

FEDERAL ELECTION ISSUES – INDUSTRY SPECIFIC ISSUES

Issue	Background	Industry position	Your Party's Policy Position
<p>Employee relations – unfair dismissals.</p>	<p>Current provisions are complex, costly and an impediment to employment.</p>	<p>Urgent changes required to simplify the process and to promote employment.</p>	<p>The Australian Democrats have consistently supported process improvements to unfair dismissal laws that will increase efficiencies and reduce costs, but have consistently opposed changes that materially impact on the rights of employees, especially if one group of employees have rights and another (small business employees) do not. The Democrats dismiss the Governments claims that exempting small business from unfair dismissal laws will create new jobs.</p> <p>In 1996 the Australian Democrats negotiated with the Federal Government to create new laws to provide a 'fair go all round' for both employers and employees. The Democrats supported further amendments to improve process in 2001, whilst opposing more radical</p>

			<p>Government reforms.</p> <p>The amendments have resulted in improved processes, reduced litigation and reduced delays, addressing small business concerns without impairing employees' substantive rights.</p> <p>For example, applications were reduced by 50 per cent after the 1996 reforms and a further 12 per cent after the 2002 reforms.</p> <p>The Democrats will continue to look for ways to improve processes and reduce costs.</p> <p>It must be remembered that these reforms have only been at the federal level, and state unfair dismissal processes are not as tight as the federal system. The Democrats support a unitary national unfair dismissal process, but again not at the expense of employee rights.</p>
<p>Employee relations – General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme (GEERS)</p>	<p>The benefits for employees should remain constant with Award and Termination, Change and Redundancy provisions notwithstanding what may be contained in Enterprise Agreements.</p> <p>The Office of the Employment Advocate should ensure that Australian Workplace Agreements do not contain any related provisions beyond the standard Terminations Change and Redundancy provisions. The external service delivery of GEERS is not supported.</p>	<p>Alignment of benefits with Award and Termination, Change and Redundancy provisions.</p>	<p>The Democrats believe that changes to corporate and insolvency laws are critical to prevent corporate collapse, parent companies avoiding obligations, and company directors avoiding or abusing their obligations.</p> <p>However, where corporate collapse does occur, the Democrats support the provision of a comprehensive national scheme to protect employee</p>

	<p>The scheme needs to be reviewed to ensure there are no unintended consequences for businesses. Any proposal to require business to 'top up' the funds or place entitlements into a trust fund should be opposed.</p>	<p>PIAA opposes any top up provisions.</p>	<p>entitlements and therefore support that GEERS Scheme. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Scheme is currently administrative and therefore could be scrapped at any time without parliamentary approval. It should be legislated. ▪ The Scheme should be funded by a mix of Government funding and either a tiered levy (depending on size and status) or an insurance contribution from employers. ▪ The scheme should be extended to cover superannuation entitlements, especially if the Government change corporate superannuation reporting requirements from quarterly to annually. <p>Our laws should also ensure that these earned entitlements have priority over the rights of secured creditors. 'Unearned' benefits like termination and redundancy payment must be legally recognised so that they have an assured ranking in the event of corporate collapse.</p>
<p>Employee relations – maternity leave</p>	<p>Existing provisions (12 months unpaid maternity leave) impose a significant burden on industry in workplace dislocation and training costs. Current union push for paid maternity leave should be opposed. Job sharing is not viable, especially for smaller firms.</p>	<p>The PIAA opposes paid maternity leave provisions and considers job sharing inappropriate in meeting the staffing needs of firms, particularly small firms.</p>	<p>There is comprehensive research that shows providing paid maternity leave actually saves companies costs in recruitment and training. Paid maternity leave overcomes the disadvantage and discrimination women face in the workplace because of the physical</p>

