

CONTENTS

Preface	i
Commitments for Change	v
Sustaining Prosperity	1
Creating More and Better Jobs	7
Fixing the Health Service	17
Building a Learning Community	23
Building Homes, Linking People	31
Combating Global Warming	35
Better Environment, Better Quality of Life	41
Community Policing	45
Justice and Law Reform	49
Achieving Full Citizenship for All	57
Cherishing Childhood	63
An Age Friendly Society	69
A Fair Place To Live and Work	73
A Fair Deal: Equality and Social Solidarity	79
Reinventing Government	87
Strengthening Local Democracy	93
Balanced Regional Development	97
Culture, Sport and Heritage	105
Uniting People	113
A Fairer World	115

PREFACE

The Ireland I grew up in during the 1950s and early 1960s was a failure. The newly independent State was economically incapable of sustaining its people, who emigrated in their thousands at enormous human cost, and its society was insular, static and often stultifying.

Ireland today is vastly different. Economic growth and prosperity have changed the face of our country. The prosperity dreamt of by the founders of the Irish state has been achieved. Ireland now is a far more open and tolerant society.

Ireland is no longer the failed entity of the past, but we have more work to do.

Ireland has a successful economy, but a society under strain. Hard working families across Ireland live life on a treadmill – a never-ending and ever more grinding cycle of traffic, work, and responsibility. Sections of our people continue to suffer disadvantage and deprivation. One in nine of our children live in poverty, and in some schools, one in three suffers severe literacy difficulties. Growing anti-social behaviour makes life miserable for vulnerable people and their communities. There are signs, particularly among our young people, of a society ill at ease with itself and in need of a fresh sense of purpose.

We cannot take our economic success for granted, but neither can we be content with economic success alone. We must measure ourselves too by the quality of our civilisation – by the kind of Ireland we create and bequeath to our children. We must seize the opportunity afforded to us by peace and prosperity to build an Ireland that I call the Fair Society.

The Fair Society is built on a prosperous and sustainable economy, personal liberty and social solidarity.

At the heart of the Fair Society is the idea of human potential. We are all born with gifts and abilities, which we develop over the course of our lives. Our human potential is sometimes expressed in the extraordinary, sometimes in the apparently ordinary, but it is through the development of that potential that we individually and collectively flourish.

To be a socialist is to recognise in each of us, the common humanity that binds all of us. The Nobel prize-winning philosopher-economist, Amartya Sen wrote that 'a common characteristic of virtually all the approaches to the ethics of social arrangements that have stood the test of time is to want equality of something'. To do otherwise, is to place one person on a different level to another – it is to deny our common humanity.

In the Fair Society, the talents and potential of all are equally valued, and society is structured so as to allow for the development of that immense human potential. As Richard Tawney wrote: 'A society is free in so far and only so far ... as its institutions and policies are such as to enable all members to grow to their full stature'. It is the task of government to confront the arbitrary interests and the concentrations of power which hold people back, and through positive measures ensure that all have the opportunity to fulfil their potential – to bridge the gap between our circumstances, and what is within us to become.

Labour is the authentic Irish expression of the great European socialist and social democratic movement. For a century, our movement has worked to improve the lives of hard working families and to protect the vulnerable in our society. Our values of democracy, equality, community and solidarity are unchanging. In common with our sister parties across Europe, we constantly debate and reassess the best means and policies through which our values can be given expression in a rapidly changing world.

Labour is a party brimming with ideas. Since I became Labour Leader, our party has continuously developed policies which apply our values to the needs of modern Ireland and to the problems confronting people in their daily lives. This manifesto reflects the outcome of that work. It outlines twenty of the most important challenges facing Irish society, and sets out concrete and realistic means of addressing them.

Our economic strategy is based on the necessity to build a new platform of competitive advantage for Ireland, based on investment in people, infrastructure and ideas. We are firmly committed to fiscal stability, and in government will adhere to the terms of the EU Stability and Growth Pact, but that is not enough to ensure continued prosperity. We have concentrated particularly on the importance of knowledge in driving growth and prosperity. We reject the notion that inequality is good for economic growth, but rather see an inextricable link between life-long learning and long-term growth and prosperity.

For this reason, and for its intrinsic value, education is at the core of the Fair Society. The Fair Society erects no barriers between any child, irrespective of income, and the attainment of knowledge to the limit of their potential. Equally, the Fair Society commits itself to life-long learning for all as a means of enhancing prosperity, enriching individual lives, and overcoming the unjust legacy of past inequalities. To achieve that goal, a significant shift in our society towards a 'learning culture' is required. Accordingly, the maintenance and extension of universal free education, from our pre-schools to our universities, is one of Labour's core values. Introducing at least one year of free pre-school education is one of my five key commitments for change in this election. We must also radically overhaul our concepts, attitudes and systems for training, up-skilling and adult learning.

The Fair Society is built on a strong public realm – the place in the life of our community where we meet each other as equal citizens, sharing rights and obligations, and providing common services. The place where we debate with each other, elect a government and hold it to account. Our democracy is suffering from a deep sense of cynicism among our people, and the Oireachtas, which should be at the heart of our democracy, is losing its relevance. This manifesto sets out a comprehensive set of measures to reform the Dáil, to end the waste of taxpayers' money, and to transform government more generally, making it more accountable and ensuring that local and national governance delivers high quality public services to our people. Our commitment to public services is grounded in our conviction that, acting collectively, people achieve more than when acting alone. Government must be an agent of progressive social reform and the provider of high quality services, particularly in areas where excellence and equality of access are ethically and socially necessary.

Nowhere is this more urgent than in health. Labour's approach to health is based on the principles of excellence, equality and value for money. We must rescue the health service from its deep-seated crisis, beginning with a substantial expansion in capacity. I am committed to providing 2300 extra hospital beds. Labour is utterly opposed to the major extension of for-profit medicine being proposed for Ireland, and will scrap the present coalition's plan for superprivate clinics. We are committed to the development of a system of universal health insurance, so that resources are directed to addressing the needs of all patients on an equal basis: 'the money follows the patient'. The proposals in this manifesto would make substantial progress towards this goal, including free health insurance for all children up to age sixteen.

Labour's commitment to equality is at the heart of our existence as a party. Labour has always been at the forefront of the fight for greater equality and human rights in Ireland. This manifesto commits the Labour Party to continuing that work in government, legislating to protect the rights of people who are experiencing discrimination in our society. Passing our Civil Unions Bill will be a priority for Labour in government.

We are committed to tackling social and economic inequality, and to spreading the opportunities of modern Ireland to all our people, through reform and enhancement of the social welfare code. We are proposing a range of social

welfare measures, including a concerted effort to tackle child poverty, and because I believe that our society must respect and care for those who care for others, I am committed to abolishing the means test for carers. Labour in government will invest in those communities which are afflicted by multiple and cumulative disadvantage through our 'Fair Deal' initiative. We will extend the hand of solidarity too, to those Irish people who emigrated from our shores and have fallen on hard times in the UK and elsewhere.

Labour recognises the vital importance of the communities in which we live, and is committed to the values that underpin community life, including mutual respect and service to others. Ireland's communities are strong, but our community values are being eroded by two decades of the 'devil take the hindmost', and by patterns of development that have placed the needs of property over the needs of people and the building of communities. In a range of areas, including transport, planning and land use, and in our proposals on sport, culture and the arts, we are bringing forward measures to enhance and strengthen community life. My commitment to our 'Begin to Buy' scheme reflects that priority.

Our proposals on policing are centered on the importance of genuine community policing. We want to build a modern and effective Garda force, where Gardaí work in communities they know, serving people they know. Through my commitment to increase the number of community Gardaí, and by building partnerships between communities and those who police them, we can tackle the plague of low level crime and anti-social behaviour that is so destructive of community life.

Government, alone, however, will not enhance restore community life, or create the environment in which our young people will grow and flourish. As a people, we must also commit ourselves to the values of mutual respect and service, and apply them in the conduct of our lives.

Global warming now ranks alongside global poverty as one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. It is a challenge that will motivate and mobilise a new generation of people to engage with politics. It is also a challenge that Labour instinctively understands and responds to, because global warming reflects the failure of markets to address the broader social and environmental impact of economic activity. It is, at its heart, an ethical challenge to which we must all, as a society and as individuals, respond. Labour is committed to working with our partners in Europe for global action on climate change, while taking the measures necessary to reduce carbon emissions in Ireland.

We believe, too, that Ireland must honour its commitment to the world's poor, and achieve without further delay the UN target for ODA of 0.7 per cent of GNP. Our ODA bill will put this commitment on a statutory footing. This is one element in a shift towards an Irish foreign policy that is rights-based, that respects international law, that promotes human rights and development and that gives concrete expression to Labour's ideals of international solidarity.

I believe in government as a powerful agent for change. I believe that Ireland can have a strong economy, and a strong society – the Fair Society. My five commitments for change are the first things Labour in government will do to achieve this goal, and this manifesto sets out a wider ranging agenda for change.

That change will not be possible unless Labour is in government. So if you, like me, believe in a Fair Society, then join us, campaign for the ideas in this manifesto, vote Labour, and make that change.



Pat Rabbitte TD
Leader of the Labour Party

COMMITMENTS FOR CHANGE

Over the last few months, Pat Rabbitte has outlined five 'Commitments for Change' that Labour in Government will implement. This is personal commitment by Pat – it is not the totality of what Labour will do, but five commitments for change that will make a difference.

1. More beds in clean hospitals

My commitment is to provide 2,300 more beds in hospitals that are clean. We need more beds to deal with our health needs. We need our hospitals to be cleaner so that you can be sure that going into hospital doesn't mean catching MRSA.

2. Pre-school education for all our children

My commitment is to provide pre-school education for all our children. To give our kids the best chance they can is the wish of all parents, and we all know that the start they get is crucial to that. It will support hard working families and will amount to five half-days of pre-school education, provided free of charge to all children.

3. More Gardaí on the beat in neighbourhoods

My commitment is to ensure that there are more Gardaí on the beat in neighbourhoods. Hard working families are entitled to live in peaceful law-abiding communities. I am convinced that changes in the manning, deployment and organisation of the Garda Síochána would have a hugely positive impact on people's quality of life and on the rates of crime and anti-social behaviour.

4. Abolish the means test for carers

My commitment is to abolish the means test for carers. Carers in our communities provide unpaid help for a family member or friend with a disability. And while nearly half of these carers have no paid employment and one third of them give more than 43 hours of unpaid time per week, less than a fifth receive financial assistance from the state for their invaluable and tireless work. It is time to recognise their selfless commitment.

5. Enable more people to begin to buy a home

My commitment is to enable more people to begin to buy a home. I have developed a new idea to help people get onto the property ladder. It is a new scheme that will provide a means for more people with a job to begin to buy their own home. This new proposal is called 'Begin to Buy'.

SUSTAINING PROSPERITY

Fiscal Policy For A Fair Society

The Challenge

Sound economic management is a fundamental requirement of good government. A prosperous economy brings higher levels of income and employment for our people and generates the resources necessary for creating a Fair Society, improving quality of life and laying the foundations for future growth.

While the broad macroeconomic outlook for the Irish economy is positive, there can be no room for complacency.

Although the Irish economy has continued to perform well in recent years, not enough has been done either to sustain and enhance our competitiveness, or to translate the resources that our economy has created into the quality public services that are the hallmark of a Fair Society.

A long list of cost overruns and project delays has accumulated. Unthinkable amounts of money have been wasted at the expense of better infrastructure and better public services through a combination of vanity projects, poor management, and the absence of a vision for what can be achieved. The government has failed to modernise the public service to make it the instrument of economic and social progress that it can be. Failure to tackle infrastructure deficits in a timely and efficient manner has undermined Ireland's capacity for sustainable, non-inflationary growth in the longer term.

Although the economy is confronted by a number of challenges, with the right policies, strong growth by the standards of other European countries can and will be sustained. Within the parameters of the Stability and Growth Pact, the resources thus generated must be used effectively to provide for progressive tax reform, better public services and a more sustainable pattern of economic development.

Labour is proud of our contribution to the development of the Celtic Tiger economy. We are committed to putting the needs of hard working families and communities back into the heart of government policy. We do not accept that high inequality is necessary for economic success. Rather we believe that in a modern knowledge driven-economy, there is an essential complementarity between social solidarity and prosperity. Our policies will tackle the deep rooted disadvantage experienced by those left behind by the Celtic Tiger.

Ireland can do better

Labour will inject new ideas, energy and determination into economic policy formation to promote an innovative, enterprise-based, sustainable economy, generating resources which are efficiently and fairly used by individuals, families and government to promote economic well-being, social inclusion and a better quality of life.

What Labour will do

Budgeting for Growth and Stability

Labour will manage the public finances in a manner which promotes economic stability and sustainable non-inflationary growth. Our approach to fiscal policy will be based on fiscal discipline and stability, investment in better public services, higher capital spending, the attainment of better value for money in public spending, and progressive tax reform.

Fiscal Discipline and Stability

Fiscal discipline and stability are essential to maintaining economic growth and higher employment, while also being a formal requirement of EMU membership.

Our approach to fiscal policy in government will be situated in the context of our over-riding commitment to the EU Growth and Stability Pact, to which Ireland is committed as part of our adoption of the euro. This means respecting the requirement that, over the course of an economic cycle, the General Government Balance will, on average, not exceed 1 per cent of GDP.

We will avoid pro-cyclical fiscal policies that increase inflation and reduce long-run competitiveness. There is a requirement to slow growth in day-to-day spending down from the present unsustainable rate towards the rate of growth in the economy.

We will maintain sufficient flexibility in the public finances to prevent a sharper than expected slowdown in growth breaching our EMU commitments, and without the need for cutbacks in public investment and services.

Under this approach, Ireland's national debt will continue to decline significantly as a percentage of national income.

Better Public Services

Labour is committed to high quality public services as an essential element in building a Fair Society. We will deliver substantial improvements to public services through a combination of investment and reform.

- We guarantee to implement the following five commitments for change set out by Party Leader Pat Rabbitte:
 - Planning and building 2300 additional acute in-patient hospital beds within the lifetime of the National Development Plan, the maximum possible number to be completed within the lifetime of the next government
 - Increasing the number of Community Gardaí to 1500
 - Providing one year of free pre-school education for every child
 - Abolition of the means test for carers
 - Establishing a 'Begin to Buy' scheme to allow people who are working to buy a stake in a home.
- These spending commitments represent a modest proportion of the total amount of resources that are likely to be available over the next five years.
- **Allocation of additional resources for further public service improvements will be determined in the context of annual budgetary planning, subject to our over-riding commitment to economic stability and our EMU obligations. The tax and spending commitments given in this manifesto are subject to the over-riding requirement for fiscal stability as expressed by the terms of the Stability and Growth Pact.**
- We are committed to increasing Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to meet the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNP. Accordingly, we will legislate to establish an ODA fund, into which 0.7 per cent of GNP will be paid annually (in a manner similar to the payments to the NPRF). In this way, ODA contributions will be accounted for as a charge on the Central Fund.
- We will fulfil existing government policy commitments across a range of public services areas, including those set out in the Social Partnership Agreement, *Towards 2016*.

Higher Capital Spending

In order to address a range of economic and social infrastructural deficits, and to lay the foundations for future growth and prosperity, Ireland will be required to maintain a high level of capital spending over the next decade.

- Labour will increase capital spending to the levels set out in the National Development Plan.
- At the same time we will introduce a new framework for delivering infrastructure on time and on budget, as set out elsewhere in this manifesto.
- We will also invest 1 per cent of GNP in the National Pension Reserve Fund (NPRF) annually over the lifetime of the government.

Better Value for Money

Poor management of public expenditure has diminished confidence in public services as a means of delivering a better quality of life and a more equal society. As a party committed to the concept of high quality public services, Labour has already published detailed proposals for delivering better value for money in our document entitled *The Buck Stops Here*.

This set out more than forty specific recommendations to improve strategic management of government priorities, enhance Oireachtas scrutiny of spending, modernise the expenditure management capacity of the civil and public service, and set out clear lines of accountability for Ministers and civil servants. These proposals are set out in detail elsewhere in this manifesto in the section entitled 'Reinventing government'

Tax Reform for Economic and Social progress

Over the term of office of the next government, economic growth will generate substantial exchequer resources. In that context, Labour will implement the following progressive tax reforms:

A More Progressive and Family Friendly Income Tax Code

Labour will enhance the incomes of hard working families who have suffered from the "rip off" experience by delivering progressive income tax reform. We will also provide income tax reforms that recognise the work done by carers in the home, and which support the life choices of all families, including parents and other carers, in achieving their own preferred balance between paid work and unpaid care. To achieve these aims, we will introduce the following measures:

- **A 2-point cut in the standard rate of tax from 20 per cent to 18 per cent.**
- An increase in personal credits in line with wage growth. This will increase the personal and married credits to €2,000 and €4,000 respectively by 2012. Combined with a cut in the standard rate of tax, the increase in personal tax credits will ensure that no employee earning less than €10.30 per hour (€400 per week assuming a 39 hour week; €20,900 per year) will pay income tax.
- **An increase in the home-carers' credit to the level of the PAYE credit (to €1,760), with a doubling of the income disregard for eligibility for this credit to €10,160.**
- Indexation of the standard rate band to wage increases on an annual basis, in a way that provides the same increase for one and two-income families. Wage indexation alone will increase the standard rate band by €6,000 for singles, and will increase the transferable band by €12,000 for one- and two-income families. This will halt the present policy of continually widening the gap between the tax treatment of one- and two-income families.
- **On top of indexation, we will provide an additional €5,000 increase in the transferable band for one-income and two-income families, to be offset by a cut in the extra standard rate band for the second earner from €25,000 to €20,000.**

A Fairer Stamp Duty Regime

It is the role of government to help families buy their homes, not to get in their way. The present stamp duty structure has become inequitable because of the failure of government to adjust tax thresholds as house prices rose, and because of the structure of the tax which applies each progressive rate to the whole house price not just to the excess above the previous threshold. The result is high stamp duty payments on much more modest homes than was originally intended. In government, we will introduce a fairer system of stamp duty on residential properties that helps make housing for all families more affordable.

Specifically, we will:

- **Raise the zero stamp duty threshold for first time buyers from €317,500 to €450,000 with duty paid only on the excess over this threshold.**
- **Restructure the stamp duty system for other buyers as follows:**
 - **No stamp duty up to €100,000**
 - **On the next €350,000 a 5 per cent rate will apply**
 - **On the balance a 9 per cent rate will apply**
 - **These changes will be a priority for Labour in government and will be introduced as a single measure.**

A Tax-Supportive Environment for Employment and Exports

We recognise that a competitive tax regime has been, and will remain, vital in encouraging employment, entrepreneurship, investment and exports. We recognise the need to maintain incentives for work, and to maintain Ireland's attractiveness as a location for mobile investment and skilled labour.

Accordingly we will:

- **Maintain the existing rates of Corporation Tax.**
- **Maintain the existing rates of Capital Gains Tax.**
- **Restrict growth in charges by state bodies at the rate of inflation. Any requested increases beyond the rate of inflation will require a specific Public Interest Report to be presented to the Dáil.**
- **Examine further tax measures to make investment in high-tech, export-oriented Irish firms more attractive to investors.**
- **Review the operation of the Tax Credit for Research and Development in Ireland to see how it can be made more attractive to smaller, Irish-owned companies that are seeking to develop new products and services.**

A Greener Tax System

As set out elsewhere in this manifesto, Labour is committed to comprehensive and urgent action to tackle climate change. As part of this broader plan, we will take the following fiscal measures:

- **We will rebalance VRT in a revenue-neutral fashion to favour lower-emission vehicles.**
- **We will abolish excise duty on biofuels produced from renewable energy crops, in conjunction with other measures to stimulate the development of a market in biofuels.**
- **We will introduce a stamp duty credit linked to a sustainability rating structure (reducing prices of energy efficient buildings in built up areas).**

A More Equitable and Efficient Tax System

Under Fianna Fáil and the PDs, the Irish tax system has been distorted to facilitate systematic avoidance of taxation by wealthier individuals in Irish society. The spectacle of millionaires paying little or no tax is both profoundly unfair and corrosive of public confidence in the tax code. We will ensure that the tax system is administratively simpler, more transparent and fairer.

- We will establish a Commission on Taxation to examine tax schemes on an on-going basis, whose work will include:
 - Subjecting tax breaks to scrutiny of their costs and benefits.
 - Assessing compliance levels for different tax headings and revenue powers needed to protect the tax system; and
 - Presenting an evaluation of the tax burden and compliance costs for taxpayers.
- **We will put in place a tax-payers advocate, situated in the National Consumer Agency, to ensure that PAYE workers in particular get all the tax credits to which they are entitled.**
- We will cap the benefit that any one individual can derive from cumulative tax breaks on investments outside of his/her principal occupation so that very wealthy individuals cannot use such schemes to avoid paying a reasonable share of their income in tax.
- We will extend tax relief at source to additional areas such as bin charges and medical expenses.
- We will provide for equal tax treatment for couples in Civil Unions.

Decentralisation

The introduction of the decentralisation programme flew in the face of all established procedures for ensuring sound decision-making and the government's own National Spatial Strategy. It threatens both to waste taxpayers' money and damage public services. There is a real danger that major property commitments have been entered into which will only offer partial service and create wasteful duplication. It has also undermined morale and operating efficiency in the public service.

This approach has damaged the potential for a rational and coherent decentralisation programme based on consultation and fair procedures. Labour proposes to create a framework where the best elements of the present decentralisation programme can be secured and further potential opportunities developed for the future. In government, Labour will adopt the following approach:

- An Immediate audit will be undertaken of the existing proposals. We shall proceed with those which have a sound business case, and a good regional fit. Decentralisation should be voluntary and based on genuine consultation.
- Where the specific proposals are found wanting, we will seek to identify alternative opportunities for decentralisation which have the potential to succeed given a sensible and well planned timescale. This must be part of a wider strategy for balanced regional development.
- We will reverse the decision to move some of the core policy planning units of government departments away from Dublin city as it would undermine the continuing effectiveness of policy development. It is our clear preference that 'stand alone' business units be moved under the decentralisation programme. We are also opposed to the moving of specialist posts which results in the loss of vital expertise or wasteful duplication of posts. We recognise the particular position of staff in state agencies.

CREATING MORE AND BETTER JOBS

Building the Knowledge Economy

The Challenge

Ireland's past successes in attracting foreign investment are world-famous and a vital part of our present economic success. In the future, however, we cannot expect to repeat the industrial successes and policies of the past. Ireland and the rest of the world have changed too much. We must build a new model of growth based on the knowledge economy to create more and better jobs.

Parts of China, India, South East Asia and Central Europe now compete for the types of high-tech manufacturing and services activities – electronics, software, financial services and pharmaceuticals – that drove the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s. Many have replicated Ireland's favourable corporation tax regime, grant incentives and access to skills.

