Help Centres and at home;
- Help adults with english and home-skills; and
- Help adults to learn to drive (vehicle provided).

Plus we need 2nd hand computers for families with school-aged children.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

visit [www.scarf1.org.au](http://www.scarf1.org.au), phone 4285 2952 or email [scarf1@optusnet.com.au](mailto:scarf1@optusnet.com.au)

# Labor's Plan for working Australians and their families

Sharon Bird and Kevin Rudd are fighting for the rights of ordinary working Australians and their families and the right to a fair go for every Australian in the workplace.

Labor wants working Australians and their families to have decent jobs with decent conditions, which allow them to balance work and family, something the Howard Government's IR changes do not deliver.

Labor's plan is for a productive, fair and flexible industrial relations system that will put balance back into Australian workplaces.

Higher wages and real productivity growth can only be achieved when employers and employees treat each other with respect.

Labor's industrial relations plan will deliver that – and protect the interests of working families.

Under Labor's plan there will be genuine flexibility – not the downwards flexibility of John Howard's unfair AWAs with a wages and conditions race to the bottom, but flexibility upwards for the benefit of employers, employees and the nation.

**Same work, \$40 less: take it or leave it**

*The Sydney Morning Herald, pg 3, 10 April 2006*

## What are Labor's commitments?

Sharon Bird and Kevin Rudd have affirmed Labor's commitment to a fair and balanced industrial relations system.

Labor has already released more details of its industrial relations policy than the Howard Government did before the last election. These commitments include:

- Abolishing John Howard's unfair take it or leave it AWAs;
- Promoting and supporting democracy in the workplace through collective bargaining and fair bargaining;
- Reinstating a strong safety net and independent umpire;
- Providing flexibility upwards for employers, employees and their workplaces;
- Allowing for common law agreements which meet minimum standards;
- Restoring unfair dismissal protections with simple and timely processes;
- Supporting working families by encouraging flexible workplace arrangements and rostering protections so families can plan ahead, and the right to request two years unpaid parental leave subject to the genuine business needs of their employer.

## Howard's unfair individual contracts



*Local MP Sharon Bird is fighting John Howard's unfair industrial relations laws.*

**The Federal Government's own report given as evidence to the Budget Senate Estimates Hearings in May 2006 shows that its new AWA individual contracts are cutting the pay and conditions of Australian workers. Of all AWA individual contracts surveyed in the report:**

- ✗ 100% cut at least one so called 'protected award condition';
- ✗ 22% provided workers with no pay rise, some for up to 5 years;
- ✗ 51% cut Overtime Loadings;
- ✗ 63% cut Penalty Rates;
- ✗ 64% cut Annual Leave Loadings;
- ✗ 46% cut Public Holidays payment;
- ✗ 52% cut Shiftwork Loadings;
- ✗ 40% cut Rest Breaks;
- ✗ 46% cut incentive based Payments and Bonuses;
- ✗ 48% cut Monetary Allowances (for employment expenses; skills; disabilities);
- ✗ 36% cut Declared Public Holidays; and
- ✗ 44% cut Days to be substituted for Public Holidays.

## Futureworld Eco - Technology Centre

### GALA FUNDRAISING EVENT

Thursday 21 June 2007 - 6pm for 6.30pm

Kembla Grange Racecourse - A J Bert Lillye Lounge

Guest Speaker: Bob Carr (Business and Climate Change)

Tickets \$100 per person including:

- 3 course meal and drinks
- Auction and raffle
- Live entertainment and dancing

MC: Nick Rheinberger

For more information and tickets please phone 4226 9147

## Website Launched

I am pleased to announce the launch of my new website [www.sharonbird.com.au](http://www.sharonbird.com.au)

My website contains all of my media releases and speeches plus helpful links.

I have also included quick link to the Parliamentary Education Office site which can assist school-aged children with their school projects about the Parliament.

There is also a feedback form so you can let me know directly the issues that are of concern to you.

Many of my information kits and previous newsletters are available online through the website. For kits that do not come in an electronic format, you are able to order these directly through the feedback form.

**If your community organisation would like to be included on my 'Useful Links' page, please let me know.**



**• AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA •**  
**THURSDAY 24 MAY**

**Every cup counts in the fight against cancer**

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea is one of The Cancer Council Australia's most popular fundraising events and the largest, most successful event of its kind in Australia.

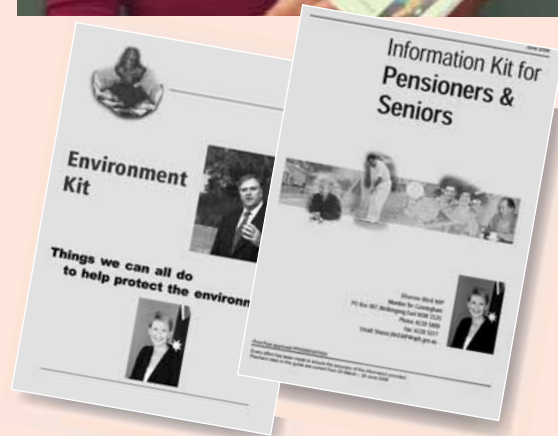
Since 1994 every morning tea held has raised funds that have contributed to vital cancer research and essential support services. The outcome of each of these cups is more survivors and more services for patients and families. Every cup really does count in the fight against cancer.

**To register go to**  
[www.biggestmorningtea.com.au](http://www.biggestmorningtea.com.au)  
 or phone 1300 65 65 85.

# Free information kits, factsheets and DVDs

My office provides information kits on many different areas. If you wish to order any of the kits below, please fill out the form below and return to: Sharon Bird MP, PO Box 387, Wollongong 2520.

To order your free copies, please tick the items you want ...



- You and Your Government
- Child Support Scheme
- Guide to Australian Government Payments
- Pensioner Kit
- Veterans Kit
- Environment Kit
- Superannuation Kit
- Families Kit
- Youth Kit
- Do Not Call (Telephone) Kit
- Banking Information
- Water Safety
- Net Alert (CD)
- Goals for Aussie Kids
- Safe Toys for Kids
- Dealing with Separation (CD): Experiences, Tips and Tools
- Keeping Baby Safe
- Cot Safety
- Fire Safety at Home
- Managing Your Money Booklet
- Safe and Secure Kit
- Labor's IR Taskforce Report
- Labor's 5 Point Plan for Small Business
- Join my Email List

### Your contact details

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail to:** Sharon Bird MP, PO Box 387, Wollongong, NSW 2520.  
 For more information please phone Sharon's office on 4228 5899.

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