			<p>need to take a break from the workforce pre and post child birth. However we believe that asking small business to provide paid maternity leave would be a burden and would result in women being discriminated against in employment. This is why the Democrats have been advocating for Government-funded Paid Maternity leave and are the only party that have legislated for such a scheme. Australian is 1 of only 2 Countries in the OECD that does not have Government funded Paid Maternity Leave, the UK has 6mths. It is important to note that there has been no negative impacts reported on Business in those countries with Government-funded Paid Maternity leave.</p> <p>The Democrats also support job sharing and point to case studies of small firms who have successfully implemented family friendly work practices, including job-sharing - these firms often have lower turnover and absenteeism.</p>
Taxation – GST - Books	The GST should not be levied on items of printed matter that convey knowledge and information such as books, newsletters, magazines and newspapers.	The Association advocates all printed matter conveying knowledge and information especially books to be free of GST.	The Democrats agree. At the very least, textbooks should be GST-free. Senator Stott Despoja campaigned strongly to retain the textbook subsidy scheme, which expired on 1 July 2004.
Taxation – GST – anomalies	Stamp duty is currently payable on GST, which is a tax on a tax. The Federal government should be	Anomalies such as a tax on a tax need to be removed since they	The Democrats agree with this position and with simplification of the tax

	asked to pressure the states to remove this anomaly.	are both unjust and inefficient.	system more generally. We will make further announcements on this issue as part of the election campaign.
Tax – BAS	Business Activity Statements are still complex and time consuming especially for small business to complete. They need to be simplified and streamlined.	Given most businesses operating in the printing industry are small, the BAS should be further simplified to reduce compliance costs.	The Democrats support a reduction in red tape for all small business. This should not just be restricted to the BAS, but all government requests for information.
Issue	Background	Industry position	Your Party's Policy Position
Compliance burden	This is a broad issue and covers compliance with a range of government laws, the effect of which is often that the business ends up collecting money on behalf of some government agency eg child support payments, or incurs an unrecoverable cost, eg completing ABS surveys.	The objectives of good government should be working with business to identify ways at easing the existing compliance burden on business. Business should be seen as creators of jobs and not revenue agents for the government.	The Democrats are committed to better management and overall reduction of the demand for additional information from government departments, and looking at ways to assist small businesses communicate with government through better use of technology. We will continue to campaign for a national Paperwork Policy to co-ordinate the timing and nature of federal, state and local government collection of information, in order to ensure that the process is as streamlined as possible.
Australian made	Current government policies do not always result in local purchases. This needs changing.	The PIAA believes that government procurement policies should be used in a more strategic manner to help increase local content. Purchase of Australian made products should be vigorously	The Democrats agree that preference should be given to local suppliers for government contracts, especially small-to-medium sized enterprises. This is also an essential part of regional development.

		promoted.	
Environmental labelling	<p>Printing industries is increasingly becoming an environmentally sustainable industry. In recent years printing companies have become proactive in the environment area by investing in products, processes and technologies that promote better environmental outcomes. Solvents that used to be common as part of inks have been replaced by non-solvent based inks, newspapers recycling targets are amongst the best in the world, and recycled paper has improved both in quality and range. Publishers and printers are also making increased efforts to purchase the paper raw material from plantation forests.</p> <p>To reflect such positive industry contributions to the environment, the PIAA advocates a national approach being adopted to the environmental labelling of printed matter.</p> <p>Such an approach would allow companies who have a proven track record in the area of the environment to receive recognition by being allowed to display environmental labels on their products</p>	The principle of developing a national system of environmental labelling standards for printed matter is supported by the Association provided it is accompanied by a period of extensive industry consultation and the input of the industry is properly reflected in the arrangements that are finally adopted.	The Australian Democrats support the use of renewable and recyclable products at every opportunity, for example renewable energy and recycled paper. We generally support environmental labelling of printed matter and would be happy to work with the industry to progress this issue.
Issue	Background	Industry position	Your Party's Policy Position
Corporations Law – insolvency	There should be stringent and effective controls on the dispersal of assets, for personal gain, by Directors/Owners of Companies prior to insolvency	The PIAA is seeking clarification of the intent of Sections 588FA and 588 FE (2).	The Australian Democrats have not previously considered this issue specifically, but appreciate your