There is now a track record of high end manufacturing and services in these countries that were once regarded as being too underdeveloped for these activities. This trend is blurring the traditional differences between industrialised and developing countries, and intensifying competition for high-paid, knowledge-intensive jobs.

At the same time, our own competitiveness and export performance has suffered from a government-driven inflationary boom that has dramatically raised costs, led to the re-emergence of a large and growing external payments deficit and made our economy far too dependent on construction and the public sector for jobs growth. The government has simply not acted with expedition in addressing these issues. Rather, the sluggishness of government has been part of the problem.

As the momentum to growth from construction and consumption eases off in the coming years, the main economic challenge facing the next government will be to recover our lost competitiveness and enter a

more export-driven phase of growth, built not just on low corporation tax but on other advantages harder to imitate by lower wage economies.

Ireland continues to have significant competitive advantages, and the potential to create a new generation of indigenous enterprises which are both high-tech and strongly export-orientated. We must provide an environment that supports the creation and development of more Irish exporters and encourages foreign investors to increase the strategic importance of their Irish operations through R&D and marketing.

The total number of jobs created is important, but so too is the quality of those jobs. Ireland can only compete with lower wage locations on the basis of higher quality and productivity. While short-term cost competitiveness remains important, it is vital that we build a platform of competitive advantage that will create and sustain higher quality jobs – jobs that produce more and pay more.

Ireland can do better

Labour will work to develop a new platform of competitive advantage for Ireland, based on a knowledge economy, to create more and better jobs.

What Labour will do

Tax Competitiveness for Exporters

Labour in government was central to the agreement of the 12.5 per cent single rate of corporation tax. As globalisation intensifies, a competitive tax regime for high-tech foreign direct investment and indigenous exporting companies alike is more vital now than ever before, even as we also develop other, less replicable, sources of competitive advantage. We also need to make sure our tax system is supportive of indigenous entrepreneurs and exporters, which continue to report difficulties in raising risk capital.

What Labour will do:

- Maintain the current rates of corporation tax and capital gains tax
- Expand our tax treaty network with Asia and Latin America to maximise the benefit of our low rate of corporation tax and to ensure that double taxation does not present a barrier to trade and investment with these fast developing economies.
- Examine further tax measures to make investment in high-tech, export oriented Irish firms more attractive to investors.
- By winding down property-based tax incentives, we will shift the balance away from the excessive, tax-driven allocation of savings in Ireland into property and towards more productive, export-oriented activities. There is a need to create a more even playing field for those competing for investment funds.
- Review the operation of the tax credit for research and development in Ireland to see how it can be made more attractive to smaller Irish-owned companies that are seeking to develop new products and services.
- Provide increased direct state support for the development of the Irish venture capital industry through Enterprise Ireland. This support will also be used to stimulate increased support for the venture capital industry from the private sector.
- Examine the barriers to Irish growth companies seeking public stock exchange listings and share issues, the small scale of which is a barrier to the development of the venture capital industry in Ireland and to the expansion of growth-oriented Irish companies.

Ireland continues to have significant competitive advantages, and the potential to create a new generation of indigenous enterprises which are both high-tech and strongly export orientated.

Upskilling the Workforce

Economic and technological changes are creating demand for a rising threshold of basic skills, as well as for more frequent changes in the nature of skills required. The challenge facing Ireland and its workforce cannot be understated. According to the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, of the 2.4 million people expected to be in the workforce by 2020, 1.43 million are already at work. Of the current workforce, 440,000 have at most lower secondary education, including 165,000 aged 35 or less. Participation by Irish adults in ongoing education and training remains, however, low compared with other countries

To meet this challenge, Ireland must develop a new attitude and approach to education and life-long learning. We must generate a Learning Community, as set out elsewhere in this manifesto. In terms of upskilling, we must set ourselves the target of increasing the number of people in employment that formally progress by at least one level under the National Framework of Qualifications by 100,000 over a five-year time frame. In policy terms, this requires a shift in the focus on national policy from just training people for employment to also training people in employment, reflecting our changed economic circumstances.

What Labour will do:

- Abolish fees for part time undergraduate courses for individuals who have not already benefited from higher education.
- **Increase modularisation, portability and cross-recognition of courses taken in higher education institutions to facilitate part-time, flexible education and training.**
- Accelerate the development of a national framework of qualifications that is well understood and recognised by individuals, employers and education and training providers and that makes access, transfer and progression a reality. This requires the rapid development of a certification and accreditation system to ensure that work-place learning can be properly certified and recognised.
- Provide more educational and training progression routes for those working in construction, through completion of apprenticeships and through easier progression into other higher educational technical and business disciplines.
- **Introduce an option to take two-weeks statutory annual paid training leave, financed out of the NTF and paid at the minimum wage rate in order to focus on the low-skilled. This could be topped up by employers on a voluntary basis.**
- Increase support for employer-led training networks, delivered through Skillnets and the enterprise development agencies. Greater support will be provided for training networks that focus on transferable skills (ICT literacy etc.) for the low-skilled.
- **Re-invent the role of FÁS to achieve greater focus and efficiencies. FÁS will be given a strong mandate to expand work-training schemes and apprenticeships and to empower individuals and small businesses to access relevant training.**
- Provide additional financial contributions from the Social Insurance Fund to support education and training for those that have been made redundant.

Enabling Ireland's Future: A "Next Generation" Telecoms Network

Ireland has the capacity to be a world leader in internet and information technology innovation. Yet due to ongoing government, regulatory and market failures we have fallen far behind in the deployment of broadband and other advanced IT services. Irish broadband connections have recently been increasing, but we are still considerably behind the majority of our EU and OECD partners and failing to keep pace with the best international broadband performers. Many Irish people have either no access to broadband services or are faced with a very limited and expensive range of services.

The Labour Party believes that a widespread, accessible and affordable broadband network is crucial for ensuring a cohesive society, competitive economy and to enable all Irish people to access the most technologically up-to-date services and products. At the heart of Labour's IT vision is also a commitment to the abolition of the digital divide and the guarantee that a new type of social exclusion will not be fuelled by the fast-paced technological changes that are now being experienced.

Our vision will be to create, by 2012, a new, high speed, open access, next generation telecoms network, designed and managed to support competing service operators that will use a variety of wireless and fixed wire "local loop" technologies, depending on local settlement patterns and geographic conditions, to deliver triple-play (TV, Internet and voice) services to every home in Ireland that wants them.

What Labour will do:

- Establish an ambitious new government vision of how Irish broadband connectivity should develop and the wider economic and social benefits intensified broadband development will facilitate. Renewed objectives, vigorously approached targets and a commitment to delivering on these targets will be a policy priority.
- Set-up a specific broadband task force headed by an e-envoy to concentrate resources and responsibility in a central location to drive an intensified rollout. The ICT industry will be encouraged to lead this development.
- **Within six months of coming to power, we will tender for the upgrade and "broadband enabling" of telephone exchanges in those, mainly rural, areas where it has been uneconomic for the private sector to do so.**
- Introduce serious regulatory reform to ensure that the broadband sector is regulated much more effectively. The communications regulator ComReg will have the ability to impose much greater financial penalties on telecom operators. Operational changes will also be examined to allow ComReg to operate without the current intensely prohibitive legal restrictions and to strengthen its anticompetitive mandate.
- To expedite competition blockages and remove obstruction, a separate High Court division of regulation will be established.
- Introduce co-competition powers for ComReg with the Competition Authority
- **We will strengthen the hand of the regulator, and seek a settlement with Eircom to create an operationally separate network division to address the absolutely crucial problem of access to the local loop. This should ensure greater access for other broadband operators to provide services, and a greater variety and less expensive range of broadband products will be on offer for Irish consumers and businesses.**
- Promote innovative measures for the delivery of a range of platforms for delivering different broadband technologies. These would include a widespread designation of 'hot spots' for wireless transmission, and making entire urban areas 'hot zones' that are entirely wireless broadband enabled.

Positioning Ireland as a Life Sciences Leader

- Incorporate local government institutions including partnerships, county leaders and county development boards in broadband rollout
- Create a Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband. Accessibility to broadband networks will assume the same character as the present expectation of universal access to the postal service or telephone network. The development of mechanisms for ensuring that a broadband USO is in place creates considerable potential for ensuring a widespread and universally accessible broadband network.
- **Instigate a national information technology education programme in order to provide the essential knowledge and training for using the critical ICT infrastructure of a modern economy. Although some schools provide such education, it is essential that all children regardless of the school they attend have access to a proper IT education so as to equip them with the knowledge and practical experience to participate fully in society.**
- Ensure access to laptops for secondary school children. Broadband connectivity needs to have a practical application. An objective of a national ICT policy should be the provision of all secondary school students with laptops so the relevant knowledge of and necessary skills for advanced technology can be experienced within the classroom. All methods of practically facilitating such a scheme, such as a partnership agreement with the IT industry, should be examined to ensure the widespread provision of laptops at second level.

If 20th century technological development was defined by advances in the physical sciences (the transistor, the semiconductor, ICT) the 21st century will be defined by the life sciences. Life spans will rise sharply as cures are found for chronic diseases. Healthcare may come to be a larger share of the world economy than manufacturing. Life science developments will likely lead to everything from further agricultural revolutions to profound changes in energy technology and the development of new materials.

We will:

- **Develop a National Life Sciences and Health Research Strategy to support entrepreneurs in Ireland to take advantage of the strong growth in products and services related to healthcare and the life sciences. We will establish a Life Sciences Research Taskforce comprising the Health Services Executive (HSE), the Health Research Board (HRB) and the industrial development agencies to develop this strategy.**
- Excellence in research is dependent on excellence in people, and the HSE will be mandated to recruit clinician scientists together with required research nurses, allied health professionals and epidemiologists, with protected time for research.
- We will also need to modernise Ireland's regulatory system for clinical trials, as Ireland's slow and fragmented clinical trials approval processes are currently a barrier to promoting collaborative public-private clinical research.

Competitiveness through Research and Innovation

To sustain Ireland's growth in employment and living standards in the face of low cost competition, Ireland needs to move beyond the era of making things invented elsewhere. We need an era of indigenous industrial innovation, driven by Irish entrepreneurs.

Technological change is revolutionising business processes in agriculture, manufacturing and services. The ability of Irish companies to develop and absorb new technologies into their products, services and processes will be a decisive driver of competitive advantage.

Of course, innovation does not just derive from scientific and engineering breakthroughs. Three-fifths of US productivity growth during the 1990s was accounted for by innovation in services and business processes.

What Labour will do:

- Increase public funding for industry-led research and in-firm R&D in line with support for university research.
- Expand industry-led networks that help to define the research agendas of universities and the Institutes of Technology
- **Reform the system for funding new higher education research infrastructure in a way that provides universities and Institutes of Technology with the opportunity to borrow to finance research infrastructure, and with the incentives to attract more ongoing research funding from industry by developing critical mass in distinctive research areas.**
- Ensure that the Marine Institute has the necessary resources to be at the cutting edge of international marine research, in a way that provides practical benefits for the Irish marine fisheries industry.
- Establish a Centre of Excellence for Alternative Energy charged with ensuring Ireland develops a world class alternative energy sector. Wind, tidal and wave energy and renewable-friendly electricity grid development are areas where Ireland can develop unique capabilities through a long-term commitment to research and development.
- **Hold a competition among universities for the part-funding of a new Institute of Advanced Studies in Applied Finance to support the further development of our international financial services industry into increasingly sophisticated activities.**
- Establish a national Intellectual Property Services Centre (IPSC) to support our higher education institutes and their research teams in the creation, protection and exploitation of ideas generated from publicly funded research.
- Review the regulation and financing of the higher education sector to remove barriers holding back export development from these sectors. With the right structures, the higher education system could become one of Ireland's leading brands internationally, while continuing to meet the needs of Irish residents.
- Ensure that the enterprise development agencies, including the County Enterprise Boards, have the necessary tools and flexibility to support individual research and innovation projects by services companies.

Cutting Red Tape and the Regulatory Burden

Labour believes that business regulation, when well-designed and enforced, improves the functioning of markets and helps to achieve environmental and social goals. In government, we will be committed to the highest standards of business regulation, and will have a particular focus on raising standards of corporate governance and improved enforcement of high employment standards and environmental obligations.

What Labour will do:

- We support better enforcement of labour legislation in Ireland to prevent exploitation of vulnerable workers, and a significant expansion in the powers and resources of the Labour Inspectorate. We will consolidate the Employment Acts and Companies Acts in order to make it easier for firms and employees to understand their rights and comply with their legal obligations, and rationalise the enforcement institutions.
- Small businesses currently face 80 tax return deadlines each year for various tax headings, such as PRSI, PAYE, VAT and corporation tax. We will significantly reduce the number of return dates for small businesses under all tax headings.
- Good economic statistics on industry are vital for policy making. By amending the Statistics Act, by introducing unique company identifiers (like PPS numbers for companies) and by improving technology, we will ensure where possible (subject to reasonable data protection constraints) that government does not ask for the same data twice.
- Companies involved in international trade have to submit large volumes of information to many governmental authorities to comply with tax, statistical, security and health and safety requirements, each with their own systems and forms. The same information is also required by private service providers, such as packers, freight forwarders, customs brokers and banks. In government, we will establish a "Single Window" for traders, whereby trade-related information is only submitted once through a single, electronic entry point.
- Introduce a "risk-based" system of regulatory enforcement, as has been done in the UK.
- We will publish future RIAs. Published RIAs will be available on a central website for businesses and citizens to read and comment upon.
- We will establish a Forum on Better Business Regulation to be chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, to provide a mechanism for a structured dialogue on regulation between policy makers and business, and for consultation on specific RIAs.
- Since so much of the new regulation is of European origin, we will pay closer attention to the EU system of regulatory impact assessment and its use in practice. We will push for the European Commission to carry out country level disaggregation of all EU RIAs and this should be mandatory for EU Regulations, which are immediately binding on all member states.

Creating Jobs in the Green Economy

As pointed out by the UK Stern Review, the shift towards a lower carbon economy will generate a large number of commercial opportunities. Markets for low carbon energy products are likely to be worth at least \$500bn per year by 2050, and perhaps much more. The shift towards low-carbon technologies will be accompanied by a shift in employment patterns. Over 25 million people may be working in these sectors worldwide by 2050.

Ireland has some strong geo-natural advantages in this area, and with the right policies the shift to a low carbon economy can produce high quality jobs. Tackling climate change early is the long-term pro-growth strategy.

What Labour will do:

- **Establish a Centre of Excellence for Alternative Energy** charged with ensuring Ireland develops a world class alternative energy sector.
- Direct ESB and Bord na Mona to become leaders in renewable energy technologies.
- Take measures to support the development of a domestic bio-energy sector. We will abolish excise duty on bio-fuels for transport. We will also reform the Existing Energy Crops Scheme to make it more attractive to farmers. Finally, we will disburse Start-Up Grants for Bio Fuel Processing Plants on a competitive basis.
- With the right regulatory environment, global moves towards a lower carbon economy will also generate opportunities for banks and other financial intermediaries. We will work with industry bodies and the financial regulator to make the necessary adjustments to our tax,

skills and regulatory framework to ensure that the Irish financial services industry is in a position to exploit these new opportunities.

- **We will also mandate Enterprise Ireland to support the development of specialist venture capital (VC) funds focusing on renewable energy start-ups in Ireland.**

Controlling Utilities Costs

The availability at competitive prices of high quality energy and communications services is vital for competitiveness, as well as for supporting balanced regional development and protecting the living standards of people on low incomes.

What Labour will do:

- **We will strengthen the powers of regulators, while ensuring that they remain accountable to Houses of the Oireachtas, to drive pro-consumers regulation in utilities. We will also examine the scope for reducing the number of regulators, so as to concentrate the skills and expertise available to the state to the benefit of consumers.**
- We will abolish the existing regulatory appeals bodies and will create a Competition Appeals Court presided over by a High Court judge to hear and decide appeals involving competition or other regulatory issues.

Public Enterprise

Labour is committed to the concept and practice of public enterprise. We will keep existing semi-state companies in public ownership. In government we will develop a positive vision of the role of semi-state bodies and put in place appropriate governance structures.

We will:

- Ensure that semi-state companies have the commercial freedom to grow and to fulfil their mandates free from ministerial interference.
- We will ensure that semi-state companies have access to capital.

Consumer Protection

Hard working families have been the victims of the 'rip-off phenomena' Labour in government will act to protect their interests

What Labour will do:

- **Cap growth in charges by state bodies at the rate of inflation. Any requested increases beyond the rate of inflation will require a specific Public Interest Report to be presented to the Dáil.**
- Compensate consumers who lose their utility service for more than three hours in a 24 hour period by forcing providers to deduct the cost of one day's service from the bill. This will apply to electricity, gas, telephone, internet and cable TV providers.
- Provide a legislative basis for co-operation agreements between the National Consumer Agency (NCA) and the utility regulators to ensure greater consumer awareness of their consumer rights when dealing with utility providers, and to promote speedier redress when their rights have been violated. The agreements will also allow for a stronger NCA input into economic regulation through formal information sharing, reciprocal consultation and co-operation in relation to consumer awareness campaigns.

- Examine the introduction of measures to tackle unfair termination charges that are imposed on mobile users.
- Support the EU-led campaign to abolish unjustified roaming charges on European mobile users when they are using their mobiles abroad.
- **Ensure that regulation of mobile phone content and services, which is presently a self-regulated industry, is brought under the remit of ComReg. This should ensure the more effective monitoring of mobile phone services (which are particularly popular among teenagers and young people) which at present are open to exploitation by unscrupulous operators.**
- Make the CEO of the Radiological Protection Society of Ireland responsible for monitoring the health effects of non-ionising and microwave radiation with the Director submitting a regular report to the Oireachtas.
- Reform the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (Statutory Instrument No. 600 of 2001) to ensure that microwave masts are co-located away from homes, schools and youth facilities.
- Ensure 3G licensing and rollout is being carried out in the most effective and beneficial manner for Irish mobile users given ongoing complaints about charges, coverage and quality of handsets in the 3G sector.
- Adequately resource the competition authority to pursue rigorous competition enforcement, focused on the needs of households.
- **Put in place a Consumer Court dealing specifically with consumer issues.**
- Insist that airlines publish full information about the total cost of seats in their advertising, including hidden charges.
- Local councils will also have a consumer protection role in relation to public services provided by the private sector.

FIXING THE HEALTH SERVICE

The Challenge

The Irish health service is in crisis. Despite all the money that has been poured into the health service, long queues remain in A&E, patients are deeply concerned about MRSA, conditions in hospitals are frequently unacceptable, patients face long delays for treatment, and access to services is deeply unfair. Recent attempts to paper over the cracks in A&E without tackling the underlying problems have led to some 40,000 operations being cancelled, as surgical beds are requisitioned to reduce the pressure on A&Es. The HSE is not seen as delivering improvements to front-line care.

There is a deep inequality built into what is a two-tier system, such that public and private patients enjoy very different levels of access to medical services. Recent Labour Party research, for example, points to significant disparities in waiting times for appointments to see consultants, between public and private patients. The co-location plan for super-private clinics will further deepen that division, and marks an unprecedented and unacceptable departure into for-profit medicine in Ireland.

The core problems remain of a system with perverse incentives, inadequate capacity, and poor use of existing facilities. Primary care and preventative medicine are under-developed, as are services for the elderly, with the result that services for patients are poorer and considerable strain is placed on the acute hospital sector.

Mental health services, long the forgotten and neglected branch of Irish medicine, continue to be under-funded. There are often alarming gaps in provision of mental health services, including services for children.

Fixing the health service is the first, but not the only step, towards a healthier people. Life expectancy in Ireland is below EU norms, and Ireland faces a number of public health challenges, such as obesity, including obesity in children. The social and economic inequality in our society has a detrimental effect on health which must be addressed.

Ireland can do better

Fixing the health service will be Labour's first priority in government. Our objective is to tackle the existing crisis and, through investment and reform, to lay the foundations for a health service based on excellence, value for money and fairness, to provide a better standard of care for patients, and to enhance the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland.

What Labour will do

More Beds in Clean Hospitals

The Irish health service needs more beds and it needs to make better use of existing capacity through organisational change. Both must proceed in tandem.

We will:

- **Provide 2300 additional acute in-patient hospital beds.**
- **Scrap the co-location plan to build super-private clinics.**
- Ensure the rigorous enforcement of strict cleaning regimes. Systems to ensure that there is clear responsibility and accountability for day-to-day cleanliness standards will be a priority.
- Develop a coherent planning function for on-going provision of new capacity and improvement of existing facilities.
- **Provide for 1500 community care beds, 600 in Dublin.**
- Move towards a consultant-provided service, rather than a consultant-led system. Subject to successful conclusion of the negotiations for a new consultant contract, we envisage employing at least 1500 new consultants, with a corresponding reduction in the number of non-consultant hospital doctors.
- The new consultant contract must provide for clinical and administrative accountability and equality of care.
- Improve manpower planning to address shortages in key health professions, including social work.
- There should be a system of governance, funding and management which will foster strong hospital networks, well connected with their communities and well aware of their needs.
- Hospital networks should be based on the 'Golden Hour' principle, i.e. that a patient should have to wait no more than one hour between the onset of a serious illness or accident and the beginning of treatment in a suitable acute hospital setting.

- We will undertake a full review of ambulance services to ensure rapid access to services.
- We will revisit the decision to locate the National Children's Hospital on the Mater Site. We favour a model of a National Children's Hospital with campuses on both the north and south sides of Dublin under unified governance.
- Ensure on-going funding and support for the Cancer Strategy.

The Money Follows the Patient: Towards Universal Health Insurance

The existing two-tier structure in the health services is both unfair and inefficient. It establishes a perverse structure of incentives, particularly for consultants. It leads to resources being allocated bureaucratically to health care providers, rather than ensuring that resources automatically flow to wherever patients are and want to be. Labour believes that a high quality and fair health service requires the introduction of universal health insurance, which would ensure that resources are allocated to meet the needs of patients. In other words, the money follows the patient. We are committed to this objective. Such a system can only be introduced over a period of time and requires significant change to the structure and capacity of the health service in advance of the introduction of full UHI. Accordingly, we propose to develop a UHI system through a series of steps, each of which represents an important reform, in and of itself, improving the quality of service to patients.

We will:

- Change the way doctors are paid, establishing a stronger link between the work consultants do for public patients and what they get paid.
- **Change the way hospitals are paid to link budgets more closely to work done for patients, and to provide explicitly for activities such as teaching.**
- We will extend free health insurance cover to everyone up to age 16.

The A&E Crisis

Ultimately, tackling the crisis in A&E units requires a broad-based reform programme across the health service. Nonetheless, there are a number of changes that can be made in the short and medium term to address the immediate problems of overcrowding, poor hygiene, long delays, indignity and discomfort for patients, and the associated stress for staff. We have published a detailed plan for improving conditions in A&E which includes the following measures:

- **Introduce a separate stream for minor injuries, using the 'see and treat' system applied in the UK, whereby a dedicated team of skilled clinicians works to see patients with minor injuries when they arrive, treats them and sends them home.**
- **Provision of Medical assessment units to cater for patients referred by GPs or A&E units, where patients can be seen in comfort and dignity, be assessed, undergo tests, be treated, and await admission to an acute bed.**
- **Patients referred by a GP should not have to wait hours in an A&E to be seen by a less experienced doctor. Protocols should be drawn up so that patients referred by GPs would be seen by a consultant within a specified period. GPs should have improved access to diagnostic facilities. The decision to admit patients must remain with the hospital.**
- **Greater out-of-hours cover for diagnostics within hospitals to speed up decisions on admitting and discharging patients.**
- **Tackling delays in discharging patients, including better discharge planning.**
- **Additional aid for elderly patients to prevent the need for admission to acute hospital beds, including a better home help service, out-of-hours services, and fast-tracking of home adaptation applications.**
- **Provision of urgent care centres staffed by GPs and nurses, open out of hours, to provide an alternative to A&E units.**
- **Provision of out-of-hours GP services and out-of-hours pharmacy services.**
- **Additional consultants in emergency medicine.**
- **Emergency helpline and GP location service on a 24 hour basis, staffed by trained personnel, to advise patients on how they might be treated at home, where to access their nearest GP out-of-hours service or other appropriate assistance.**

Labour believes that a high quality and fair health service requires the introduction of universal health insurance, which would ensure that resources are allocated to meet the needs of patients.

Patient Safety Authority

Several cases have come to light in recent years which highlight the requirement for an independent agency within the health services to inspect, monitor and regulate patient safety.

Accordingly we are proposing the establishment of an independent Patient Safety Authority which would oversee the registration and accreditation of hospitals and inpatient facilities, set and monitor standards of patient safety in all registered health and social care facilities and investigate complaints.

Palliative Care

We welcome the development of hospices in Ireland, but we are concerned at the fact that there is no uniform funding across the country to support these hospices.

What Labour will do:

- Set a target of having a hospice in every former health board area.
- Introduce best practice protocols in hospitals to ensure dignity at the time of a person's death.

Primary Care and Prevention

One of the biggest problems in the Irish health system is the under-development of primary care. A properly developed primary care structure is essential to ensuring that illness is detected early and treated promptly, that patients are treated in a setting they know and trust, that pressure is taken off the acute hospital sector, and for getting the best use of healthcare resources. Research shows that the cost of primary care is discouraging significant numbers of our people from attending a GP.

What Labour will do:

- Labour will promote the development of primary care, and improve access to primary care.

- We will extend medical card eligibility to include 40 per cent of the population with a focus on families with children.
- We will provide GP cards for children under-5, who tend to have heavy demand for GP services.
- Develop incentives for doctors working in deprived communities and remote rural areas.
- Facilitate GPs over 65 who can and wish to continue working.
- Promote the integration of primary health services at community level.
- Continue to promote the development of group practices and primary care centres.
- Promote the integration of community based nursing services with general practice.
- Introduce universal patient registration whether public or private.
- Develop robust data collection systems in general practice.
- Initiate agreed primary care based preventative strategies to combat the current inequalities in mortality rates due to geographic location and socio-economic backgrounds. This will include universal cervical screening; secondary cardiac preventative programme; and a robust Well Man and Well Woman service.
- **Provide Breastcheck nationwide.**
- Promote regular exercise and healthier lifestyles as detailed in our proposals on sport elsewhere in this manifesto.
- Promote better nutrition as set out in our policy on food poverty.

Mental Health Services

Mental Health has long been the Cinderella of the health services, under-funded and neglected. There a number of unmet needs, including mental health services for children and services for those suffering from dementia. Meanwhile, the problem of suicide requires urgent attention. Labour supports the concept of 'recovery-orientated mental health services'.

What Labour will do:

- In time, we envisage a minimum base line funding for mental health services of 10 per cent of current health spending.
- Put in place multidisciplinary community mental health teams, reducing the need for in-patient care.
- **Close psychiatric institutions that are inappropriate for their purpose, once adequate out-patient services are in place. Funds from the sale of such institutions to be ring-fenced for mental health services.**
- Introduce long-term personnel management to address staff shortages.
- Appoint adequate numbers of psychologists to all prisons.
- Increase the budget of the National Suicide Prevention Office to €10 million initially and to €20 million over five years.
- Provide a comprehensive package to all primary and secondary schools, including mental health programmes and comprehensive counselling services.
- Establish formal structured partnerships between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector to strengthen community-based suicide prevention strategies and bereavement support.
- **Act to solve the crisis in child and adolescent psychiatric services by increasing specialist out-patient teams by 50 per cent and bringing established teams up to the recommended staffing complement.**
- Ensure early intervention, including a Youth Mental Health Initiative aimed at teachers and other adults who have frequent contact with young people.
- Develop specialist child and adolescent intellectual disability services, establish specialist eating disorder services, develop multi-disciplinary teams nationally to deal with addiction and increase the in-patient facilities to meet the needs of the 0-15 year-old age group and the in-patient needs of the 16-17 year-old age group.

Our objective is to tackle the existing crisis and, through investment and reform, to lay the foundations for a health service, based on excellence, value for money and fairness, to provide a better standard of care for patients, and to enhance the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland.

BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

The Challenge

Education is at the core of the Fair Society. A truly universal education system puts no age limit on learning. It is flexible enough to embrace multiple intelligences and talents. And it offers all who access it an equal chance of success, regardless of income, class or family background. By these standards, Ireland's education system is universal in name only.

To build a fair society and a knowledge economy, we must develop a genuinely universal learning community for all of our citizens from the cradle to the grave. Education is about realising one's full potential, but it is also about releasing and harnessing the creative potential of society as a whole. We will never know what we can achieve as a country until everyone has a real chance to contribute to all aspects of Irish life.

The challenge of creating a learning community is a considerable one, particularly in light of the basic problems still blighting our education system. We have no universal pre-school education. Our primary school population alone is set to expand by some 100,000 children, yet we cannot even accommodate the pupils we have now. Pre-fabs pass for proper school buildings. 'Free' schools depend on voluntary donations from parents for basic essentials. One in four children is in a class of thirty-plus. Literacy and numeracy standards are stagnating. Children with learning difficulties wait months for an assessment. One in five will drop out of school before the Leaving Certificate.

The government may wonder why the only resemblance between Ireland now and Ireland in the 1980s is our schools. The answer is simple: you can't buy ambition, or a passion for education. Our schools need investment, but they also need imagination, courage to reform and a vision of Irish education that takes as its end point the kind of skills, confidence and experience we would like our citizens of all ages to possess. Without it, we can only expect more of the same.

Ireland can do better

Labour wants to build a world class education system for Ireland in which there are no barriers to learning. Under Labour, equality of opportunity will be supported by practical measures so that there is real equality of outcome regardless of income, social background or age.

What Labour will do

Schools

Standards and leadership in schools

In government we will give principals and teachers the support and professional development they need by:

- Making all new appointments of principals for a ten-year period only.
- Requiring all principals to complete or to have completed a designated Master's degree in Educational Management.
- Establishing an appropriately attractive pay scale for principals.
- Making relevant expertise available to boards of management when selecting a new principal.
- Requiring principals and teachers to draw up an agreed programme of professional development for each individual teacher, to be reviewed at the end of the school year.
- Establishing a dedicated fund within the DES to which schools may apply to fund professional development for staff.
- Funding an agreed number of days for substitution per year for teachers participating in supplemental professional development.
- Devolving greater autonomy to school principals in the use of teaching and other resources.
- Extending the National Pilot Project on Induction to all primary and secondary schools so that all new teachers get supervised on-the-job training during their probationary period.
- Providing financial support for students undertaking teacher training modules as part of their course to offset the cost of their teaching materials and travel expenses.
- We will review the content and duration of secondary school teacher training with a view to further developing practical classroom experience and the interpersonal skills appropriate to a classroom situation.

Education is at the core of the Fair Society. A truly universal education system puts no age limit on learning. It is flexible enough to embrace multiple intelligences and talents. And it offers all who access it an equal chance of success, regardless of income, class or family background.

A more democratic system

What Labour will do:

- Draw up guidelines so that schools can design their own Home-School Agreements. These agreements will set out in clear and inclusive terms the respective responsibilities of the school, parents and the pupil, and will be agreed by all three.
- Oblige schools to publish an annual whole school report. This will contain general information about the school, such as its rules, ethos and extracurricular activities. It will also contain a financial report for the previous school year.

Proper funding for schools

We will:

- Double the primary school capitation grant from €163.58 to €320 to recognise the real cost of running a primary school.
- Increase the per capita funding for all pupils in non-fee-paying second level schools by €300.
- Increase the capitation element of the current Maintenance Grant to €25.
- Increase the ancillary grant for secretarial and caretaker staff to €200 per pupil.
- End the practice of levying rates on publicly-funded schools in the free education system.
- Replace the rest of the complicated grants system for primary and second level schools with a single block grant that can be used on a multi-annual basis if required.
- **Have the State Claims Agency carry out an assessment of insurance costs in all schools with a view to reducing risks and premia. Options to be examined will include the centralised purchasing of insurance for all primary and voluntary secondary schools and the indemnification of schools by the state.**

Class sizes

We will progressively reduce average class sizes towards the EU norm. We will cap class sizes at 15:1 in schools where there is significant disadvantage and progressively move towards capping class sizes at 25:1 in mainstream primary schools.

Early childhood education

We are committed to providing one year's free pre-school education for all children.

Progressing towards equality of outcome

In order to tackle educational disadvantage Labour will:

- **Address the needs of all of our school children by 'weighting' each child or teenager according to their personal, social or academic needs, and distributing extra financial and non-material resources to schools accordingly. This method will also be used to determine appropriate staffing levels for schools.**
- Schools in disadvantaged communities will have access to a study support fund, which they could use to provide after-school and holiday activities for its students. This could range from music or dance lessons, to training with local football clubs or study skills seminars, and be arranged in partnership with local youth organisations.
- Give pupils access to healthy meals by developing partnerships between schools and local caterers and food suppliers.
- Resource the NEWB adequately so that it can fulfil its mandate and devote some of its energy to pro-actively preventing at-risk children from dropping out of school.
- **Develop a social guarantee to all 16 to 18 year-olds of training, a school place or meaningful work.**

Improving literacy and numeracy

What Labour will do:

- **Require all primary school teachers to undertake more intensive training in literacy and numeracy education, with extra subsequent training available to teachers working in disadvantaged schools.**
- Require schools to develop whole school literacy policies and target outcomes for class groups and individuals, and to have an in-school reporting mechanism through which teachers would report on the progress of their teaching and learning objectives.
- Provide speech and language therapy support to schools with the greatest need to address the issue of language delay among Junior and Senior Infants.
- Extend teaching hours for maths support for students with very weak mathematical skills.
- Remove the cap on English language support teachers in schools. Schools will receive a teacher allocation according to the needs of their pupils. The principal may then choose how to organise staff timetables and to recruit staff with the appropriate skills for a specific student population.
- Have the Department of Education and Science conduct a comprehensive review of the communication needs of pupils for whom English or Irish is not their first language, their schools and their parents, with a view to developing a coherent national policy framework for English language teaching and communication in schools.
- **Provide appropriate funding and training for Family Literacy schemes.**
- Require public libraries to increase their opening hours and to have outreach programmes aimed at maximising community literacy.

- Provide for homework clubs run by trained tutors in schools with low achievement in literacy and numeracy.
- Work with local authorities to incorporate educational facilities, such as space for homework clubs, into local authority housing developments.

School as a community resource

What Labour will do:

- Make school opening hours and the option of using schools as multiple-use facilities a condition of state funding.
- Address the insurance and staffing needs that accompany longer opening hours and multiple uses.

Schools for all

What Labour will do:

- **Regulate schools' admission policies in line with the Education Act 1998 to ensure that schools are genuinely inclusive of special needs students.**
- Ensure that new and existing schools in receipt of state aid respond to the needs of a more diverse school-going population.

World class school buildings

Under Labour, new schools will be built according to the following requirements:

- School space will be flexible enough to be able to adapt to various teaching methods, diverse uses and to variations on group sizes. For example, school space will be adaptable to PE, music or woodwork, as well as small group tutoring.
- Classrooms will be big enough to be able to move furniture easily to facilitate group work, and have enough 'free' space for unstructured play, reading, art, performing etc.
- **The school grounds will be regarded as an extension of the classroom. They will be as natural as possible, and be spacious enough to house a school garden.**
- All new schools will have sports facilities that will also be available to the community.
- All new schools will be low-energy, sustainable buildings.

School planning

We will give the National Treasury Management Agency the task of tracking residential development and population patterns, and of developing a model that will be able to predict when and where demographic change will lead to a demand for school places and to address the many already existing education blackspots.

The NTMA will be able to acquire land for schools using Compulsory Purchase powers.

We will future-proof new schools against the anticipated needs of communities, and allow the state to be the patron of new schools where necessary. These schools will cater for children of all denominations and of none.

All educational buildings will be zoned for educational use so that schools and educational buildings and grounds cannot easily be sold out of education.

Broadening the learning experience

Our specific commitments include:

- Progressively implementing the NCCA's proposal for a revised senior cycle curriculum.
- Enabling all schools to offer a three-year Senior Cycle at second level.
- **The reform of maths and science teaching and learning as set out in our policy document 'Formula for Success'.**
- Extending the use of oral skills in language examinations.
- Extending Social, Personal and Health Education to all schools. The importance of SPHE will be emphasised in the national syllabus. Teachers will undergo pre-service and in-service training in Relationships and Sexuality Education, which will include an expanded section on sexual diversity.
- Provision of funds under the school works programme to provide non-classroom learning facilities for all secondary schools or clusters of schools.
- Making PE an examinable subject at Junior and Leaving Certificate level.
- Ensuring that every second level school has their own, or access to, a qualified PE teacher.
- Enabling schools to develop partnerships with local sports clubs and organisations in order to share facilities.
- **Establishing the Music Entitlement Scheme, which would entitle every child to 30 hours free music tuition in the course of one primary school year.**
- Providing for artists to work with teachers and pupils on group projects for the benefit of the school or the community.

Caring for Young People: Special Needs and Support Services

What Labour will do:

- We will progressively increase the number of national educational psychologists to 400. These professionals will support special needs students, their teachers and their parents, but will also underpin more general school-based counselling and programmes addressing mental health among young people.
- A full-time educational psychologist will be allocated to schools on a clustering basis.
- We will ensure that the resources available to a child with special needs at primary level are also available to that child at second level in advance of the child beginning First Year.
- We recognise the success of the ABA method for many children who are on the Autistic Spectrum. We will sanction the 12 ABA schools awaiting Department recognition and engage with parental groups who are seeking to have early assessment and autism-specific methods supported by the state.
- We will integrate the wide range of agencies and bodies providing support to children and schools into a more coherent, user-friendly structure.
- Specifically to address the widespread problem of homophobic bullying in our schools, the Department of Education and Science will issue clear guidelines to schools outlining their responsibility to address homophobic bullying among students and teachers.
- We will facilitate the sharing of best practice between schools which have implemented successful policies and programmes addressing sexuality and homophobic bullying.

Learning for life

If Ireland is to prosper, and generate more and better jobs, we must invest in our people. A knowledge economy requires a skilled, flexible and adaptable workforce, based on strong educational attainment and

on-going training and skills enhancement. In modern economies, more and more people will move jobs several times in the course of a career, and re-training and up-skilling beyond the traditional education years will be essential both to enhancing productivity and to protecting the employability of individuals during those transitions.

Furthermore, we firmly believe that education and learning should also be valued for their own sake. The opportunity to learn should be flexible and open to people of all ages, backgrounds and needs, whether in work, at home or retired

Upskilling the workforce

What Labour will do:

- We commit to increasing the number of people in employment that formally progress by at least one level under the National Framework of Qualifications by 100,000 over a five-year time frame.
- Accelerate the development of a national framework of qualifications that is well understood and recognised by individuals, employers and education and training providers and that makes access, transfer and progression a reality. This requires the rapid development of a certification and accreditation system to ensure that work-place learning can be properly certified and recognised.
- Increase support for employer-led training networks, delivered through Skillnets and the enterprise development agencies. Greater support will be provided for training networks that focus on transferable skills (ICT literacy etc.) for the low-skilled.
- Re-invent the role of FÁS to achieve greater focus and efficiencies. FÁS will be given a strong mandate to expand work-training schemes and apprenticeships and to empower individuals and small businesses to access relevant training.
- Establish the right to take two weeks paid study leave from work, paid for out of the social insurance fund.

Third and Fourth Level

We believe that in creating a knowledge economy we must also nurture the values of civic society. It is essential that we promote innovation in science and technology, but we need to do the same in the creative arts, humanities, and the social sciences. Indeed, solutions to the biggest challenges of the future, such as better education, environmental protection and urban planning, will come from disciplines other than the 'hard' sciences. We will ensure that funding for third level reflects the public good served by academic diversity.

The abolition of third level fees introduced by the Labour Party has greatly enhanced participation rates at third level. We will build on this to expand participation rates across all social groups, while working to improve the standards and consistency of education at third level.

What Labour will do:

- Fully support the development of a fourth level sector. We believe that genuine cutting-edge research achievement will require unprecedented cooperation and collaboration between institutions. Our approach to third level investment will reflect this priority.
- Reform the system for funding new higher education research infrastructure in a way that provides universities and Institutes of Technology with the opportunity to borrow to finance research infrastructure, and with the incentives to attract more ongoing research funding from industry by developing critical mass in distinctive research areas.
- **We will establish a multi-campus University of the South East with Waterford Institute of Technology as its hub.**
- Study the feasibility of establishing an all-Ireland university press.
- Hold a competition among universities for the part-funding of a new Institute of Advanced Studies in Applied Finance to support the further development of our international financial services industry into increasingly sophisticated activities.
- Establish a national Intellectual Property Services Centre (IPSC) to support our higher education institutes and their research teams in the creation, protection and exploitation of ideas generated from publicly funded research.
- **Abolish fees for part-time students studying for their first primary degree.**
- Steadfastly maintain our commitment to free third level education for all.
- **Reform the student grant system to make it more transparent and equitable and progressively increase the level and income thresholds for third level grants. Responsibility for administering third level grants will be transferred to the Department of Social and Family Affairs.**
- We will establish an Open University of Ireland.
- We will create an Ombudsman for third level education.
- Legislate to take effective action against bogus universities and "diploma mills".

Education is about realising one's full potential, but it is also about releasing and harnessing the creative potential of society as a whole.

Further Education

What Labour will do:

- Revive the National Adult Learning Council and local co-ordinating bodies so that diverse elements of lifelong learning can be linked into one coherent system through which learners can progress.
- **Make Further Education a distinct sector of the education system.**
- Put in place a Council of Further Education Colleges to coordinate the activities of PLC providers.
- Provide for appropriate management structure and specialist staff for FE provision.
- Provide appropriate non-pay budgets to reflect the nature of the activity.
- Remove the arbitrary cap on PLC places. A real commitment to a knowledge economy recognises that a knowledge society needs diverse sources of education.
- **Provide separate FE colleges in centres where there is a sufficient concentration of students. These buildings will be designed to meet the requirements of Further Education.**
- Ensure all FE students have web access, email accounts, IT equipment and access to a library.
- Create a transparent model of mobility for students to third level where appropriate.
- Encourage the development of student unions with student representation on appropriate college decision making bodies.
- Draw together existing strands of funding into a dedicated annual budget for Women's Community Education within the Department of Education and Science.
- Through our 'open schools' policy we will support Adult Learning in primary and post-primary schools after school hours.

Adult Literacy

What Labour will do:

- Significantly increase the Adult Literacy budget in line with increased capacity among adult literacy providers.
- We will also put in place appropriate structures for the training of adult literacy tutors.
- We will initiate a mass-media adult literacy campaign, including a TV literacy programme similar to Read Write Now.

A National Education Forum

When the Labour Party was last in government, we initiated the National Education Forum. This forum provided the first significant opportunity for the major stakeholders in education to debate in public session the issues and priorities confronting all levels of education. As a direct result of this open debate, more long-overdue educational legislation was resolved upon than had been in the previous sixty years.

We believe that there is a need once more to bring the education stakeholders together in a transparent and far-ranging debate. From this we hope to make an inventory of the issues facing a much changed society before moving forward in a concerted way with an educational system which will meet the priorities and contingencies of the 21st Century.

What Labour will do:

- Establish the National Forum on Education on a permanent basis. Every seven years the forum will conduct a comprehensive review of the primary, second level, third level and life-long learning sectors of education. The process will commence with a comprehensive review, in public session, of the efficiency and effectiveness of educational policies, strategies, structure and implementation in relation to the primary sector.
- This will be followed at two-yearly intervals by a similar process for the other sectors, and when completed the cycle will recommence.

BUILDING HOMES, LINKING PEOPLE

Transport, Housing and Planning

The Challenge

Despite our prosperity, and despite record levels of house building, we find ourselves in the midst of a housing crisis. Almost half a million new houses have been built in the past decade alone, but average house prices have trebled. Thousands of young people cannot afford to buy a home from their own resources, especially in the cities. There are twice as many people on waiting lists for council housing as there were ten years ago, and 60,000 trapped on Rent Allowance.

The outgoing government has failed to harness record levels of residential construction to meet the housing needs of the very people whose efforts have made the economic boom possible. They have maintained a menu of tax breaks for investors in residential property, while abolishing the First Time Buyer's Grant. A new two-tier society has evolved in Ireland: those who can afford to buy up lots of property and those who cannot afford to buy their own home.

New homeowners who start their commute in the dark to beat mounting daily congestion would not be surprised that in 2006 Dublin was used by the European Environment Agency (EEA) as a worst case example of urban sprawl. Like other cities, towns and even villages around the country, Dublin's expansion was, and continues to be, ad hoc and developer-driven.

We have half a million more houses now than we did ten years ago, but weaker communities. Housing estates with hundreds of new homes have been built with no shops, schools, doctors, childcare, public transport, recreational facilities or job opportunities nearby. Young parents find that they are forced to spend more time in the car than with their children. Existing schools have had to house Junior Infants in school gyms to cope with unprecedented population changes.

Planning profoundly affects how we live. It affects where we live, how we get around, how much time we spend commuting and how much time we have for rest and recreation. It affects where we shop, where our children are educated, play, or get treated when they are sick, and what our teenagers do in their free time. It affects the quality of our environment and the delivery of public services.

The construction boom has treated houses as an end in themselves instead of the homes and communities they become. Good public transport is essential to linking these communities to work, leisure and essential facilities. Joined-up planning is too important to be neglected any longer.

Ireland can do better

Developer-led planning ignores the vital social element of where we live, work and play. Everyone should have a good quality home at a price they can afford and in sustainable communities that are planned with the interests of those communities, existing and future, in mind. Ireland should be one of the most attractive places to live in Europe.