	<p>Preferential Payments - Debts older than six (6) months that are paid within six (6) months of an insolvency, creditors to have an automatic right to retain the proceeds of such payment(s).</p> <p>The intent of Section 588FA and 588FE (2) requires clarification and review.</p> <p>The preservation of Employee entitlements in an insolvency situation is supported.</p> <p>Secured Creditors protection should be preserved, to do otherwise would increase the risk of lending, leading to increased lending costs and interest rates, also possible earlier foreclosures. This would adversely affect all business particularly small businesses.</p> <p>Consideration could be given to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) monitoring the viability of companies.</p> <p>Rules put in place to provide transparency, and to control the maximum level of Administrator's and Liquidator's fees.</p>	<p>The Association remains concerned about unintended consequences such as companies being required to pay back to creditors payments they have received from companies in the preceding period prior to the appointment of administrators and liquidators.</p>	<p>concerns.</p> <p>As stated above, the Democrats believe that changes to corporate and insolvency laws are critical to prevent corporate collapse, parent companies avoiding obligations, and company directors avoiding or abusing their obligations.</p>
<p>Industry Development</p>	<p>The Enhanced Printing Industry Competitiveness Scheme (EPICS) has shown itself to be an outstanding example of how an industry development program can be delivered but was targeted to only one sector of the industry – Book production.</p> <p>With the broader industry key to the Australian economy's transition to a knowledge based economy a similar such scheme should be introduced for the whole industry.</p>	<p>The PIAA advocates a broad based printing industry scheme be introduced to help the printing industry play a strategic role in the emergence of the knowledge/IT economy.</p>	<p>The Democrats believe that in a global knowledge economy there is an enhanced role and responsibility for Government to be an active partner in providing strategic direction to the development of local industry, drawing on the successes of countries like the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland and Singapore in promoting industry and jobs growth.</p>

	The printing industry has developed its own Action Agenda called PRINT21 which was launched in March 2001. While the research papers of PRINT21 have highlighted important industry issues, lack of specific government funding to date has meant many of the Action Agenda recommendations have not been properly implemented.	The PIAA advocates allocation of specific government funds to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of PRINT21 – Printing Industries Action Agenda.	We believe that strategic plans must be developed that identify future opportunities and the best means of industry sectors meeting those opportunities. The process of developing these plans should include consultation with business, unions, Government, the education and training sectors, local communities, trade experts and the regions.
Issue	Background	Industry position	Your Party's Policy Position
Industry Rationalisation	Industry research has shown that in the sheet fed printing sector there are too many firms operating resulting in excess capacity and falling profit margins.	Government explore ways with the industry to develop profitability or in the alternative effective exit strategies.	The Australian Democrats have not considered this issue specifically, but appreciate your concerns. In the past we have supported targeted industry assistance measures and programs that assist profitability and enhance industry capacity for development and expansion.
Industry Research and Development	The industry currently has the Cooperative Research Centre and the National Print Lab at Monash University. While these initiatives have been welcomed, innovation in our industry requires more than refining the use of paper and paper products.	Government support required to improve the research and development of innovative new products comprising new materials, processes and systems.	The Australian Democrats support a broad-based tax concession that gives incentives for all sectors, including mature mining, agriculture and manufacturing sectors, to engage in R&D by restoration of the 150 per cent tax deduction for business Research and Development; increased funding for the Co-operative Research Centres, CSIRO, and the Commercial Ready Program; and, substantial additional funding to expand the Pre-Seed Fund program. We have also called for