What Labour will do

Making home ownership a reality

What Labour will do:

- Introduce a new housing option called 'Begin to Buy'. Those who cannot purchase a home from their own resources alone, and who can demonstrate a clear need for housing, will be eligible to apply for a 'Begin to Buy' home purchase scheme. This would allow a person in employment to buy a minimum 25 per cent stake in a home, with the state meeting the rest of the cost. As the individual's financial circumstances improve, he or she can increase their equity in the home.
- Expand the scope of the Affordable Housing schemes so growing families or those who need to move for work or family reasons will be able to qualify. We recognise that it is not only first-time buyers who are under pressure.
- The NESC has recommended social housing output should be increased to 10,000 per annum for the next seven years. We are committed to meeting this target through increasing local authority output and actively supporting the voluntary and cooperative sectors to reach their full potential.
- Reform the Tenant Purchase Scheme for local authority tenants, introduce a tenant purchase scheme for the voluntary and co-operative sectors subject to consultation with the relevant stakeholders, and encourage tenant purchase in the private sector to maximise the number of people who can buy their own home.
- Over time, replace the Rent Allowance scheme with a new form of housing support based on need, income and family circumstances. Receiving rent allowance should not be an obstacle to employment.

Delivering affordable homes

- We will ensure that the Affordable Housing Schemes deliver a minimum of 5,000 homes per year by strengthening the Part V provision of the Planning Act.
- Public land that could be zoned for affordable homes has been steadily sold off by the FF/PD government to private speculators. We will immediately halt this practice. In addition we will impose tighter restrictions on the sale of public lands and legislate to bring public open spaces under the control/ownership of local authorities.
- We will amend Compulsory Purchase powers to allow local authorities to assemble land banks on which affordable housing can be provided. The same powers can be used by central government for the provision of schools, hospitals and other social purposes.

Ending Homelessness

- We are committed to ending homelessness as defined by the *Make Room* campaign through a range of measures including greater provision of supported housing.

A quality rental market

- We will update the standards regulations for private rental accommodation.
- We will review the operation of the Residential Tenancies Act and the Residential Tenancies Board to ensure the most efficient possible resolution of disputes.

Linking homes, work and leisure

We will:

- Consistent with our plans to recast local government in Ireland we will create city and regional authorities that will have a number of functions, including transport. They will include city authorities in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, and the Athlone-Tullamore-Mullingar triangle. Regional authorities will be established in other regions of the country. These authorities will be responsible for strategic planning and for overseeing the delivery of region-wide services, which will include procuring, funding and operating joined-up public transport projects for their region, integrated timetabling and ticketing, development of new routes, linking land use planning to public transport and managing traffic flow. These authorities will be chaired and coordinated by directly elected full-time mayors.
- Oversee the completion of major inter-urban routes by 2010.
- Upgrade intercity rail connections to ensure that all major inter-city journeys are faster by rail than by car.
- Extend commuter rail services to the suburbs of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.
- The Athlone-Tullamore-Mullingar transport authority will be responsible for the opening of a rail link between Athlone and Mullingar.
- Prioritise the construction of the Interconnector tunnel between Heuston and Connolly stations.
- Begin to lay the foundations of a metro system as part Dublin's rail network. This will begin with the construction of Metro North between Swords, the airport and Dublin city centre within the lifetime of the government.
- Deliver Luas services to Lucan, extend Luas lines to Citywest, Cherrywood and the Docklands and link the existing Red and Green Luas lines in the city centre.
- Introduce long-overdue integrated ticketing for all public transport.
- Increase the current Dublin Bus fleet by 50 per cent, or 500 buses.
- Complete the existing QBCs so they have enough road space to move quickly and add extra QBCs on the main arteries in the Greater Dublin Area.
- Extend the Dublin Bus network to major residential areas within a 25 mile radius of the city.
- Introduce a €1 adult fare and 50 cent children's fare on the entire Dublin Bus network within this 25 mile radius. This approach can be replicated in other cities and regions by the new transport authorities.
- Fast track 6 Park and Ride sites and service them with express bus services to the city centre.
- Replace the Travel Pass Scheme with a new cheaper Freedom Card that could be used across all public transport.
- Enable the government to manage traffic at the Westlink Toll Bridge by lifting the barriers at times of heavy congestion and varying the tolls at different times of day.
- Appoint Cycling Officers in each Local Authority to promote cycling and encourage greater cycling numbers by providing safer cycling routes.
- Fund all schools to provide cycle stands and, in conjunction with local authorities, develop safe cycle routes to schools.
- Require all major employers to provide cycle stands and showering facilities in order to encourage their staff to cycle.
- In Dublin, we will develop safe cross-city cycle routes, complete the Sutton to Sandycove cycle route and develop a new cycle route along both sides of the Liffey quays.
- Pursue the possibility of holding an annual Cycling Marathon similar to Zurich and Cape Town.
- Review the law which currently compels, in certain circumstances, a cyclist to use a bus lane where one is provided.

Planning for communities

Labour will reform the planning laws and the planning system.

What Labour will do:

- We will link planning permission for residential developments to the provision of public transport, schools, healthcare, recreational areas, shops and facilities.
- Encourage clustered rural and urban regeneration through pro-active planning.
- End the use of private management companies and management charges in private housing estates, and regulate them in the case of apartments.
- Refuse planning permission to developers who have failed to finish off housing developments in the past.
- Abolish the €20 fee for making a submission to a local authority on a planning issue.

Airports and Freight

- We will ensure modern passenger facilities at our airports and provide fast public transport access to all our airports.
- We will commission a study to examine airport capacity in the Leinster area over the next 10 to 20 years.
- In government we will encourage transport of freight by rail and gradually target an increase in annual freight rail volume.

Road safety

We will:

- Make Road Safety a priority for Cabinet and allocate a specific budget for the Road Safety Strategy.
- Implement the measures for better driver education and licensing set out in our document *Driving for Life*, including our strategy to clear the driving test backlog within two years by employing more temporary driver testers and modernising the driver testing service.
- Improve the poor enforcement record on road traffic issues by increasing Garda resources, management and training, and setting specific targets for annual enforcement levels across a wide range of road traffic offences.
- Provide a statutory watchdog for the National Car Test to improve accountability and standards.
- Set specific deadlines and multi-annual targets for each Department and Agency involved in Road Safety.
- Overhaul and consolidate the Road Traffic Acts.
- Introduce higher standards for road haulage and buses, in particular in relation to driver licensing, training and testing and vehicle testing.
- Introduce a requirement for the retrofitting of Cyclops mirrors to all larger vehicles in order to protect pedestrians and cyclists.

The construction boom has treated houses as an end in themselves instead of the homes and communities they become.

COMBATING GLOBAL WARMING

The Challenge

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. Without urgent and decisive action within the next decade we are likely to experience flooding affecting one sixth of the global population; drought and famine for 200 million of the world's poorest citizens; extinction of up to 40 per cent of all species; and more extreme weather patterns threatening lives and livelihoods over the coming decades. The cost to the global economy could be up to 10 per cent of GDP per annum. The human and environmental costs are unquantifiable.

The international consensus on the need for radical action to avoid serious climate change has been growing steadily since the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated in 1997. The British government has indicated its intention to achieve a CO₂ reduction of 60 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050. Germany and France have signalled their intention to push climate change up the European agenda, and Sweden is on track to being an oil-free economy by 2020.

Ireland has had ten years to prepare for our first-round commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, commencing on 1 January 2008. Despite this, Ireland is set to overshoot its target by 7.2 million tonnes of CO₂ a year for five years. The government has already sanctioned the purchase of €270m worth of carbon credits (or 'clean air') from abroad to compensate for its failure to meet our domestic target. However, this figure assumes that global demand for carbon credits will remain reasonably static. The truth is that the direct cost of failing to meet our CO₂ reduction target could be up to €750m for the first Kyoto period alone.

Ireland needs to take serious action now to meet our Kyoto commitments and to position ourselves for a medium to long-term economic climate where energy and environmental issues will dominate. The message of the recent Stern report for the British chancellor is clear: early action to avoid runaway global warming far outweighs the costs. Decisions taken over coming decade will be crucial in determining success or failure in the fight against climate change.

The next government will have responsibility for negotiating Ireland's second Kyoto commitment, and for putting policies in place between 2008 and 2012 to achieve that target. The present coalition parties have a profound credibility deficit when it comes to delivery on the environment, and greenhouse gas reduction in particular. From construction to planning, this government has consistently demonstrated its willingness to appease vested interests over long-term environmental sustainability. They cannot be trusted with our children's future.

Ireland can do better

Instead of regarding CO₂ reduction as a threat to the economy, taking action to combat climate change at home and abroad should be an opportunity to put Ireland on the cutting edge of new markets for low-carbon goods and services. Ireland has one of the most favourable wind and tidal regimes in Europe. It could go from being a net importer of polluting fossil fuels today to being an exporter of clean, renewable energy within a few decades.

What Labour will do

Taking action at home to avoid debt abroad

We will set the following greenhouse gas reduction targets:

- To meet our 2008-2012 Kyoto target of annual greenhouse gas emissions of 63 Mt CO₂e per annum (or +13 per cent relative to 1990) by 2012.
- To reach 1990-level greenhouse gas emissions by 2016.
- A reduction in CO₂e up to 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.
- To achieve a carbon neutral economy by 2030.

Looking to our economic future

What Labour will do:

- Publish a Climate Change Bill setting out legally binding emission reduction targets in five-yearly budgets.
- Establish a Department of Energy, Climate Change and the Environment to progress these important policy areas and to drive national climate change strategy.
- Create an environmental pillar in the social partnership process.
- Establish a National Forum on Climate Change involving all relevant stakeholders and the public to generate a national consensus on the measures we need to take to meet existing and future greenhouse gas reduction obligations.

Our energy future

What Labour will do:

- Set a target of 50 per cent electricity generation from renewables by 2020. Some of this electricity will be exported.
- Introduce a renewables obligation for electricity suppliers.

- Steadily reduce Ireland's almost complete dependence on a centralised system of large fossil fuel power plants and extremely inefficient distribution network and develop a national electricity grid that is suitable for decentralised renewable electricity generation and local micro-generation.
- Develop up to 1000 MW of interconnection between Ireland and Britain by 2012 and progressively invest in our interconnection capacity with the UK and mainland Europe.
- All Area Development Plans will be required to incorporate micro-generation, such as small-scale Combined Heat and Power plants, anaerobic digesters or domestic energy generation from solar or biomass into all new residential and commercial developments.
- We will give the ESB a new mandate to develop renewable energy in Ireland with special emphasis on marine technology.
- We will establish a Centre of Excellence for renewable energy technology, with a specific focus on developing technologies not currently commercially deployable and energy storage capacity.

A fair and equitable energy market

What Labour will do:

- Legislate to ensure greater accountability to Dáil Eireann in the regulation of the exploitation of Ireland's natural resources, and to address the health, safety and environmental implications of licences granted.
- Keep the gas and electricity networks in public ownership.
- Establish a strategic gas reserve to protect ourselves against gas shortages.
- Extend free insulation to pensioners in low-income households.
- Increase the fuel allowance to address fuel poverty.

Better building

In government we will:

- Require all new homes to be built to a passive house standard from 2012.
- Begin to make new housing stock more efficient from 2008 by requiring all new homes to use 60 per cent less energy for space and water heating than houses built to current building standards.
- Overhaul and expand the Greener Homes scheme so that grants are used to achieve a 'whole-house' reduction in CO₂ emissions. Grants will be tied to packages of measures. Different combinations of insulation options, window replacement and/or installation of renewable energy technologies will be available and subsidised through a mixture of grant aid and low-interest loans, repayable after a sufficient period of time has passed to allow the householder to accumulate financial benefits from energy savings.
- Include the installation of renewable technologies in a major expansion of the Warmer Homes scheme.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a minimum energy efficiency standard for homes undergoing major refurbishment.
- Mandate local authorities to facilitate voluntary group insulation schemes to reduce the cost and inconvenience of retrofitting.
- Introduce a stamp duty credit linked to a sustainability rating structure to reduce the price of energy efficient buildings.
- Fund local authorities to retrofit local authority dwellings to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon emissions.
- Require all commercial and public buildings, where practicable, to be built to be carbon neutral by 2012.
- Ensure that local authorities have sufficient trained building inspectors to enforce regulations.
- Ban the use of hollow blocks in the construction or extension of all residential, commercial and public buildings.
- Conduct an energy audit of all public buildings and retrofit them to a high standard of energy efficiency accordingly.
- Require the cost of carbon emissions as they relate to both the construction stage and projected ongoing energy requirements to be factored into all public infrastructure projects.
- Promote environmentally sustainable methods and materials for construction, including green cement.

Instead of regarding CO₂ reduction as a threat to the economy, taking action to combat climate change at home and abroad should be an opportunity to put Ireland on the cutting edge of new markets for low-carbon goods and services.

Doing more with less energy

- In partnership with ESB we will roll out a national programme to install a smart electricity meter showing real-time use of electricity in every household in the country.
- Inefficient incandescent light bulbs will be phased out by 2012.

Planning for sustainable communities

We will:

- Link planning permission for residential developments to the provision of public transport, schools, healthcare, recreational areas and sources of local employment.
- Require commercial developments to have comprehensive public transport links before they are given planning permission in order to minimise the car-dependency of their employees and customers.
- Encourage clustered rural and urban regeneration.
- Make greenhouse gas emissions reduction a central tenet spatial planning.

Ireland has one of the most favourable wind and tidal regimes in Europe. It could go from being a net importer of polluting fossil fuels today to being an exporter of clean, renewable energy within a few decades.

Cleaner transport

The importance of quality public transport goes beyond climate change: it is about quality of life. We have set out elsewhere in our manifesto our commitment to delivering integrated public transport systems and upgraded rail and rural transport links as a matter of priority.

To further facilitate cleaner transport, we will:

- Progressively introduce a 5.75 per cent renewables obligation for fuel suppliers so that biofuel-blend petrol is delivered at the pump. This target will be subject to the environmental sustainability of domestic and international bioenergy crop production.
- Abolish excise duty on biofuels.
- **Rebalance VRT to reflect CO₂ emissions per kilometre travelled. This would be a revenue neutral tax reform designed to encourage the purchase of low-emissions vehicles.**
- Progressively reform company car tax so that this charge is calculated according to CO₂ emissions per kilometre rather than mileage.
- Convert the maximum number of public motor vehicles (state cars, public buses etc) to run on biofuel.

Sharing the cost of carbon

Labour in government will oblige the commercial and public sectors to accept a greater share of the carbon reduction burden than they have to date. We will examine the potential of a domestic emissions trading system for the largest energy users in the commercial, service and public sectors. A similar system will be operating in Northern Ireland when the British government implements its planned domestic carbon trading scheme.

Reducing farming's greenhouse gases

We will work with all the stakeholders in agriculture to:

- Support the top-up per hectare payment to supplement the existing EU grant for energy crops.
- Provide start-up aid for co-operative groups setting up supply chains in the wood biomass energy sector.
- Encourage partnerships between local authorities and these local supply chains.
- Support relating all agricultural supports in the post-CAP period to greenhouse gas abatement, whether through the adoption of low-impact farming methods required by REPS, conversion to organic farming or the production of energy crops.
- Undertake further research, currently overseen by Teagasc, into the improvement of herd management in ways that will lead to a reduction in methane and nitrous oxide emissions.
- Expand research into carbon sequestration through farming methods, soil types and forestry.
- Aim to at least double the carbon sequestered by sinks from 2.07 Mt CO₂ to 4 MtCO₂ in the next Kyoto period.

Nuclear Power

Labour is committed to keeping Ireland nuclear free and will not establish any nuclear facility in the state. We will continue to oppose the Sellafield plant and other installations in the UK which pose a risk to our people.

International leadership

Climate change is a global problem that can only be solved by collective action by the international community. The ability to make strategic foreign policy decisions at an EU level will be vital in future climate change negotiations, particularly if the EU is to exploit its diplomatic and economic power to the full.

- **Labour is committed to supporting a Climate Change Protocol to the stalled Constitutional Treaty, setting out what the EU-27 would do to tackle climate change through the mechanisms it creates. We believe that this could also help to break the European deadlock, and to underscore to the citizens of the EU the relevance of a strong, cohesive union that can act in their interests on this major global issue.**

Ireland needs to take serious action now to meet our Kyoto commitments and to position ourselves for a medium to long-term economic climate where energy and environmental issues will dominate.

BETTER ENVIRONMENT, BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

The Challenge

Ireland is the 'dirty man' of Europe. As well as producing the most CO₂ per capita in the EU, we also produce more waste per capita than our fellow EU citizens. Over the past ten years, the European Commission has initiated legal proceedings against the Irish government for no less than thirty infringements of environmental directives. Included in these is the failure to ensure that potentially fatal bacteria were absent from Irish drinking water.

One of the most pressing environmental challenges we face is waste. Improvements in recycling rates are eroded by the fact that we are still producing more and more waste every year. A growing waste problem such as Ireland's is a by-product of greater affluence. An expanding economy and growing population mean that unless we tackle our consumption patterns and disposal habits now, we will face some extremely hard choices over the coming years.

The outgoing government has primarily focused on the problem of disposal, and has made the choice to divert waste to local incinerators. However, incinerators can have negative environmental and public health impacts, which is why they are rarely welcomed by local communities. Dressing incineration up as 'Energy from Waste' does not make it any more palatable. Burning municipal (or 'wet and dry') waste is an extremely inefficient way of generating energy. Furthermore, these incinerators need to be 'fed' to guarantee the electricity they do produce, thereby doing away with incentives to recycle or cut down on waste.

Simply cutting down on waste reduces or even eliminates the need for unsightly landfill and unwanted incinerators. We can legislate to cut down on non-biodegradable packaging and make it easier for householders to recycle as much of their waste as possible.

Furthermore, joined-up policy on waste reduction and recycling can create jobs. Instead of the current policy, which would drive the creation of incinerators and waste to fill them, we could get 'Money from Waste' in the form of a domestic recycling industry. At present we pay for three quarters of our recycling to be done abroad. If we had a strong indigenous recycling industry, it would be in our financial as well as our environmental interests to 'feed' that industry as much as possible through high levels of recycling.

Waste is just one area where we need a real commitment to sustainable environmental policies. Fast-tracking investment in drinking water facilities is another, as demonstrated by the recent crisis in Galway. Declining water quality in our lakes and rivers, poor conservation of biodiversity and our countryside, dirty, littered streets, rocketing carbon emissions and the retreat from action on Sellafield sully the record of the past ten years.

The environment and environmental services have been a low priority for the outgoing government, the price for which will be paid by households and communities around the country, and future generations.

Ireland can do better

Protecting the environment is an investment in our quality of life. Irish people have the right to free, clean drinking water, safe and sustainable waste disposal and clean and pleasant cities, towns and countryside.

What Labour will do

Waste and recycling

We will:

- **Establish a National Waste Management Agency, which will include a state authority for recycling charged with the development of recycling infrastructure and a market for recycled products.**
- Remove any charge for the collection of waste destined for recycling. We believe that householders should be rewarded for making sound environmental choices.
- **We will introduce a National Waiver Scheme for domestic charges, which would be binding on local authorities and which would apply to low-income households, pensioners, large families and people with special needs.**
- Aim for every household in Ireland to recycle 50 per cent of their waste by 2012, rising to 75 per cent by 2020.
- Establish a per capita target for municipal waste to encourage householders and local authorities prevent waste production.
- Explore using anaerobic digestion for localised heat and energy production.
- Price landfill and incineration so that recycling is the most economic option for waste disposal.
- Explore the use of Mechanical Biological Treatment to deal with non-recyclable waste.
- **Require producers to assume responsibility for waste reduction at source through less and smarter packaging.**
- Explore the use of an environmental levy on hard-to-recycle products, such as disposable cameras, non-rechargeable batteries, white goods which do not have multi-annual repair warranties and multi-layered beverage cartons.

Water

- **Establish the right to clean, potable water under Irish law.**
- Bring forward legislation which will require local authorities to develop strategic water plans for their area.
- **Ensure that there is no privatisation of the public water supply, and no reintroduction of domestic water charges.**
- Accelerate investment in water treatment facilities.
- Fully implement and enforce EU legislation, especially the Nitrates Directive, the WFD and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive.
- Increase monitoring of waters and prompt ongoing publication of data in a user-friendly manner, taking the bathing water reporting as a model.
- Carry out a full public review of pressing water issues, including fluoride in water, water metering and decisions on water-related designations.
- Seek better control of what enters waters, including cleaning agents, which kill sewage treatment organisms, and ban phosphates in washing powders.
- Make the installation of low-flush option toilets mandatory in all new housing.

Clean communities

We will clamp down on environmental crime, including pollution, illegal dumping, littering and graffiti. We will introduce new legislation to protect and enhance public space and the public's right to enjoy it.

An expanding economy and growing population mean that unless we tackle our consumption patterns and disposal habits now, we will face some extremely hard choices over the coming years.

Biodiversity

Labour in government will:

- Review Natura 2000 site protection and management with a view to having real management in place in at least 75 per cent of sites within a short time frame.
- Set up Biodiversity Units in relevant government departments in line with a commitment given in the first NBP to ensure biodiversity is integrated early into plans, policies and actions.
- Significantly increase native broad leaf species according to RIO 2000 and implement a Timber Policy that ensures timbers and wood-based products used in public buildings come from responsibly managed forests.

Coastal Zone Management

- Labour in government will bring forward a National Coastal Zone Management Plan. This plan will give local authorities defined functions for the protection of their coastal amenities and for the provision and maintenance of coastal infrastructure.
- We will reform the legislation governing developments in the coastal zone.
- **We will pursue a policy aimed at maximising public access to our coastal amenities, protecting the coastal environment and supporting coastal communities.**

Public Participation

We will:

- **Transpose the two EU directives guaranteeing citizen rights in relation to public participation and access to environmental information into Irish law and fully implement the same.**
- Ratify the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.
- Set up an Appeals Board to enable citizens to challenge dredging and other licenses granted at sea without having to go to the High Court.
- Provide representation for environmental groups in key forums including the National Economic and Social Forum and the national 'Working Group on Public Participation' under the Water Framework Directive.
- **Establish an Environmental Pillar in the social partnership process.**

Environmental Education

All of our new model schools will incorporate low-energy and environmentally-sustainable design features. We will also work with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to incorporate environmental education and civic responsibility across the primary and second level curricula and into the ethos of education in Ireland.

Sellafield

Labour in government set in motion the first comprehensive and coordinated campaign against the British nuclear industry. It was the work of a team of scientists and legal experts established when Labour was last in government which led to the British government refusing permission for the NIREX dump. However, under the current administration that team of experts has been disbanded, and the inter-ministerial working party on Sellafield downgraded.

Labour in government will reinvigorate the national campaign against Sellafield. We will upgrade the Ministerial task force and resource the RPII to monitor the threat from Sellafield. We will work with NGOs campaigning against Sellafield.

The threat from Sellafield and British nuclear power stations will be taken seriously, as opposed to the belated and confused approach of the outgoing government and its unfortunate Minister for nuclear emergencies. A detailed and workable emergency plan will be drawn up with open public participation in the strategy process.

We will also legislate to comply with Ireland's obligations under the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and will promote nuclear disarmament in international forums.

Protecting the environment is an investment in our quality of life. Irish people have the right to free, clean drinking water, safe and sustainable waste disposal and clean and pleasant cities, towns and countryside.

COMMUNITY POLICING

The Challenge

Irish society has changed radically since the Garda Síochána was founded in 1922. There are more crimes, more drug and alcohol abuse, more public order offences and more anti-social behaviour, making life a misery for so many citizens. Whole communities – including some of our most marginalised communities – have suffered in their quality of life due to lawlessness, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Yet despite the fact that growth in crime and anti-social behaviour – and, in particular, the impact of alcohol and illicit drugs on crime – have created new demands on policing, Ireland's policing structures are virtually unchanged since the foundation of the state.

Our police force has a proud tradition of service, both to the Irish people and to the communities they have served with the UN abroad. But tradition alone will not provide the Irish people with the world class modern police service they deserve and which the Garda Síochána could provide. The ingredients for

such a world class system already exist, but the Gardaí are currently falling short of that goal, and there is a decline in public confidence in the force. In a changing world there is an increasing need for the Garda Síochána to adapt and change, so that it can better serve the community.

The Garda Síochána must become a modern, effective police service with a firm commitment to community policing, modern management structures and proper systems of accountability.

Ireland can do better

People deserve to live in peace and safety, free from harassment, intimidation, vandalism and fear. More Gardaí on the beat, working in communities they know serving people they know, can make a real impact on crime and anti-social behaviour.

What Labour will do

A Modern and Accountable Police Service

Labour believes we need more Gardaí on the ground – on the beat, patrolling our neighbourhoods. This can only be achieved by speeding up the pace of reform within the Garda Síochána.

We need changes in structure, organisation and management in order to ensure the most effective deployment of the Gardaí and the most efficient possible use of resources. In particular the situation where virtually all key decisions in regard to policing are made by just two people – the Minister for Justice and the Garda Commissioner – is no longer appropriate and new procedures for democratic accountability are required.

We will reform our policing service from the top down and the bottom up.

At the top, we will ensure increased public scrutiny and greater accountability of the Gardaí through a new Garda Authority, representative of civil society, to stand between the Commissioner and his officers on the one hand, and the Minister for Justice and his Department on the other. The Authority will incorporate the current Garda Inspectorate and will drive the reform agenda and drive efficiency and effectiveness.

Key objectives for the Authority will include:

- **Revising Garda rostering, so that Gardaí are on the streets where and when they are most needed.**
- **Driving a comprehensive civilianisation programme, so that the maximum number of Gardaí are available for frontline duties.**
- **Opening up senior Garda recruitment to external candidates and ensuring the best recruitment and promotion practices are operated.**
- **Improving Garda diversity to reflect changes in Ireland's population profile.**
- **Using performance data from different Garda regions, districts and divisions, to drive innovation and initiative in tackling crime.**
- **Top-heavy Garda management will be streamlined with greater responsibilities going to regional Assistant Commissioners to take powers in their own areas. The Garda Commissioner will be expected to relinquish routine day-to-day affairs to Deputy Commissioners.**
- **Garda equipment will be continually updated with essential items such as stab vests and pepper sprays.**

People deserve to live in peace and safety, free from harassment, intimidation, vandalism and fear. More Gardaí on the beat, working in communities they know serving people they know, can make a real impact on crime and anti-social behaviour.

More Gardaí visible in communities they know, serving people they know

Labour's commitment is to a system of community policing where Gardaí participate in the community and respond to the needs of that community and where the community participates in its own policing and supports the Gardaí.

What Labour will do:

- Triple the number of community Gardaí to 1500 within three years.
- Place a much greater emphasis on community policing throughout the force, including recognition of the special status of the Community Garda. This will involve a much greater physical presence on the ground – walking the beat, visible on public transport, visiting schools.
- Community Gardaí will stay working in their communities for significant periods of time and will not be diverted from community duties at the drop of a hat. Garda organisational structures will be amended to reflect a focus on community-based policing and an acknowledgement of the value of the Gardaí involved in it.
- Community policing will be a serious career option for Gardaí, in which they can reasonably expect advancement.
- Develop new community policing structures, through local policing forums in individual communities, to reconnect the Gardaí and local communities in a spirit of genuine partnership. A successful community policing programme will mean that residents will be able to personally name their community Garda – the contact point responsible for the visible policing of their community.
- A real commitment to visible and effective community policing will require the recruitment of additional Gardaí and not the diversion of serving members. This will mean a policing service of at least 15,000 in the lifetime of the next government, even allowing for the numbers of existing Gardaí who are released back into core

policing duties through greater civilianisation and more effective rostering. Further increases in Garda numbers would follow from recommendations to government by the Garda Authority.

- Increase recruitment from areas with the worst crime and anti-social behaviour and from minorities.
- Garda training will be enhanced in key areas including: firearms training, driver training, legal training, urban crowd control, traffic management, human rights, domestic violence and sexual offences. This will include shared training with members of the PSNI.
- Training of Garda recruits will be reformed to include time spent in a mainstream third level institution, in an urban setting.

Anti-social behaviour

Our response to anti-social behaviour is not confined to just a policing plan.

We will:

- Increase the number of Juvenile Liaison Officers and increase the resources for the Probation & Welfare system.
- Fund and commence all sections of the Children Act 2001.
- Set up new sporting and leisure activities, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Extend the Drugs Court and a system of restorative justice that has proved so successful in dealing with young offenders in other jurisdictions.
- Mandate the proposed Sport and Recreation Ireland in partnership with the Department of Justice, the Garda and the probation service to develop physical activity programmes for young offenders, including adventure/outward bound type programmes.

JUSTICE AND LAW REFORM

The Challenge

The scale and nature of criminal activity in Ireland is changing.

On the one hand, there has been a serious escalation in gangland crime. We have seen the terrible death toll as drug gangs feud on our streets. Sadly, as Labour had repeatedly warned, the innocent have become caught in the cross-fire. We cannot, as a country, as a people, shrug our shoulders as the gangsters kill each other. We cannot allow life to become cheap.

At the same time, Labour is all too aware of the damage done by anti-social behaviour. We know the fear and intimidation suffered by the victims, who are often themselves vulnerable people. Labour has always stood for civil rights. But we must also stand with those who seek only the quiet enjoyment of their neighbourhood and their community.

Both the growth of gangland crime, and the worsening problem of anti-social behaviour contribute to an undermining of confidence in the legal code and in the administration of justice. They expose weaknesses in a justice system which is often antiquated, inaccessible, remote, and unresponsive to the needs of contemporary Ireland.

A comprehensive process of reform is required, including the courts, the prisons, the probation service and the system of juvenile justice.

Ireland can do better

Labour is committed to ensuring that people can go about their daily lives, free from fear and harassment. We are committed to reform of our legal and administrative structures to promote a secure, free, fair and just society.

What Labour will do

Organised crime, drugs and proceeds of crime

Effective policing is smart policing, using the tactics of the 21st Century to penetrate and bring down highly organised gangs of motivated and ruthless individuals.

Organised gangs thrive in a climate of fear. It is this climate of fear and coercion that is the greatest stumbling block in tackling organised crime. The Gardaí need the resources to assure innocent people under threat that their complaints will be dealt with thoroughly and in safety.

- As proposed by the Court of Criminal Appeal, Labour in government will put an effective and reliable Garda witness protection programme on a proper statutory footing.
- We will ensure that resources are available to have both the Criminal Assets Bureau and Garda Regional Drugs Units operational on the ground throughout the country.

Juvenile Justice

We recognise a deepening public disquiet about the juvenile justice system. Despite the dedication of many, it is a system that regularly fails the children who come in contact with it, deeply frustrates the professionals who work in it and unnecessarily exposes the wider community to criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

The response to juvenile offending in Ireland is fragmented, uncoordinated and sometimes self-contradictory. It fails to provide at risk young people with constructive alternatives and opportunities in life so that they would not consider crime either feasible or desirable.

- We will give the National Children's Office, under the Minister for Children, a statutory mandate, responsibility and resources for youth justice. It will co-ordinate a cohesive and organised service provision and will ensure that high standards of rights protection are maintained by all agencies including the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Health and Children, the Garda Síochána, the Probation and Welfare Service, the Courts Service, the Prison Service, the HSE and the Special Residential Services Board.
- The National Children's Office will have its own vote, its own accounting officer and have political accountability to its own Minister.

Child Detention Places

At times as many as 40 per cent of places in our child detention schools are occupied by children who have not been sentenced for a criminal offence but have been remanded there due to behaviour or emotional needs.

The misplacement of a significant proportion of the population results from the fact that many young people are placed not on the basis of need but on the basis of which places are available.

One of the main difficulties facing the juvenile justice system is recruiting and retaining suitable, qualified and experienced staff. And the high level of staff turnover poses difficulties in creating a stable environment for the children. Many justice and welfare centres are operating well below full capacity due to difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced staff.

Children Act

The Children Act 2001 is an important piece of progressive legislation. The Children Act could have been a very significant stepping stone towards a better way of doing things but the reality is that there has been a complete failure to create an effective system to implement the Act. The professional and other resources necessary to make implementation fully effective have not been made available.

What Labour will do:

- **Fully implement the Children Act 2001.**
- Invest resources in community and statutory services to adequately support the effective implementation of the Act.
- Put in place appropriate and comprehensive support services and resource the HSE to fulfil its child protection functions in order to prevent children becoming involved in conflict with the law.
- Allocate resources to provide rehabilitative and support services for children and young people with drug or alcohol problems and services for children and young people with mental health difficulties.
- Introduce bail supervision and support schemes to avoid children committing crimes on bail
- Give priority to the preventive elements of the 2001 Act and to the investment of resources in community and statutory services necessary to support these measures, including adequate staffing of the social welfare service.
- Emphasise the resourcing of community-based, non-custodial options and the provision of community supervision services, step-down facilities and after-care services.
- **End the practice of placing non-offending children in facilities for offenders. Children with severe emotional or behavioural problems should not be placed in facilities for offenders, including juvenile justice institutions or the adult prison system.**
- Correct the practice of misplacing children in Children Detention Schools.
- Provide specialised community services (and if necessary residential services) to meet the needs of certain at-risk children and adolescents. These children include those with learning disabilities, acute psychiatric illnesses, children requiring medically supervised detoxification for drug use, persistent school non-attendees and those at risk of leaving home. Culturally appropriate prevention services are needed to tackle the disproportionate representation of children from the Travelling Community in detention.
- Fill vacancies in the social work service to provide children with access to care and counselling services without delays.
- Implement a drive to recruit and retain suitable, qualified and experienced staff.

A comprehensive process of reform is required, including the courts, the prisons, the probation service, and the system of juvenile justice.

Joyriding

In many estates and neighbourhoods residents still live in dread of so-called 'joyriders'.

- **We will provide in law for an offence of joyriding: directing or participating in the unlawful taking of a vehicle for the purposes of dangerous driving in a public place.**
- And we will support and resource education and training programmes and dedicated mentoring support aimed at this segment of the youth population. Restorative justice also has its role, as well as community service orders.

The Courts

What Labour will do:

- Legislate for a flexible mechanism for allocating cases, as between the Circuit and High (Central Criminal) Courts, to the court and venue best placed to ensure a fair and speedy trial.
- **Increase the number of judges available to hear criminal trials and we will reduce the summer vacation for the Circuit Court from its present 8 weeks.**
- In the Dublin area, we will put in place local district courts in each of the main areas of the city and county. In this way, the local judges can build up an understanding of the impact of anti-social behaviour, including drug abuse and drug pushing, on local communities, get to know the offending families, acquire an appreciation of local needs in terms of the community sanctions and community service orders they impose and so discharge in a visible way their obligations to the community for the way they run its court.
- Establish a full-time Court of Criminal Appeal and give it jurisdiction to hear appeals in bail cases.
- **Review the current structure of the Legal Aid system to improve access to the courts.**
- We believe that wherever possible child custody and access cases should be dealt with through mediation and that the state should develop appropriate mediation structures.
- Introduce case management procedures for criminal trials including a preliminary hearing designed to resolve the issues which ought to be agreed in advance of trial.

This would include the need to:

- Identify areas in which evidence should be agreed or admitted, including admission of expert reports
- Identify any evidence which might require to be taken by video-link and to make arrangements for the taking of such evidence
- Ascertain any other arrangements which may have to be made regarding information technology, use of interpreters or other facilities
- Enable the determination of those types of issue of admissibility of evidence which are capable of being dealt with prior to trial
- Receive and deal with a plea of guilty or fix a hearing for sentencing
- Identify any issue of insanity or fitness to plead which may arise
- Enable the court to establish the likely length of the trial
- Cooperation by an accused – having received legal advice – with the objectives of the preliminary hearing will be recognised as a factor to which the court will give consideration when imposing sentence if there is a conviction, in the same way as it may take into account the stage at which a plea of guilty is made.

Sentences

The criminal courts show inconsistencies in their sentences. This is because there are no sentencing guidelines for the judiciary and consequently no consistency between judges.

What Labour will do:

- **Introduce a new Sentencing Act, which will provide for sentencing guidelines, binding on the courts, to reduce the disparities between sentences handed down in similar cases. The Act will specify aggravating and mitigating factors to be taken into account.**
- Putting the victim in fear of injury will be a serious aggravating factor in any offence against the person.
- Judges will be required to give reasons for their sentences and for any departure from the guidelines in individual cases.
- The DPP will be given the function of advising a court, by reference to the sentencing guidelines, as to the accepted range of appropriate sentences for the offence committed in the circumstances of the case.
- **Oblige all courts to give clear and adequate reasons for their decisions and to record in writing the reasons for decisions involving a custodial sentence.**
- Enact comprehensive legislation for the updating and indexation of fines in criminal statutes. We will give effect to the principle of equality of impact, so that a fine may be increased for more affluent offenders and decreased for offenders of more limited means.

Information, databases, etc.

There is a surprising lack of accessible information on the case management process in our criminal justice system. And the Gardaí, the courts and the prisons use different and incompatible counting systems.

We will create a national register of crime statistics, which will receive and process in a coherent and unified way the figures from all agencies involved in the criminal justice system, including a register of sentences.

Labour is committed to ensuring that people can go about their daily lives, free from fear and harassment. We are committed to reform of our legal and administrative structures to promote a secure, free, fair and just society.

Prisons

Our prison system is antiquated, expensive and ineffective. The reformation and rehabilitation of offenders is at best sporadic and at worst non-existent. On a daily basis prisoners, many of them able-bodied and capable, walk aimlessly around prison yards or are locked up to lie in bed for over 17 out of every 24 hours. Prison does nothing to prepare its inhabitants to lead a crime-free, socially responsible life.

What Labour will do:

- Consolidate and modernise our prison legislation, much of which dates from the nineteenth century.
- Both the Prisons Service and the Parole Board will be established by statute, independently of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- **Implement the recommendations of the National Economic and Social Forum Report on the Re-integration of Prisoners. We will introduce a comprehensive rehabilitation programme of positive sentence management based on individual needs analysis and a planned programme for all first offenders.**

This programme will:

- Plan for reintegration as the norm
- Provide personal and educational skills and fill any gaps in work, training, education, welfare etc.

- Treat mental or physical health problems and addictions
- Develop a special role for prison officers, the probation and welfare services and other training and education agencies
- Provide strong links from custody to the wider community
- Provide on-going support to former prisoners seeking and maintaining employment.

The jurisdiction of the Ombudsman will be extended to deal with complaints about the Prison Service.

Probation and Welfare Service

The Probation and Welfare Service continues to be under-staffed and under-resourced. There are too many people in prison who don't need to be there because the resources have not been made available to the probation service.

- We will provide a statutory footing and operational independence for the Probation and Welfare Service and we will give it a clearly defined role.
- **We will progressively increase staffing and resources in the Probation Service.**

Both the growth of gangland crime, and the worsening problem of anti-social behaviour contribute to an undermining of confidence in the legal code and in the administration of justice.

Alternative sanctions

Community-based sanctions are significantly less costly to implement than custodial sentences. Implementing community service orders costs about one-third of the cost to the public of implementing the custodial sentences that might otherwise be imposed.

What Labour will do:

- We will repeal the outdated and inadequate Probation of Offenders Act 1907 and we will enact new legislation to provide for a statutory institutional framework for the Service and additional non-custodial sanctions.
- **We will give the courts system the widest possible scope to make appropriate sentences, including restorative justice measures, probation and welfare services, and formal cautioning.**
- Ensure that offenders can be placed under a probation supervision order, under which conditions such as a curfew or staying away from certain areas can be attached. If offenders are not fully compliant, a term of imprisonment can be activated. They can also be sentenced to community service orders. Under these, an individual can be ordered to do up to 240 hours of community work.
- Ensure that those brought before the courts can also be ordered to undergo treatment for drugs or alcohol addiction. In the case of sex offenders, particularly those involved in internet child pornography, they can be ordered to participate in long-term therapy such as that offered by the Dublin-based Granada Institute.
- **We strongly favour restorative justice programmes and Community Service Orders. These should involve young offenders being required to confront the implications of their actions for the community, and where possible to be involved in cleaning up after those who have been involved in anti-social activity.**

- We also strongly support the concept underlying the Drug Referral Programme. There are currently only two community-based pilot reparation programmes in Ireland.

Victims of crime

Victims of crime are still treated by the criminal justice system as just another potential witness.

We will:

- Ensure that victims and their needs are at the heart of the justice process and that their rights to information, advice and other appropriate assistance are met effectively and efficiently.
- **Oblige Gardaí to maintain adequate contact, through identified liaison officers, with victims of crime and to report progress on the investigation and on the prosecution.**
- **Establish a Victims' Compensation Fund, to award compensation to victims of crime outside the normal loss and expense that individuals and businesses are normally insured against. The expenses of the Fund will be met by fines paid by offenders.**
- Work towards a new protocol for communications by the DPP with victims of crime, so as to improve the responsiveness of that office. We will enhance public confidence in the prosecutorial system through a system of dialogue between the DPP and the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, on general issues of prosecution policy.

Judicial conduct and training

It is necessary, in order to safeguard judicial independence, that judges who may be involved in issues of major controversy against the interests of the Executive are not answerable on a day-to-day basis to the government or the Oireachtas. We claim the entitlement to remove a judge from office only where standards are breached that have serious consequences for public confidence in the administration of justice.

We will:

- Legislate for a reformed, speedy and efficient procedure to secure judicial accountability, bearing in mind a proper respect for the independence of the courts and the separation of powers under our Constitution.
- **Introduce a code of judicial conduct and ethics, to be policed by the judges with professional and lay participation in an open, transparent manner that serves public confidence, in relation to matters that fall short of "impeachable" misbehaviour.**
- Enhance the existing minimal provisions for formal training and continuing education for judges.

Other law reforms

- **We will enact a Defamation Bill to reform the law of libel and slander. We will review the necessity for a counterbalancing Privacy Bill when the defamation bill is enacted and when the effects of the Bill in practice have been fully examined.**
- Comprehensive regulation of charities will be introduced as a priority.
- **We will introduce reforms of the law of contempt of court, including protection for journalists' sources in line with the European Convention on Human Rights.**

- We will legislate for post-mortem procedures and organ retention practice as recommended by the Madden Report on Post Mortem Practices and Procedures.
- We will legislate for a fair, transparent and clear cut system for human organ donation and consent procedures, so as to improve the availability of organs for patients in desperate need on waiting lists for transplants.
- We will legislate to provide clarity on issues of human fertility within the context of existing constitutional provisions.
- On the issue of abortion, we will legislate in accordance with the Supreme Court judgment in the X Case.

Amendments to the Constitution

In addition to the all-party commitment made for a referendum on the rights of the child, Labour favours the practice of incremental constitutional reform, in tandem with local, European and general elections.

Within that time frame, our priorities include:

- **An amendment to permit polling at local, European and general elections to be held over two days, e.g. a Saturday and Sunday, rather than being confined to one as at present.**
- Replacing the outdated provisions dealing with the place of women in the home with a gender-neutral provision on the role of family members and carers who work in the home.
- A new provision on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- An amendment replacing the present excessively restrictive rules against revealing discussions that took place at government meetings, in favour of a more open provision.

ACHIEVING FULL CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL

The Challenge

The Labour Party has a long and proud record of driving the equality agenda in Ireland. From decriminalising homosexual relations to providing for the availability of contraceptives and divorce, to legislating for women's equality in the workplace, to the passing of employment equality and equal status legislation, Labour has led the fight for an equal Ireland. However, the fight for effective and practical equality and human dignity for everyone is not yet won.

More than 30 years after it became a statutory entitlement, the pay gap between men and women has yet to be bridged. Large sectors of the economy still depend on low-paid, often part-time 'women's work'. Care for others – particularly care in the home – continues to be undervalued, enabling the state to obtain social services on the cheap, at the expense of one gender and to the benefit of the other.

Women continue to be under-represented – if they are there at all – in decision-making arenas. The government target of a minimum 40 per cent of each gender on State boards has not been realised. The percentage of women in the Dáil has plateaued at 13 per cent and only one-fifth of local councillors are women.

People with disabilities must also be enabled to participate fully in society. Yet current legislation does not recognise the right of disabled people to a similar standard of living as could reasonably be expected by any other citizen of the state. Our disability legislation creates no entitlements, other than an entitlement to be assessed as to one's needs, and it places no obligation on the state to meet those needs. As a result, persons with disabilities and their families are cast back on the cap-in-hand, hand-to-mouth provision of services, unable to plan for their long-term future.

More generally, changes in Irish society and the lives of its citizens have fast outpaced the law which is supposed to serve and protect them. There are currently over 120,000 cohabiting heterosexual unmarried couples and more than 2,000 gay couples in Ireland. They have no automatic rights of inheritance, no rights if their partner is sick and needs treatment and no right to apply to adopt, simply because they are not married. This discrimination is particularly acute in relation to gay couples, who do not have the right to marry even if they would like to.

The fact that legal protection is largely confined to traditional family units does not stop other kinds of families from getting on with their lives, but it places them under significant strain. We believe that the state has a duty to these families and others suffering from the effects of inequality in our society.

Ireland can do better

The Labour Party is committed to the vision of its founder James Connolly: 'to close the gap between what is and what ought to be'. We can make Ireland a fairer society through reform of our laws and through using the resources available to us to improve the quality of life for those who have suffered from historic and entrenched discrimination and disadvantage.

What Labour will do

Disability

Labour remains committed to an approach based on rights, equality and participation. We will work to vindicate the rights of people with disabilities to education, health, housing and work and to participate in an inclusive manner in the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

People with a disability are entitled to a strong, enforceable legal right to an assessment of their needs in relation to education, healthcare, training and residential services. That right must be underpinned by the resources to ensure that waiting lists are tackled quickly, in a planned way and in proper consultation.

Our central policy commitment is short, specific and, we believe, will effect a radical change.