			increased national investment into R&D with the OECD average of 2.33% as a medium term goal.
Full restoration of Tariff Concession System	<p>Materials used in the printing industry which had to be imported due to the absence of local production attracted no customs duty until the government replaced the zero rate with a 3 per cent rate.</p> <p>The PIAA believes this is an unnecessary cost impost on business operating in the industry and can no longer be justified since the government's original decision was based on revenue considerations which no longer are valid since the budget is now in surplus.</p>	Immediate removal of the 3 per cent tariff on imported raw materials that are currently not manufactured in Australia.	Our general position is that there should be a freezing of any further reductions in tariffs and we should reduce them only if our trading partners do so. However, this position assumes a historical tariff rate that may not apply to this industry – and so we would need to consider the detailed specifics of the situation and determine our position accordingly.
Industry Training	<p>The printing industry is currently experiencing low apprentice and traineeship intakes. What measures and initiatives need to be implemented to help the industry provide the appropriate training to both existing and prospective employees?</p> <p>Industry feedback suggests that existing government incentives give preference to younger apprentices at the expense of older ones.</p>	<p>Encourage greater training at the workplace level and have such training recognised and accredited.</p> <p>Ensure that all apprentices irrespective of their age benefit from existing government incentives.</p>	<p>The Australian Democrats support increasing the incentives for employers to create apprenticeships and traineeships. In particular the Australian Democrats believe that apprenticeships or traineeships and accredited vocational training should be a key component of a youth employment strategy; which is:</p> <p>The Australian Democrats will improve jobs opportunities for young Australians by offering a youth guarantee with a choice of free full time tertiary education, OR apprenticeships or traineeships OR entry to the workforce through subsidised employment OR accredited vocational training and integrated paid work experience.</p> <p>The Australian Democrats also support</p>

			increased training at the workplace level, especially as a measure to improve job opportunities for mature aged Australians by providing incentives to employers to retrain and redeploy workers in preference to retrenchment.
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FEDERAL ELECTION ISSUES – GENERAL ISSUES

Issue	Background	<i>Printing Industries</i> position	Your Party's Policy Position
Taxation - general	This is a very complex area and thought needs to be given to the specific areas impacting on the industry particularly small business. There is a requirement for a total overhaul of the Australian taxation system to make it more equitable.	Despite promises to the contrary the taxation legislation has become more and more complex with each new government.	The Democrats agree with this position. We will be making further announcements on this issue during the election campaign.
Taxation – bracket creep	The effect of inflation forcing employees into higher tax brackets is providing a strong disincentive for employees to do extra work. Consideration could be given to flattening the tax scales by eliminating one or two of the brackets and by replacing the tax free threshold with a tax rebate for low income earners. An annual indexation of the taxation brackets should also be considered.	The Association believes that as a means of preserving the real value of earnings, taxation brackets should be indexed in line with the annual CPI index.	The Democrats agree with this position. It is Democrat policy to index all tax thresholds annually.
Taxation – personal tax rates	To help counter the current brain drain and as a way of attracting highly skilled and knowledgeable people to Australia, serious consideration should be given by the government for the alignment of Australia's personal income tax rates with that of other industrialised nations such as the United States of America.	Align personal income tax rates with those of leading industrialised nations such as the United States of America.	Our priority is to ensure that we have enough tax revenue to provide Government services such as health and education. We believe that if tax concessions and loopholes were closed, income tax rates could be reduced.

Tax – superannuation surcharge	The superannuation surcharge should be reviewed with a view of its removal - even more important in light of the Treasurers statement on the ageing and the need to encourage saving.	The PIAA supports the removal of the superannuation surcharge.	The Democrats support the superannuation surcharge. We would, however, support a general reduction in superannuation tax.
Bank fees	A view has been expressed that printers are paying premium margins/fees and that the Federal government should exert more control on bank charges.	A possible regulation of bank fees and charges may be warranted given continued industry financial detriment and concern on this issue and the community service obligations under which banks operate.	We have not considered this issue specifically but appreciate your concern.
Australian constitution	For greater stability in government and to encourage longer term planning consideration should be given to 4 year terms for the House of Representatives. Consideration could also be given to holding simultaneous lower and upper house elections.	The PIAA supports the extension of the current 3 year political term to a minimum 4 year term.	The Democrats support the extension of the existing three year electoral cycle to four years for the House of Representatives and eight years for the Senate. We also believe that parliamentary terms should be fixed, subject to the power to resolve deadlocks between the House and Senate.