What Labour will do:

- **At present, individual assessments of the needs of persons with a disability are ongoing. These assessments of need will be expedited and completed.**
- **At the end of a two year period, the information extracted from these assessments will have been compiled into a national database of disability needs. The database information will be costed, in a process that is objective and independent and in which all stakeholders can have confidence.**
- **Labour in government will use these independently arrived at costing figures to commit the necessary resources to deliver the level of service that each individual is entitled to under his or her own assessment of need.**
- Allowing for inflation and for a necessary lead-in period to deliver new services and enhance existing ones, a comprehensive five year plan will be published.

- The funds necessary to deliver on this comprehensive plan will be withdrawn from the annual Estimates and Budget procedure and, for the duration of the plan, will be charged directly on the Central Fund as an ongoing statutory commitment and entitlement.
- We are committed to ensuring that public transport is made wheel chair accessible. And we will ensure that taxi drivers who have benefited from reductions in VAT and VRT for the purchase of wheelchair accessible taxis actually provide the service for which they were given these tax concessions, by making themselves available to wheelchair users when requested.
- We will review the stringent regulations governing the disabled drivers and disabled passengers tax concessions.
- We will carry out a root and branch review of the building regulations, which are completely unsuitable for the needs of people with disabilities, and of the measures to ensure compliance with those regulations. We aim to ensure that at least 3 per cent of all new houses and apartments are suited to the needs of an ageing population and of persons with a disability.

As part of this approach, Labour in government will recognise the philosophy of "Independent Living" for people with disabilities. Independent living means practical measures to enable a person with a disability to make his or her own arrangements for personal assistance, transport, access, and so on.

Independent Living measures include enabling people with disabilities to employ personal assistants and so take control of their own lives. Funding for independent living means resourcing people with disabilities, and tailoring services to meet individual requirements.

Gay Rights

Labour's Civil Union Bill was defeated by the present government parties. In government, Labour will re-introduce and enact this legislation. The Bill will create a status relationship equivalent to marriage for the benefit of people who are of the same sex and who, under the current constitutional understanding of marriage, cannot marry each other. In most respects, the same rules that apply to marriage will apply to civil unions.

- **Partners in a civil union will have the same rights, privileges and benefits and be subject to the same obligations, penalties and other sanctions as those that apply to spouses in a marriage.**
- They will also be responsible for the support of one another and for any dependent child to the same degree and in the same manner as married persons.
- The Bill provides that parties to a civil union who are living together may apply to adopt a child. The Bill also states that all adoption decisions must be made in the best long-term interests of the child.

Our objective, in due course, is to bring about constitutional change to provide for full equality between heterosexual and homosexual couples. In addition, Labour will take a number of measures to improve the position and well-being of lesbian, gay and transgendered citizens in our society.

We will:

- Put in place policies to tackle homophobic bullying in our second level education system.
- Amend employment equality legislation to prohibit schools from discriminating against their employees on the grounds of sexual orientation or marital status.

- Introduce a gender recognition act to provide transgendered people with the right to realise their gender identity.
- Introduce a gay and lesbian strand to the National Anti-Poverty Strategy based on updated research on poverty issues among gay and lesbian people.
- Provide for a lesbian and gay community-building framework within the Pobal Strategic Plan and amend the legislation governing Community Development Projects to allow for non-locality based community projects
- Appoint an official in the Department of Health to have responsibility for advising the Minister on LGBT health issues and for liaising with the LGBT community on same. We are committed to on-going funding of gay HIV strategies.
- Create a national LGBT monitoring and advisory committee, under the aegis of a relevant government department

Rights of the Child

- **Labour shares the commitment of all political parties to put to the people, as an immediate priority, an appropriate constitutional amendment to enshrine in explicit form the rights of the child.**
- The wording will reflect the special vulnerabilities and dependencies of children and the consequent obligations owed to them, both by their families and by the State, and will conform to the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Labour is also committed, within 12 months of entering office, to bring all child protection legislation, including the Children Act 2001, finally into force and to adequately resourcing that legislation.

Irish-born emigrants

In harsher times Irish emigrants made a vital difference to those left behind, yet they have been sorely neglected by the State. In particular, the generation who sent back the equivalent of €3.5 billion in remittances during the 1950s and 1960s deserve to be cared for and assisted in their retirement. We are committed to providing greater assistance and support to Irish emigrants, particularly those who have fallen on hard times. It is right and fair that we extend our duty of care and responsibility to these Irish-born citizens.

In government we will implement the government's Taskforce on Policy Regarding Emigrants in full. In particular, we will:

- **Establish an Agency for the Irish Abroad.**
- Support emigrant representation in the Seanad for Irish communities overseas.
- Expand the President's Gift on Reaching Age 100 to all Irish born citizens provided they can supply a valid birth or baptismal certificate.
- **Mandate RTÉ to broadcast in the UK.**
- Significantly increase funding allocations for services to the Irish abroad, particularly those experiencing hardship.
- Allow emigrant representative groups representing Irish-born citizens abroad to apply to the Dormant Accounts Disbursement Board for funding.
- Work to improve services to Irish-born female emigrants.
- Lobby the US government to legalise the position of illegal Irish immigrants in the US while expanding opportunities for US citizens to live and work in Ireland.
- Ensure all Irish-born emigrant pensioners who return to live in Ireland receive social welfare entitlements equal to those enjoyed by Irish pensioners.

- Increase support for Irish-born citizens living overseas who wish to return either permanently or on holidays to Ireland.
- Ensure all Irish-born emigrant pensioners have the right to free travel on public transport in Ireland.

Gender Equality

What Labour will do:

- Labour is committed to ensuring that state bodies and agencies achieve at least 40 per cent representation of each gender on their boards and governing bodies. We will give statutory force to that objective and we will ensure that the social partners and other nominating bodies are bound by the same target.
- **We will tie public funding for political parties to the level of participation by women as public representatives those parties achieve. Demanding targets for all parties – including our own – will be set out in legislation.**
Payments to a qualified party under the Electoral Act will be reduced unless at least 33 per cent of its candidates are women. That 33 per cent target figure will apply to elections taking place from 2012, and will be increased to 40 per cent from 2019. Provision will be made for circumstances where a high proportion of candidates elected are women.
- We believe that it is in the public interest that public and private organisations are transparent in their recruitment and remuneration policies as they pertain to male and female staff.

To aid this policy, we will require large public bodies and large private companies to publish the average whole time equivalent salary for male and female members of staff on an annual basis.

Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women

The insidious and increasing prevalence of domestic violence and violence against women continues to be one of the most critical issues confronting Irish society. We are committed to tackling and eradicating domestic violence and violence against women. This means an integrated response tackling domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, prostitution, trafficking and pornography through providing supports and safety for the woman, holding accountable and sanctioning the perpetrator and those who gain economically from the abuse and commodification of women, and giving political leadership in Irish society by holding the State ultimately responsible for the safety of women.

Our first priority is a commitment to adequate and guaranteed funding for frontline services. It is totally unacceptable that women in emergency need throughout the country do not have access to support, help and counselling. Labour in government will address this deficit. We will provide, where missing, and upgrade, where inadequate, the physical infrastructure of appropriate refuges and places of safety.

A second immediate priority is reform of the courts system, civil and criminal, learning from best international experience. We will ensure appropriate locations and adequate time are provided, with dedicated and experienced judges to deal with domestic violence cases. Foremost among necessary court reforms is the need to tackle the delay in hearing cases and to have ready access to the courts for urgent applications, regardless of where in Ireland the applicant lives.

- **We will improve Garda training in the handling of domestic abuse cases and ensure swifter penalties for the breach of barring orders.**
- **We will legislate in Ireland and work with our European partners to tackle human trafficking.**
- We will develop integrated responses to sex trafficking which do not distinguish between a 'free' or 'forced' entry route into prostitution and which do not carry the threat of forced repatriation to country of origin.

- Given the interconnections between prostitution, trafficking and organised crime, the potential for sustained economic and fiscal sanctions for organisers and traffickers based on the Criminal Assets Bureau model will be investigated.

Non-marital families

Labour accepts of course that the traditional family continues to contribute enormously to the common good and that it should be given special protection in the Constitution. However, while married life and family life are, for many people, clearly connected, it is equally clear that family life and married life are not in modern conditions either identical or inextricably linked. We believe that other forms of family life can and should be given constitutional recognition and protection.

We see no conflict in proposing that the Constitution should recognise family life in general while giving special protection to the family based on marriage.

This is the approach that was favoured by the Constitution Review Group, which reported in 1996. That group recommended that the State should guarantee to all individuals respect for their family life "whether based on marriage or not".

- **We endorse, and will act upon, those recommendations first made in 1996. A referendum on the rights of the child will also make it clear that the Constitution's recognition of "The Family" – parents and children living together – extends to non-marital families.**
- As between cohabiting couples, Labour will act on the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission and the Colley Report to ensure that, although these couples have opted not to get married and so have opted out of the full system of mutual rights and obligations that govern marriage, the tax and social welfare codes and property and succession laws are suitably adapted in recognition and support of long-term relationships.
- We will modernise the legal framework governing rights and responsibilities of unmarried fathers.

Travellers

Travellers are native to Ireland; they have been part of Irish society for centuries. They have historically been marginalised and, as a result, the Traveller population experiences institutionalised deprivation and higher likelihoods of poor education, poor health, poor living conditions, poor relations with the law, unemployment and a markedly poor life expectancy.

Labour is convinced that, working in a spirit of mutual respect, the difficulties encountered by a population of around 30,000 individuals are neither inevitable nor insurmountable. There is no shortage of policies, programmes and plans to deal with the issues, either in general terms or in relation to specifics. What is lacking is the political will to drive these programmes forward. And a commitment to deliver them in partnership and co-responsibility with Travellers themselves, rather than handing them down from on high.

- Labour in government will establish a National Office for Travellers' Affairs, similar to the National Children's Office. The National Office will have responsibility for drawing together and overseeing delivery in relation to the various Traveller-specific programmes and plans

of individual government Departments, agencies and local authorities (for example, the Travellers' health programmes of the HSE, the Travellers' education programmes of the Department of Education).

- The Office will hold bodies to account for their failure to draw up plans, failure to allocate resources to those plans or failure to deliver on their plans. Where a Department or agency is in default of its obligations, the Office will have statutory power to take over the Budgets and the executive and financial responsibilities of those bodies and to direct officials to carry out official plans within stated and specific timescales.
- The National Office and representative Traveller bodies will also be responsible for promoting relations between Travellers and other members of the community, to ensure that rights are accompanied by a recognition of corresponding responsibilities, on both sides of the community.

We can make Ireland a fairer society through reform of our laws and through using the resources available to us to improve the quality of life for those who have suffered from historic and entrenched discrimination and disadvantage.

CHERISHING CHILDHOOD

The Challenge

Childhood is precious. Childhood is the time when children begin to encounter the world and learn how to learn. Childhood should be a safe and protected time, when every child is nurtured and allowed to develop to the fullness of their human potential.

Yet, as a country, our record of protecting children and childhood is poor. We have a terrible legacy of institutional and other abuse, with which our society must still cope, and we have not yet established the Rights of Children in our constitution.

One in every nine children lives in poverty. As the children's author, J.K. Rowling has written "Poverty is a bad place to live on your own, but the worst place on earth if you have a child with you". Child poverty results in incalculable loss of human potential, and stores up problems for which society continues to pay for decades.

There are deep deficiencies in our health service that severely affect children. Across a range of areas, the provision of health services, including mental health, operates on an emergency basis, rather than on a preventative base. We repeatedly fail to tackle problems before they become acute, whether it be in terms of basic developmental checks, or the provision of a child psychology service in our schools. Irish children suffer from some of the worst rates of alcohol and drug abuse in Europe. Suicide among children and young adults is a growing reality of Irish life.

Childcare policy, in so far as it exists, is work-focused, rather than child focused. Our society places too much strain on the families of young children, to balance the need to earn a living and still have time for each other. There is no structured system of pre-school education and the schools to which we send our children are under-resourced, over-crowded and poorly designed.

That protected space of childhood is being encroached on by pressures of commercialism, including the premature sexualisation of young people. Family life is under the increasing strain of longer commutes and less time at home, which places strains on both parents and children.

Sport, recreation and play are central parts of a child's life, just as is the development of artistic ability and awareness. Again, provision in these areas has a long way to go before Ireland can claim to be offering the best to our children.

Ireland can do better

Ireland can and should be the best place in the world to be a child. An Irish childhood should mean protection and security, nurturing and opportunity. Irish children should benefit from every possible educational and developmental opportunity, and we should not wait until problems become acute before we help a child.

What Labour will do

Constitutional Change

Labour shares the commitment of all political parties to put to the people, as a priority, an appropriate constitutional amendment to enshrine in explicit form the rights of the child.

The wording will reflect the special vulnerabilities and dependencies of children and the consequent obligations owed to them, both by their families and by the State, and will conform to the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Labour is also committed, within 12 months of entering office, to bring all child protection legislation, including the Children Act 2001, finally into force and to adequately resourcing that legislation.

Social welfare proposals for children

Child poverty leads to an incalculable loss of human potential.

We will:

- In the context of developing policy on support for families with children, including the early years subsidy, FIS and CDAs, we will examine reform options including a supplementary child benefit.
- We will substantially improve rates of payment under the Back to School allowance scheme, introduce a once-off payment for children entering second level education and review the income limits.
- Restructure support for one-parent families to enable those parenting alone to meet their

obligations, support themselves in work and, if they choose, form sustainable relationships.

Broadcasting And Advertising

Labour believes it is inappropriate for advertisers to target children, particularly where the advertising is promoting goods such as fast food which may be injurious to a child's well being. Children are entitled to a childhood that is, as far as practical, free from commercial pressures.

Accordingly, Labour will:

- Mandate RTÉ to provide a number of periods of children's programming during the day when there would be no advertising.
- Work at European level towards a ban on advertising aimed at children
- Prevent schools from becoming vehicles for commercial advertising. We will introduce a code of practice for schools to restrict this form of activity.

Childhood should be a safe and protected time, when every child is nurtured and allowed to develop to the fullness of their human potential.

Childcare and Pre-school Education

Labour is committed to the creation of a national child-centred learning-focused system of childcare and pre-school education which supports parental choice, and which puts children first.

Our proposals fall under five headings:

Pre-school education

- **Provide one year of free pre-school education (five half days per week) for every child.**

Time to be a Parent

- Move towards paid Parental Leave, modelled on Maternity Benefit, for up to one year, with an option for fathers to take part of that time.
- **A legal right to take up to three years career break. We will explore appropriate fiscal support for employers.**
- A right to part-time work, subject to reasonable conditions.

Meeting the Cost to Parents

- We will progressively increase early childhood payments so that families receive €50 per week per child, from expiration of maternity leave to the child entering state-subsidised pre-school, and €25 per week when the child is in their pre-school year and in primary school.

Childcare Places

- Work with providers to expand the number of childcare places.
- Provide childcare facilities established and run directly by the state, or other non-profit entities.
- **Ensure that childcare facilities are integrated into plans for residential developments.**
- Where possible develop childcare facilities at or near primary schools.

- Build childcare and early education facilities into plans for new primary schools.
- Increase support for childcare centres in disadvantaged areas.
- Promote supervised after-school activities in schools and a wide range of positive after-school options for children.
- Ensure adequate provision of primary school places, to prevent feedback of pressure on childcare places.

Enhancing Quality

- **Develop standards for childcare which include developmental and educational goals, not just bricks and mortar regulations.**
- Require registration of all childcare facilities and providers, including for over-6s, as the basis on which there can be positive engagement to enhance skills.
- Promote the registration of childminders, and awareness of the income disregard scheme, to provide a basis for positive engagement to enhance the quality of childminding.
- Develop outreach services to enhance the skills of childcare workers and childminders, linked to resource centres supporting networks of childminders.
- Require care-settings to include outdoor play areas.
- Develop an inspectorate of facilities comprised of childcare professionals.
- Develop a system of information and consultation with parents.
- Develop a quality-mark system for childcare facilities.
- Garda clearance for all childcare staff.

Health Care for Children

Access to health care is a real issue for children. In general, there is a failure to develop early warning systems and preventative approaches, and there are deep inequalities in access to healthcare among children of different backgrounds. Labour favours more focus on early diagnosis of developmental and health problems (including mental health), and speedy action to cut waiting lists for children.

We will:

- **Provide free health insurance for every child up to age 16.**
- **Provide a GP visit card to all children up to age 5.**
- **Extend medical eligibility to 40 per cent of the population, increasing income thresholds so as to favour families with children.**
- Ensure that the necessary specialists are recruited to bring provision for all children up to the highest standard.
- Ensure adequate numbers of public health nurses are in place to carry out routine developmental checks for all children at appropriate stages.
- Increase the number of national educational psychologists to 400 within the first term of government and allocate a full-time educational psychologist to schools on a clustering basis.
- **Act to solve the crisis in child and adolescent psychiatric services by increasing specialist out-patient teams by 50 per cent and bringing established teams up to the recommended staffing complement.**
- Ensure early intervention including a Youth Mental Health Initiative aimed at teachers and other adults who have frequent contact with young people.
- Develop specialist child and adolescent intellectual disability services, establish

specialist eating disorder services, develop multi-disciplinary teams nationally to deal with addiction and increase the in-patient facilities to meet the needs of the 0-15 year-old age group and the in-patient needs of the 16-17 year-old age group.

- Tackle childhood obesity through education and measures to promote sport and exercise.

Art and Sport For Kids

A comprehensive programme for investment and reform in our schools is outlined elsewhere in this document. But learning is not confined to the formal curriculum. Children also benefit enormously from sporting and artistic activities which take place in the school, or a club, or in their local community. Labour is determined to support these activities. Our proposals on the Arts and Sport are set out in detail elsewhere in this manifesto. Particular measures of relevance to children include:

- Vouchers for music lessons at primary level to ensure where practicable, 30 hours of free tuition by qualified teachers is available to all students during one designated year.
- Coordinated strategies for Youth Arts development between relevant government departments and agencies.
- Making PE a Junior and Leaving Cert Subject, with points for college entry.
- Continued expansion of the number of community playgrounds.

Youth Initiative

Labour is committed to giving all our young people the best chance in life. What young people do in their free time has significant implications for their development as adults. Labour is proposing to establish after-school and summer recreation programmes for young people. These programmes will offer young people the opportunity to engage in positive and constructive activities during their spare time. It is also hoped that these activity programmes will function as youth diversionary programmes, deterring young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

What we will do:

- **Establish arts and sports-based after-school and summer recreation programmes which will provide diversionary and supervised activities for young people.**
- School buildings will serve an important function as the focal point and primary location for many of the youth schemes, providing halls, basketball courts, pitches/fields etc. We will address insurance costs by embarking on a broad review of the school insurance system.
- In addition to school facilities, the schemes will work in partnership with local community sports clubs, making use of facilities such as GAA, soccer and rugby pitches, tennis courts and swimming-pools.
- The schemes will be staffed in part by third-level students in a system similar to the Student Summer Job Scheme that ran successfully from 1993 to 2002. In addition to third-level students, the schemes will employ a small number of more senior staff experienced in working with children or in sports organisations to manage each individual programme.
- The schemes will be run at a local government level. Labour will appoint a full-time youth recreation co-ordinator for each local authority. The main responsibility of the post will be to co-ordinate the schedule; employ staff; and

liaise with school representatives, local sports clubs, the Gardaí and other relevant parties in designing and running activities.

- Labour will ensure that schemes are attended by adolescents from a wide range of social backgrounds.
- We will tailor activities to meet the interests of young people by consulting with young people prior to setting up the scheme and during operation of the scheme.
- The schemes will include a wide range of sports and activities to appeal to boys and girls of different ages.

Youth Work

Labour will ensure the full and complete rolling out of the 2001 Youth Work Act and the 2003-2007 National Youth Work Development Plan. We will support a new Youth Work Development Plan for 2007-2011. We are committed to a vibrant and active voluntary youth work sector. We want to see an enhanced partnership between local voluntary youth services and VECs based on mutual trust and a shared vision. In particular we will support this model by:

- **Developing quality, relevant and accessible facilities and services for young people. There should be a quality multi-purpose youth facility in every major urban centre with more than 5,000 people.**
- Combining relevant funding from Youth Affairs, Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund, other exchequer sources, local authority funding, private sector capital, philanthropic funds and new public resources where necessary to support these quality facilities and services.
- Providing for properly resourced staff to run facilities and services.
- Using resources from the above to create for the first time a capital fund for youth work and youth services at local level.

AN AGE FRIENDLY SOCIETY

The Challenge

Ireland faces a demographic revolution for which it is largely unprepared. Over the coming decades the number of citizens aged over 65 is set to double, while the number of those living beyond 85 will treble. Advances in medicine, diet and incomes have transformed the nature of old age, but they have also changed our expectations of it. Senior citizens are more active, remain independent for longer and expect to partake fully in society.

Yet society has failed to respond to these changes with public policies capable of meeting these new expectations and satisfying these needs. The increased longevity of our population is a cause for celebration. This is not a problem, but rather an opportunity. It is an opportunity for our older citizens to avail of activities, opportunities and resources that they did not have before and it is an opportunity for society as a whole to avail of their wisdom, skills and resources.

Among the primary requirements for the enjoyment of the older years are adequate incomes and good health services, including long-term care. While virtually all older people want to continue to live in their own homes, and the vast majority succeeds in doing so, Ireland lacks a coherent and rational system for supporting those who can stay at home, and caring for those who cannot.

Older people face particular forms of discrimination and are often treated as invisible by the state and by wider society. In a world that can be heavily youth-focused, the contribution that older people make must be recognised. However, we should go beyond simply giving our senior citizens their due to ask what we can do to actively improve their quality of life. We need to move the debate about aging on from health and maintenance alone to how older people can be enabled to make the best of their senior years.

Our challenge is to create An Age Friendly Society. To succeed, we need to introduce fundamental change across the full spectrum of public policy.

Ireland can do better

The Labour Party wants to create an Age Friendly Society which ensures that our older citizens are able to enjoy the prosperity that they have created, the security to which they are entitled and the care and services they require, and can play a full part in the life of the community.

What Labour will do

An Age Friendly Society

It is the responsibility of government to create An Age Friendly Society as recommended by the Council on Ageing and Older People. Labour's strategy for senior citizens will be founded on the UN Principles for Older Persons: Independence, Participation, Care, Self-fulfilment and Dignity.

Older-Friendly Government

Improving and enhancing the lives of our older citizens requires a whole of government approach.

We will establish an Office for Senior Citizens, similar in design to the Office for Children, to address issues relating to aging from a 'whole of government' perspective.

There are few groups in society more vulnerable, or dependent on others to assert rights on their behalf, than older people.

We will establish an ombudsman for older people

We will end discrimination against older people, including:

- **We will ensure that upper age limits do not apply to screening services.**
- We will implement a programme of training in the health services to ensure that older people are not treated in a discriminatory manner.
- We will change the legislation which prevents people aged 70 and over from serving on juries. Everyone will be eligible to serve but people over 65 will be excusable as of right.
- We will change other legislation which imposes an upper age limit on people serving on certain state boards.

Income Adequacy

Older people, like all others, need an adequate income in order to avoid poverty and to enjoy a good quality of life. The State Pension needs to be significantly enhanced in order to provide older people with an adequate income.

What Labour will do:

- **Raise the level of the State non-Contributory pension to €300 by 2012.**
- Introduce a National Waiver Scheme to meet the cost of service charges in all areas – this would replace the current waiver scheme and also provide assistance to those people who cannot avail of the waiver scheme because the services are provided by private companies.
- Allow non-contributory pensioners to earn money from self-employment as well as employment without affecting their pension.
- Provide specific training programmes for older people who wish to work or be self-employed.
- **We will introduce a more flexible approach to retirement so that those who wish to work beyond 65, and are capable of doing so, will have a statutory entitlement to protection against being required to retire on grounds of age subject to necessary exceptions (e.g. in defence and security).**

Active Aging and Full Participation

Older people are entitled to live active lives, to avail of opportunities for education and personal development, and to play a full part in the life of the community.

Labour will:

- Develop an 'Out And About' €1 ticket scheme, which will allow people over 65 access to sporting and cultural venues. We will include relevant state-supported cultural venues, and invite major sporting organisations to participate. Our goal is to provide older people with access to theatres, concert venues, sports stadia for €1. Bringing the scheme into operation will require negotiation with major sporting and cultural organisations, but we believe they will appreciate the benefits to them of such a scheme.
- Many seniors are anxious to continue to contribute their time, energy, skills and wisdom to their community and to their country. We will issue a call to service to all people over 65 years who wish to give of their time and skills, individually or in groups, and will establish a national database of older volunteers which can be accessed by voluntary organisations and NGOs, who will in turn be encouraged to call on the skills of older people.
- We will put in place a specific access to education programme for those older people who wish to avail of it.
- We will help voluntary organisations to arrange transport and other facilities to enable older people to avail of the opportunities provided by sports and culture programmes.

Personal Protection

We will introduce a number of measures to address the problems of elder abuse and to ensure protection for vulnerable adults

The vast majority of older people are able to make and implement their own decisions and they do not need any special protection. A minority does need protection and they are not adequately catered for at present. They need protection from abuse whether it is physical, mental, sexual or financial.

- We will put in place a protection system for vulnerable older people, including those who may be subject to physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse.
- We will also introduce substitute decision making and protection arrangements for vulnerable adults along the lines of the proposals put forward by the Law Reform Commission. This means that adults who are unable to make decisions may have adult guardians appointed to make decisions on their behalf.
- There will be an overall supervisory Public Guardian system to ensure that vulnerable adults are protected. This system will also supervise social welfare agency arrangements. Special protections will be provided for people in long stay care.

Our challenge is to create An Age Friendly Society. To succeed, we need to introduce fundamental change across the full spectrum of public policy.

Long term Care

Long term care arrangements for older people in Ireland are unplanned, inadequate, inequitable and under-funded. People who are in need of care, and especially those who have to leave their homes and go into long stay institutional care, are among the most vulnerable members of our society. A civilised society which respects human rights and promotes human dignity should be judged on the way care is provided for the elderly and on the quality of life provided by the care system.

What Labour will do:

- **Provide at least 1500 public long stay beds immediately, 600 of them in Dublin.**
- **Provide for an assessment of need leading to an individual care plan, based either on enabling a person to live at home with appropriate adaptations and/or supports, which includes financial supports and respite care, or on providing a supported living arrangement.**
- Equivalent financial arrangements should be made for people who need care and who live at home as for people who go into long stay care. These arrangements will be transparent and equitable.
- Legislate for the right to core community care services, such as home nursing, care assistant and home help services.
- Integrate community care and housing policies so that older people may have a range of residential options and supported living arrangements, including staying in their own homes with adaptations if necessary, sheltered housing, community homes and public and private nursing homes.
- Ensure that all care facilities, public and private, are subject to stringent quality control, through the establishment of a Patient Safety Authority.
- Ensure that all senior citizens are involved in decisions about their care.

- Put in place a system of substitute decision making for older people who are unable to make decisions for themselves.
- Continue the provision of free GP services to the over 70s. We will also expand the number of medical cards to cover 40 per cent of the population, which will ensure that a much greater number of older people will be eligible for a medical card.
- Tackle the deficiencies in the availability of Home Care Nurses, care assistants and home helps.
- **We will abolish the means test for carers.**
- Introduce tight regulation over equity release schemes, and provide independent advice, through the Financial Services Regulatory Authority, on the rights and options of seniors who own property.

Financing of Care

It is clear that only a small proportion of older people who need extensive care can afford to pay for this service from their own resources. Labour believes that the medical and nursing element of long-term care should be free of charge, as it would be to an older person with any other medical condition. We consider that those who can afford to do so should be required to pay for, or contribute towards, the cost of their personal care and maintenance. This should be subject to the person having an income for personal needs which is consistent with human dignity.

- We do not consider that family members other than spouses should be required to contribute towards the costs of the care of older people.
- We are opposed to the Harney scheme to appropriate a share of the family home to pay for long-stay care.

A FAIR PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

The Challenge

Labour believes that we must combine a strong, enterprising and innovative economy, enhancing productivity and value added with robust employment standards and fair terms and conditions of work. We reject the view that Ireland's prosperity requires employers to have free access to an unlimited supply of cheap, casualised labour in preference to a strong workforce enjoying collectively agreed terms and conditions of employment.

Across Europe there is a divergence between those who would promote a 'race to the bottom' in wages and employment standards, and those who insist on the maintenance of decent terms and conditions of employment and the European social model.

Labour will work to maintain the European social model, not as an alternative to, but as a foundation for an economy which is moving up the value chain and creating more and better jobs. We must ensure that Ireland does not build the next phase of its economic development on the basis of a low wage economy.

Economic growth results from a combination of both greater numbers in employment and higher productivity per employee. Ireland must seek a

balance between the prevention of labour shortages, which might create damaging bottlenecks in the economy, and the wholesale casualisation of labour. The latter poses the risk of an increased reliance on an exploited immigrant workforce and the consequent driving down of wages, particularly for less skilled employments.

We should seek to develop a Labour market where job security is enhanced through investment in people and their skills, and through policies which ensure that people made redundant retain a higher proportion of their earnings and are facilitated in rapidly finding new jobs.

A fair society does not treat immigrant workers as an end in themselves. Newcomers to Ireland have the same entitlement to dignity, family life, education, accommodation and other essential services as Irish nationals do. If we are to lay the foundations for an equitable and inclusive society, it is important that we adopt a holistic approach to immigration and the needs of a more diverse population.

Ireland can do better

Labour is committed to making Ireland a fair place to live and work, with strong enforcement of fair labour standards for all workers, fair immigration rules and conditions, and measures to promote the integration of newcomers to our society.

What Labour will do

Protecting Employment Standards

People working in Ireland are entitled to fair and rigorously enforced terms and conditions of employment.

What Labour will do:

- **Develop and extend the Registered Employment Agreements model which gives binding status to wage agreements reached at sectoral and employment level.**
- Better resource the Labour Inspectorate and ensure more effective enforcement and prosecution of offences.
- **Ensure targeted enforcement and Revenue inspections of the bogus subcontractor and agency worker issue in the construction sector.**
- Insist that contractors working for local authorities and other public bodies meet minimum labour standards.
- **Create a right for self-employed individuals who enter into or work under contracts "personally to execute any work or labour" to join trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining.**
- Support the EU Temporary Workers Agency Directive, up to now opposed by the Irish government.
- Make permanent provisions to protect against the displacement of workers as envisaged in the Protection of Employment (Exceptional Collective Redundancies and Related Matters) Bill 2007.
- In light of the recent Supreme Court decision, we will restore the original spirit of the Industrial Relations (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 through legislation and procedural change.
- Support measures at EU level to ensure that minimum labour standards are applied in all ships that commence and end their journeys in the European Union.
- Eliminate the "sub-minimum" wage, by the removal of exemptions on the minimum wage based on age, except in the case of apprenticeships.
- Ensure the collection of better data on labour market conditions.
- Ratify the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and enshrine its protections in our domestic laws.
- **Enact a new comprehensive Employment Act, consolidating and codifying the existing twenty-plus pieces of labour law in a coherent and efficient form.**
- Strengthen existing Health and Safety legislation, with provision for a crime of corporate manslaughter, as recommended by the Law Reform Commission.
- Enact effective whistleblowers legislation, applicable to the private sector, to protect persons from disciplinary action and defamation where disclosure is in the public interest.
- Expand the Labour Relations machinery and increase the number of Rights Commissioners. Employers and employees will be actively encouraged to seek and use mediation as a method of resolving disputes, so as to reduce the increasing costly adversarial methods that have placed a burden on businesses in general and on small businesses in particular.
- Update and renew the Social Partnership model to take into account the new concerns of a modern Ireland. Issues such as climate change and social equality will take centre stage. The Houses of the Oireachtas will be brought closer into the system, rather than simply rubber-stamping the outcome.

Supporting Work-Life Balance

Too many hard working families encounter obstacles in achieving their preferred work-life balance. Labour believes that there should be a greater element of choice in how families combine the need to earn a living with the need to care for others. Women in particular should not be penalised when they avail of flexible working options.

What Labour will do:

- **Bring in new laws providing for workplace flexibility and part-time, flexi-time and job-share working. These will be targeted at parents, carers and those wishing to upskill or reskill or to re-enter the workforce after a period of absence. We will provide for real equality between men and women and nobody will be penalised for availing of flexible working conditions, career breaks or part time work.**
- **Bring in two extra public holidays, to bring Ireland up to the EU average.**
- **Secure working-time arrangements that support lifelong learning and the development of a stronger, knowledge-based economy.**
- **Progress towards paid parental leave for up to one year, with an option for fathers to take part of that time.**
- **Establish a legal right to take up to three years' career break. We will explore appropriate fiscal support for employers.**
- **Introduce a right to part-time work, subject to reasonable conditions.**

Flexicurity

Labour favours the development of policies based on the concept of flexicurity, i.e. the promotion of employment security through investment in the education and skills of employees, better protection of income after redundancy, and active policy to ensure rapid re-employment after a person loses their job.

What Labour will do:

- **Promote life long learning and up-skilling through the measures set out under 'The Learning Community' elsewhere in this manifesto.**
- **Examine means to provide higher levels of support in the aftermath of a redundancy, combined with measures to rapidly secure replacement employment or education/training for the individual.**
- **Seek to eliminate long-term unemployment, through the design and introduction of a new comprehensive Social Employment Programme, providing persons currently registered as long term unemployed with a range of training options, work placement and employment with social, cultural and community organisations across the country.**

We must ensure that Ireland does not build the next phase of its economic development on the basis of a low wage economy.

Pension Rights

Elsewhere in this document, we set out our proposals to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the pensions issue, to ensure that everyone has an adequate income in old age.

What Labour will do:

- Review our pensions system. The social partners, through the National Economic and Social Council will be entrusted with the task of agreeing a new system of pensions, both for the public and private sectors and for state-provided pensions, to take account of the fact that most people will have a number of jobs during their time in the workforce and many will have multiple pensions by retirement age. The resulting proposals will feed into a new generation of Social Partnership talks to address the pensions issue specifically.
- Ensure easy transferability of pensions between employers and between pension providers and allow for easy amalgamation of multiple pensions.
- Protect the pension rights of employees working in firms that are sold as going concerns. In future, the purchaser of an existing company will be required to take on responsibility for the pension entitlements of the existing employees and the state of the pension fund at the time of purchase.

We should seek to develop a Labour market where job security is enhanced through investment in people and their skills

Immigration and Immigrant Rights

Labour believes that immigration to Ireland is a positive development that both enhances economic growth by alleviating labour shortages and also enriches Irish society through the contribution of people from other cultures to our national life.

But it is clear that immigration is being encouraged by some not because it is of value in itself, but simply because it is feeding the perceived needs of our economy. However, this risks fostering low pay and poor conditions, a form of exploitation which immigrants themselves are most likely to experience. It is therefore vital that people coming to Ireland to work should enjoy the same terms and conditions of employment as Irish workers.

Furthermore, people who come to Ireland to work need and are entitled to housing, transport and health care. They are also entitled to live with their families, including dependent children and dependent relatives.

In government we will address the particular rights of immigrants as follows:

- **A flexible Green Card system will apply to all immigrants from non-EEA countries. Such a new immigration initiative will be based on a real assessment of our labour market requirements and could be adapted from time to time as circumstances change.**
- Work visa allocation will be based on an ongoing assessment of the needs of the Irish labour market. The occupation, education and language skills of applicants will be considered as criteria for issuing these visas within national quotas. Work visas will entitle immigrants to work in our country legally and immediately upon arrival, for a fixed number of years. Bureaucracy and administration will be reduced to a minimum.
- **Immigration for the purpose of family reunion will be facilitated, so that the number of immigrants in employment is recognised as carrying with it an additional number of dependent non-nationals who will have an entitlement to residence in Ireland with a wage-earning family member.**
- Family reunification is one of the most pressing concerns of non-nationals living in Ireland. As such, the provisions that govern this entitlement will be spelled out in primary legislation rather than ministerial orders or practice guidelines.
- The ability to attract overseas students is, amongst other things, a market opportunity. The salability of the product is dependent on adequate prevailing standards. Rogue educational institutions and exploitative employers can only undermine the potential for growth in this area. We will enforce standards through regular inspections of educational institutions that target overseas students, whether in the public or private sector.
- Students from overseas attending accredited institutions will be free to work to finance their studies, just as their Irish peers do.
- **We will grant leave to stay to the small number of aged-out minors who remain in this country.**

The Asylum Process

Although the number of asylum seekers has greatly reduced, real problems remain. There is a huge disparity between the numbers granted refugee status at the initial stage and the numbers successful at the appeal stage. This raises questions as to the soundness of the initial procedures. Inconsistencies and flaws in the decision-making process lead to expensive court actions and delays. The process requires urgent overhaul to bring it into line with best European and international practice.

Labour in government will ensure the following rights and guarantees for asylum-seekers:

- The right to an appropriate interpreter.
- The right to an oral hearing before a decision is made.
- That decision-makers behave sensitively and are properly qualified and trained and have adequate information about the country of origin.
- That effective and resourced representation is available to all asylum seekers.
- That time limits relating to the application are fair and not oppressive to the asylum seeker
- That unaccompanied minors applying for asylum should have a legal guardian appointed to represent them in an appropriate manner.
- Restricting the grounds upon which applicants may be rejected as “manifestly unfounded”, to bring Ireland more into line with the UNHCR and the EU Council of Ministers’ resolution.
- That the standard of decision-making be improved by independent and objective performance review.

Social integration

Planning for a fair and efficient immigration system involves more than devising rules and procedures. The significant number of immigrants arriving in Ireland prompts the need for a range of services, including accommodation, training and language courses.

Labour in government will take lead responsibility in this area from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, which has entirely legitimate concerns of its own but which is not best equipped to meet the demands of social integration, and transfer it to another government department. We will also introduce more relevant and meaningful citizenship ceremonies when people are awarded citizenship of Ireland.

A FAIR DEAL

Building a more Equal Ireland

The Challenge

Even after more than a decade of rapid growth, poverty is still a reality. Why is it that Ireland has one of the most unequal distributions of income in the industrialised world? Or that one in nine children live in poverty? Why are the poor still likely to be children of the poor, caught in the poverty trap set by poor education, low-skilled jobs and unemployment?

While poverty exists in every corner of Ireland, there are also particular areas where there are strong concentrations of poverty and disadvantage, leading to a particularly acute experience of poverty for the families and communities concerned. These are areas where significant pockets of chronic, persistent unemployment coexist with buoyant national labour markets. One in three children in some disadvantaged schools has severe literacy and numeracy difficulties – ten times the national average. School drop-out rates in some parts of the capital are as high as 60 per cent. Life expectancy in severely deprived communities is lower and the incidence of chronic ill health, including mental ill health, higher.

In these severely disadvantaged communities, families struggle with the combined burden of poverty, crime, low educational attainment, unemployment, drugs, over-stretched services, poor housing and health problems.

Despite progress in improving social welfare payment rates, absolute poverty is still a reality, with social welfare payments often falling short of what is needed to make ends meet, and relative poverty rates remain high by European standards.

Furthermore, Social Welfare rules include perverse disincentives to re-train, take up employment or even co-parent. The safety net of social welfare can become a trap from which it makes no financial sense to escape. Some groups in our society are particularly vulnerable, including one-parent families, the elderly, and those working on low incomes.

The concept of equality is built on the idea that everyone should be able to develop their potential to the full. Too often in our society, human potential is unnecessarily and arbitrarily held back through poverty and disadvantage. Equality is not achieved by a state that stands back, and allows each individual to find their own way, but through proactive policies designed to allow each individual to realise their full potential. As a society, we must ensure that, working together, we spread the opportunities of modern Ireland to all our people.

Ireland can do better

A fairer, more equal society is possible. We can hope for a better future for communities blighted by generations of neglect if we wage a war against economic poverty, poverty of skills and poverty of aspiration. We can reform the social welfare code, making it not just a safety net, but also a springboard of opportunity. We can assist those who can work to support themselves, and we can do more for those, including many elderly citizens, who face life on low incomes.

What Labour will do

Labour's approach to tackling inequality and poverty is based on a combination of four elements

- Continuing to enhance the adequacy of social welfare payments
- Reform of social welfare to remove poverty traps and to improve the position of some of those at highest risk of poverty
- Our Fair Deal Commitment for areas of multiple disadvantage
- Better services, especially in health and education, to improve quality of life, and to give people a springboard for a better future.

Social Welfare reform

Many of the meaningful changes in the Irish social welfare system have happened under Labour Party guidance and initiative. While recent budgets have seen significant improvements in social welfare payment rates, which Labour has welcomed, little has been done to modernise the social welfare system to recognise the changes in families, in the role of women, and the nature of work. Despite having the opportunity to do so, the present government has not been willing to engage in real social welfare reform to tackle the problem of poverty traps and persistent poverty and inequality. Our proposals for social welfare reform are set out using the life cycle approach adopted by the social partners.

Children

- **In the context of developing policy on support for families with children, including the early years subsidy, FIS and CDAs, we will examine reform options including a supplementary child benefit.**
- We will substantially improve rates of payment under the Back to School allowance scheme, introduce a once-off payment for children entering second level education and review the income limits.

Working age

This government says we have full employment and only 4.2 per cent unemployment but over half a million working aged people are trapped on social welfare unable to live life or contribute to their full potential. We will maximise their opportunity for employment while at the same time ensuring the social welfare system is an effective safety net for those who cannot work or cannot find work.

- Social welfare payments are still not enough to lift people out of poverty. As resources allow we will make real increases in social welfare payments.
- Over time, we will replace the Rent Allowance scheme with a new form of housing support for public and private rental accommodation, which also covers those working on low incomes. As a short-term measure we will increase the disregards and rent thresholds that apply in the existing scheme.
- Improve the system of retention of secondary benefits for people who take up work.
- **We will restructure support for one-parent families, to enable those parenting alone meet their caring obligations, support themselves in work and, if they choose, form sustainable relationships.**
- **Promote equality for women in the social welfare system by beginning to phase out the limitation rule and the concept of qualified adult.**
- We will make the social welfare service more relevant to the needs of working mothers' employment patterns by reviewing the 'actively seeking work' guidelines to facilitate part-time working.
- Consistent with our commitment to reform FÁS, we will also examine the Department of Social and Family Affairs to ensure it has the capacity to meet the demands of a modern society.
- Ensure that work pays through examination of how social welfare income interacts with paid work.

- Ensure that the obligations of people of working age to seek work are met by the State with the appropriate levels of support.
- We will review the supplementary welfare allowance urgent needs payments and develop a low cost credit scheme for those on social welfare or low incomes.

Pensions

While much is said about the contribution of older people to the foundations of our modern economy, less is done in real terms to value and reward that contribution.

- We will raise the level of the State non-Contributory pension to €300 by 2012.
- **We will progressively increase contributory old age pension qualified adult payments towards the same level as the adult rate, and pay them directly to the qualified adult.**
- We will allow non-contributory pensioners to earn money from self-employment as well as employment without affecting their pension.
- We will recognise the real contribution made by older women near or at pension age to both the Irish economy and society by progressively making home care credits retrospective to 1973.

Disability and care

Those who are depending on receiving care and those who provide that care are often the most vulnerable in our society. It is no surprise that many of this group are women.

- **We will introduce a cost of disability allowance.**
- Abolish the means test for carers.
- Examine how to ensure that women who take time out to care for others do not suffer pension poverty in later years.

*A fairer, more equal society is possible.
We can hope for a better future for
communities blighted by generations of
neglect if we wage a war against
economic poverty, poverty of skills and
poverty of aspiration.*

Long-Term Pensions Reform

Labour believes that the time has come to put in place a comprehensive pensions policy framework to ensure that all older people have an adequate retirement income, through a combination of social welfare and personal/occupational pensions. To achieve this goal we will adopt the following approach:

- **Request that the social partners, working through the National Economic and Social Council, prepare a blueprint document for a comprehensive settlement of the pensions issue. We will place that document before the next round of pay negotiations, and move rapidly to an implementation phase.**
- **We believe this settlement should provide for automatic pensions deductions for all employees, with an opt-out option. Every employee will have a pension contribution made from their pay packet, but will have the option to sign a form saying that they do not wish to make that contribution. Where a person is not part of a company pension scheme, the automatic voluntary contribution would be paid into a personal defined-contribution pension product.**
- A major push to expand this kind of pensions coverage demands that the state ensures that people have reasonably priced pensions products available to them. The pensions industry in Ireland continues to be characterised by obscure charging regimes, and there are real difficulties for consumers in identifying who is charging what so that they can compare pensions products. We need further reform to address these issues.
- In addition, the state acting through the NTMA, should provide access to a basic personal pension product or products. This should be structured among the lines of an SSIA, where contributions and state top-ups are clearly visible. This would be the default option for the automatic voluntary deduction. It would of course be open to people to pay their contributions to a private sector provider. The NTMA could charge a fair, modest and transparent fee for its services.
- While this approach will improve the income of future pensioners, it will not address poverty among older people at present. We believe the solution is to introduce a minimum income guarantee for today's pensioners. This would provide a top-up pension payment to those whose income falls below a minimum level.
- The state will be required to continue incentivisation of personal pensions provision in the future. There is a need, however, to impose more rigorous limits to prevent the use of pension schemes for wholesale tax avoidance.
- **There is a need to examine pensions legislation to ensure easy transferability of pensions between employers and between pension providers and allow for easy amalgamation of multiple pensions. It is also important to protect the pension rights of employees working in firms that are sold as going concerns. Defined benefit schemes, where they exist, should be sustained.**
- We will sympathetically examine the idea of a state annuity scheme.

As a society, we must ensure that, working together, we spread the opportunities of modern Ireland to all our people

A Fair Deal for Communities

Chronically deprived communities need a co-ordinated programme of investment in all aspects of life in these areas, including education, health, the built environment, policing and childcare. Coupled with social welfare reform, this amounts to a major, cross-departmental 'Marshall Plan' for what we call Fair Deal Communities.

This programme can be delivered through the National Development Plan by prioritising and ring-fencing investment in these areas in a determined, co-ordinated, whole-of-government approach.

Labour in government will:

- **Use existing structures to replace the RAPID programmes with a Fair Deal for Communities initiative.**
 - Draw on small/local area census data to compile accurate deprivation indexes to help and delimit Fair Deal communities.
 - Secure a transparent, multi-annual funding formula for the Fair Deal initiatives.
 - **Require all relevant government departments and agencies to clearly earmark and ring-fence not less than 5 per cent of NDP capital funds for Fair Deal communities.**
- Incorporate strong ex post evaluative and accountability rules within the framework of reformed public financial procedures.
 - Put renewed emphasis on strategic direction from the centre and locally based, targeted active labour market initiatives and local employment/placement services in Fair Deal communities and neighbourhoods.
 - Prioritise Fair Deal communities in the deployment of additional community Gardai and the development of local community policing structures.

Tackling Educational Disadvantage

Like poverty, educational disadvantage is to be found in every corner of Ireland, but is also concentrated in particular areas of cumulative disadvantage. We want to develop a system which allocates resources based on the cumulative 'weight' of disadvantage of the schools' pupils. Thus the most disadvantaged schools will still receive the most support, while schools with 'pockets' of disadvantage within their catchments will also receive necessary resources to address their needs. We also believe that school principals should have greater flexibility in applying resources to meet the needs of their particular school and area.

In addition, we will:

- Adequately resource the National Educational Psychologist Service to ensure that children get assessed quickly, and thus have access to the learning support they need.
- Provide well-equipped, family-friendly school libraries which could have the potential to offer community-based family literacy schemes.
- **Encourage local authorities to promote better literacy, through homework clubs, longer opening hours for libraries, and better design and standards in local authority housing – the ideas promoted by the Right to Read Campaign.**
- Enable pre-school centres and schools to adopt special teaching programmes such as High/Scope and the Incredible Years programme, aimed at educating parents in the skills of parenthood and targeting children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (EBD) in school and at home.

- **Adequately resource the NEWB to allow it to fulfil its national mandate under the Education and Welfare Act 2000.**
- The Board will also be mandated to prioritise Fair Deal communities and neighbourhoods and to actively engage with other agencies such as FÁS and the HSE and community representatives in the area implementation planning structures.
- In respect of primary education we will provide the most disadvantaged primary schools with a comprehensive package of supports.

Tackling the Skills Deficit

Low levels of education and skills are primary drivers of low incomes and inter-generational poverty. Labour is committed to reform of Ireland's skills and training structures, with the twin aims of enhancing productivity and promoting social solidarity. Central to this objective is that of reducing the numbers who leave school without Leaving Cert equivalent qualifications, and raising the educational attainment of those who have already left school with inadequate qualifications.

What Labour will do:

- Mandate the NEWB to track all 16-18 year olds who leave school without a Leaving Certificate.
- **Develop a social guarantee so that all early school leavers (16-18 years old) will be offered a place in meaningful and appropriate education or training.**

We can assist those who can work to support themselves, and we can do more for those, including many elderly citizens, who face life on low incomes.

Drugs

Drug use is an escalating social problem in Ireland characterised by poly-drug use, violence and gun crime, alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour. The numbers of young people experimenting with drugs in our towns, villages and cities is growing at an alarming rate. Having previously been confined mainly to Dublin, in the last decade heroin has spread to every county in Ireland. Poly-drug use is increasingly becoming a reality, while drug and criminal networks are in place nationwide.

The National Drugs Strategy is effectively at a standstill, as the fulfilment of their 100 promises under the strategy remains behind schedule. The Labour Party is still broadly supportive of the principles and objectives of the National Drugs Strategy. However, we believe that it is imperative that the changing nature of the drugs problem in this country is addressed. This is particularly urgent as we come to the end of the 2001-2008 National Drugs Strategy and begin to prepare a successor strategy.

The political will of the present government to fight the problem of substance abuse has clearly evaporated. Labour in government will give renewed impetus to the fight against drugs as conceived in the National Drugs Strategy. By re-focusing and re-assessing our approach to the drugs crisis, Labour will ensure that the National Drugs Strategy will remain relevant and effective and will provide a long-term solution to our drug crisis.

What Labour will do:

- Invest the National Drugs Strategy with fresh political will and impetus.
- **Implement in full the national drugs strategy (NDS) 2001–2008, fast track the implementation of all remaining actions in that plan and as a priority, prepare a successor strategy.**
- Build on local community policing structures in line with stated Labour community policing and police reform policy.
- **Expand rehabilitation services at local level in line with need. Provide adequate funding for Community based drug projects like Merchants Quay and SAOL, North-West Training and Development Programme and Aftercare Recovery Group.**
- Alcohol abuse and drug abuse are increasingly interlinked. In the 14 local drug task force (LDTF) areas we will integrate drug and alcohol abuse strategies. Poly-drug use also needs to be addressed by local drug task forces.
- Integrate substance abuse strategies with active labour market and local area renewal policies as elucidated in Labour's policy document *A Fair Deal* to give a new sense of community and community renewal to the drug epidemic black spots.
- Strengthen the supply reduction effort and criminal asset seizures, particularly at the local level.
- Develop through, for example an expanded system of drug courts, compulsory as well as voluntary rehabilitation programmes.
- Work to ensure that our prisons are drug-free rather than, as at present, drug dens.
- A special task force should respond immediately to the arrival of new illicit drugs. They should be specifically targeted with a view to swiftly identifying the source of supply and eliminating it.

REINVENTING GOVERNMENT

The Challenge

Irish democracy is not in good shape. The national hangover caused by corruption in local and national government has yet to fade. We are further and further removed from how our tax contributions are spent. We are frustrated by the incapacity of an inflexible, centralised government to respond fast enough to real-life problems. As a result, citizens have disengaged from politics in large numbers.

At the same time, massive budgetary increases and the growing complexity of a globalised world mean that the need for accountability in government has never been greater. Yet we are stuck with 19th Century systems of administration to oversee and manage a 21st century country.

To take just one example, the Dáil is meant to oversee government spending and to check projects for 'value-for-money'. But the Dáil's spending watchdog, the Public Accounts Committee, operates under a timescale whereby, in 2007, it will spend its time examining government accounts showing how money was spent two years ago, in 2005.

A major challenge is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure programmes. Because Labour champions public service provision, we also champion public service effectiveness and efficiency. This is not code for public spending cuts. Effectiveness simply means the degree of success of a programme in meeting its objectives. And efficiency means the delivery of services at least cost in terms of resources used.

There is an 'efficiency dividend' to be reaped from reducing waste in the public sector. That dividend will be reinvested and will be used to deliver better public services.

Labour also insists that public administration must be informed by the principles of openness, transparency and accountability. These are not burdensome principles, designed to slow down or sidetrack the public service. They are the best and indeed only means of ensuring that citizens get all necessary information to assess whether best practice is being followed and whether value for money is being sought and delivered. We are convinced that the only effective and efficient government is one that is open and honest.

The current system dates from a more leisurely age and has failed to keep up with the demands of a modern state and with the citizens' right to know how decisions are taken on their behalf. We need radical changes to the structures and systems of administration, financial management and government accountability.

Ireland can do better

Labour will reform and enhance the democratic institutions of the state to promote engagement with politics, greater accountability of the executive and more effective and efficient public services.

What Labour will do

Openness

We will:

- Restore the Freedom of Information Act to what it was before it was filleted by the present government. We will also implement all the recommendations for reform of the Act made by the Information Commissioner. We will extend the remit of the Act – and the remit of the Ombudsman Act – to the Garda Síochána, the Central Bank and many other statutory bodies, and bodies significantly funded from the public purse, that are currently excluded.
- Introduce Whistleblowers' Protection legislation to protect those in public service who bring maladministration to light.
- Propose a referendum to reverse the constitutional amendment on Cabinet confidentiality, to ensure that the current almost absolute protection cannot be used to cover up necessary investigations.
- Repeal the Official Secrets Act, retaining a criminal sanction only for breaches which involve serious threats such as a threat to the international relations of the state, the conduct of a fair trial, or national security. A public interest defence will be available in such cases.
- Where the government relies in the Dáil on legal advice received from the Attorney General, as its reason for proposing or refusing to accept legislation, we will ensure that, subject to normal considerations of commercial confidence, national security and so on, summaries of the Attorney General's advice to government are made and published.

Transparency

What Labour will do:

- Introduce a statutory register of lobbyists and a statutory code governing the practice of lobbying.
- Bring in rules to ensure that senior public servants (including political appointees) cannot work in the private sector in an area involving a potential conflict of interest with their former area of public employment until at least two years has elapsed since their departure from the public service.
- Review the law on spending by political parties with a view to developing a more rigorous system, including spending limits for local and presidential elections, and to widen the time frames to which the spending ceilings for European and general elections apply.
- Given that it is not constitutionally feasible to abolish outright donations to political organisations, we will introduce legislation to restrict contributions to political parties and candidates to €2,500 and €1,000 respectively, and to require disclosure of all aggregate sums above €1,500 and €600 respectively.

Oireachtas reform

We will:

- Introduce a package of changes to bring about a 50 per cent increase in Dáil sitting days. Dáil Éireann will in future meet four days a week when in session and working hours will be significantly extended.
- There will be a summer recess of just six weeks and significantly reduced breaks at Christmas and Easter. We will abandon the practice of providing a “mid-term break” – a full week off at St Patrick’s Day and Hallowe’en.
- Amend Cabinet procedures to require the general scheme of a Bill to be published as soon as it is approved by government, so that Oireachtas committees can debate and hold hearings on Bills at the earliest stage.
- Undertake a complete redrafting and updating of Dáil Standing Orders. The new draft will
 - Confer on the Ceann Comhairle a specific responsibility for ensuring that the interests of all members and the public interest are fully and fairly protected.
 - Oblige Ministers to ensure that questions are answered properly and fully (including an obligation to correct matters if the House is misled).
 - Allow for “same day” discussion of urgent or topical matters, especially those involving a wide public interest.
 - Restrict the use of guillotine motions and other procedural devices that prevent Bills from being fully debated.
- Allow far more interchange between members and make it obligatory on members, including Ministers, to “yield” to reasonable interventions and questions from the floor.
- Reform procedures for dealing with legislation, to allow more time for debate and participation at every stage.
- Private Members Time will be extended to include government as well as opposition deputies. All TDs will be entitled to put forward proposals for legislation and a lottery at the start of each session will determine which Bills will be debated. Party whips should be relaxed on such occasions.
- Extend Question Time, to increase the number of questions to be answered and debated in the Chamber and to allow written questions to be submitted directly to state agencies. In addition, written questions will be asked and answered during Dáil recesses.
- Significantly expand the work of Oireachtas committees dealing with scrutiny of EU legislation and regulations made by ministers.
- Following on the Supreme Court judgment in the Abbeylara Inquiry case, we will, if necessary, propose an amendment to the Constitution to ensure the Dáil is enabled to inquire into and report on any exercise of the executive power of the state or in relation to the administration of any public service.

Oireachtas inquiries

- We will establish an Oireachtas Committee of Investigations, Oversight and Petitions. The committee will be bi-partisan in structure and chaired by a member of the opposition. Its functions will be to:
 - Ensure consultation and collaboration between the Oireachtas and the Ombudsman.
 - Receive parliamentary petitions seeking the redress of grievances connected with the public services and with public administration generally.
 - Arrange investigation of issues of urgent public importance which demand detailed and thorough investigation.
 - Supervise an Office of Parliamentary Investigator.
- The Office of Parliamentary Investigator will have responsibility for ensuring the timely and cost effective investigation of issues giving rise to significant public concern.
- Persons would be appointed from time to time to this office, on the basis of specific contracts, to carry out specific investigations.
- The Investigator will perform functions similar to those carried out by the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- The Investigator will have powers to require witnesses to attend and answer questions and to disclose and produce documents, together with power to enter premises and to take copies of documents.
- Evidence would be taken in private, as is done by Commissions of Investigation.
- The written reports of the Investigator on matters of established fact would be used as the basis for further investigation, by Oireachtas committees or by tribunals.

Ensuring Value for Money

Labour has published a detailed document entitled *The Buck Stops Here*, setting out a comprehensive set of proposals to end the waste of public funds that has characterised this government and to ensure the delivery of better, more efficient and effective public services.

The Estimates procedure

Our Constitution requires the government to prepare Estimates of the receipts and expenditure of the state for each financial year and to present them to the Dáil. The Dáil is then required to "consider" those Estimates.

Real and effective Dáil scrutiny, on behalf of the taxpayer, needs two things:

- A reliable and easily understood budgeting process that sets out the financial consequences of policies the government proposes to implement.
- A reliable and easily understood reporting (or management accounting) process, that sets out the consequences of the policies actually implemented.

Labour in government will bring forward the annual Estimates cycle, so that it becomes more timely and relevant. It will in future start at the beginning of the preceding year and conclude by the summer.

- **The annual Estimates will in future distinguish between monies being allocated to maintaining the existing level of service for existing programmes and money to support new programmes or policy decisions.**
- Proposals for new expenditure programmes will be accompanied by a five-year projection of costs and benefits.
- The Estimates will also distinguish between discretionary and non-discretionary spending, i.e., spending arising from legal entitlements which must be met (such as pensions).
- The Book of Estimates will be accompanied by a detailed performance report on what the previous year's spending had achieved. It will

also give details of the level of performance achieved by agencies under service delivery agreements with government.

- Improved services for Oireachtas members will include dedicated resources for the proper scrutiny of the Estimates.
- An Estimates Commissioner, with strong powers, will be appointed within the Houses of the Oireachtas to manage the advance scrutiny of spending proposals, in the same way that the Comptroller and Auditor General scrutinises the outcome of spending after the event.

Public service reform

We will introduce a new basic law for government departments and the civil service.

- The legislation will specify the roles, functions, powers and duties of departments and the position of the minister in charge of each department.
 - **The new legislation will provide for a clear line of authority, responsibility and command. It will permit only the specific delegation of specific powers to civil servants, instead of the current practice of implied blanket delegation of all ministerial powers to all his or her civil servants, capable of being exercised without the minister's knowledge or authority.**
 - Civil servants exercising delegated ministerial powers will be, to the extent of the authority delegated to them, accountable both within the department and also directly and publicly accountable to the Dáil.
 - Ministers will become responsible in law for the supervision and oversight of their departments, as well as for their own direct actions.
- The law will clarify the authority, responsibilities and accountabilities of Secretaries General of government departments.
 - We will replace the existing rules which severely restrict civil servants in their answers to Dáil Committees with a system which reflects the reality of responsibility delegated to civil servants
 - We will keep clear records of the decisions made by ministers personally, so that there can be no subsequent conflict, confusion or denial of responsibility on such basic matters.
 - We will make ministers accountable to the Dáil for the adequacy of their oversight of all the agencies and public bodies under their remit.
 - We will enhance the capacity of the civil service by:
 - Introducing open recruitment for senior public service Positions.
 - Introducing greater professionalisation of key functions.
 - Equipping senior managers with a wider range of skills
 - Linking performance pay schemes to high level targets.
 - Expanding civil service training and education opportunities.
 - Strengthening the internal audit function and augmenting its legal capacity.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

The Challenge

Labour believes that the best people to plan and manage local services, such as planning for the environment and housing, the amenities that make our local community work, the schools which teach our children, transport and traffic matters, policing, care of the young and of the elderly, should be the locals who use them.

In most European countries, these everyday matters are the concerns and functions of a strong system of local government. Education, health, policing, transport and traffic are normally delivered and overseen by city, county, regional and local authorities.

Ireland has one of the weakest systems of local government in the European Union. Local 'government' does not exist in Ireland. At best, we have a system of "Local Administration", through which centrally appointed managers make the executive decisions for our cities, counties and towns.

All this leaves the individual citizen feeling powerless in his or her own city or county. The net result of Ireland's unique approach to local governance is that the quality of local services is often poor.

The system by which Ireland provides local services is excessively bureaucratic, confused and costly and the citizen finds it difficult to get access to the real decision makers. The lack of accountability results in the unelected management of local authorities being too powerful and the lack of real power for elected councillors is leading to decreased public confidence in local government. Many providers of public services are not accountable at all at local level

Ireland can do better

Labour will radically change the way Ireland is governed. We need a new modern system of local government, which is more democratic, more accountable and which provides a better quality of service to the public.

What Labour will do

Labour will deliver a major reform of local government and devolve further functions from the national to the regional and local levels under new structures to ensure democratic management of these services.

- **Labour will strengthen the role of the elected council, in order to provide the citizen with accountable public services. Councillors will have power to seek accountability from any agency, whether public or private, which is providing public services in their area. Councillors will have power to seek reports from service providers and to question, in public, the appropriate managers on aspects of their service.**
- Councils will also have a consumer protection role in relation to private sector services. Private refuse collectors, telecoms, private schools, local banks and cable TV providers will be amenable to public questioning by the elected representatives of the people, on their public service remit.
- Local government in Ireland needs to be remapped. The remapping will be based on the wishes of the people and will be preceded by public consultation.
- **There will be two levels of local government: Regional Authorities, which will include City Authorities for the larger cities, and Local Authorities, which will include County, Town and District Councils.**

The City and Regional Authorities will have responsibility for:

- **Strategic Planning:** a democratically decided Regional or City Plan will replace Strategic Planning Guidelines, which are now handed down by the department
- Implementation of national spatial strategies
- Transport and traffic
- Economic development including Employment Services
- Other functions to be devolved over time.

- Local Authorities will be given, in addition to their existing core responsibilities, a new range of devolved functions together with the finance and resources needed to carry out these new roles.
- **We will establish a Dublin Regional Authority, which will have overall responsibility for the running of the city and the three Dublin counties. It will be responsible for transport and traffic, strategic planning, protection of Dublin Bay and for overseeing the services which are delivered Dublin wide. The members of the DRA will be directly elected, headed by a directly elected mayor of Dublin.**
- The current Dublin City Council and the three county councils will be replaced over time by 10-12 District Councils, based on populations of approximately 100,000, each of which will have the status of a County Council.
- City Authorities will be established for the other larger cities in the country, and Regional Authorities will be established for different regions of the country.
- Devolution of powers will take time. The first responsibility to be devolved to these Regional and City Authorities will be transport.
- One of the first regional bodies to be set up will be for the "ATM region" – Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar.
- Respecting the principle of subsidiarity the distinction between County Councils and the larger Town Councils will be ended. All such councils will have the same status. There will be options available to people as to the type of Council which would exist in a particular area, as between County Councils, Town Councils and District Councils. Where a dispute arises over the inclusion of an area in a council, the issue will be resolved by plebiscite of the voters in that area.

- The position of County Manager will be abolished and replaced by a Chief Executive of the Council. Chief Executives will exercise a limited range of executive functions, similar to those which were originally intended in the City and County Management Acts. Chief Executives will have no policy making functions other than to assist and advise the elected Council in the making of policy.
- The power of the Minister to abolish a Council and to replace it with a Commissioner will be ended. Instead, where a Council fails to adopt an annual budget, the Council will stand suspended until fresh elections are held to elect a new council for the remainder of its five year cycle.
- Each Local Authority will have a directly elected mayor for the five year term of the Council. Directly elected mayors in the larger authorities will hold office on a full time basis.
- The reorganisation and remapping of local government will be achieved without increasing costs. The devolution of powers and functions from the centre will be accompanied by the corresponding finance and resources. In the longer term, devolution will reduce cost because many of the functions concerned can be performed more effectively at local level.
- **Effective regional and local government must be adequately resourced. A redistribution of taxes will be defined as between central and local government, based on the funding framework which is already in place for local authorities. Already some taxes are dedicated for either local government generally, or for services provided through local government. These include rates on commercial and industrial properties, which are levied and collected by local authorities; the Local government Fund which is based on motor taxation; and the Environment Fund which was established with the tax on plastic.**
- Rates will be levied on state owned commercial property. There is no continuing justification for exempting state owned commercial property from the rates regime which applies to privately owned businesses.

Labour will radically change the way Ireland is governed. We need a new modern system of local government, which is more democratic, more accountable and which provides a better quality of service to the public.

BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Challenge

Balanced regional development is in the interests of individuals, families and communities in every region of the country. Dublin has been the engine of the country's economic growth, but its current uncontrolled expansion is neither sustainable nor desirable. Ireland needs a more balanced pattern of development in the interests of fairness, sustainability and competitiveness.

The next government must not repeat the mistakes of its predecessors. The chief weakness of the 2002 National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was that it lacked real political commitment across all government departments. In addition, the scattergun approach of the failed decentralisation policy only served to signal that the government had no intention of implementing its own spatial strategy.

The challenge for the next government is to lay the foundation stones of modern regional economies that will be capable of embracing a future where regions and cities compete for investment on an international stage.

This must be supported by national government through guaranteeing universal broadband access, investing in transport infrastructure, ensuring adequate water, gas and electricity supplies and investing in education, research and skills.

Future balanced regional development should be a combination of significant investment in regional urban centres and innovative policies to exploit our natural strengths, such as our beautiful landscape and high-quality food industry, and to spearhead new industries, such as bioenergy.

A strong economic and social counterweight to Dublin which would attract both private investment and a significant proportion of the country's workforce could only improve Ireland's competitiveness.

It is time for strong, joined-up leadership from government to close the wealth divide between east and west. Improved standards of living and vibrant, sustainable communities for all should be more than an aspiration. It should be a priority.

Ireland can do better

Labour will pursue a more even spread of economic activity across Ireland to improve quality of life and build a more sustainable and competitive economy.

What Labour will do

A quality future for rural communities

What Labour will do

- Create a unitary Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to ensure the proper coordination between these related areas of government and to take advantage of increasing payments from the EU's Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) budget for rural development initiatives.
- Reduce by 50 per cent the rates bills of village shops, pubs and/or garages where they are the last one, two or three remaining in their communities.
- Develop and resource targeted policies addressing poverty and social exclusion among women in rural Ireland, particularly regarding childcare, training and education.
- Implement policies that encourage part-time farming.
- We want a greater share of Ireland's rural development funding to go on improving the quality of life in rural areas and facilitating the diversification of the rural economy.
- Find effective ways of ensuring farm spouses' work on the farm is appropriately recognised by the social welfare system.
- Foster, particularly through distance and after-hours learning courses, an ethos of continuing education amongst farming and rural families.

Balanced regional development is in the interests of individuals, families and communities in every region of the country. Dublin has been the engine of the country's economic growth, but its current uncontrolled expansion is neither sustainable nor desirable.

Agriculture: supporting farmers

What Labour will do

- **We want only products wholly produced here to be labelled as Irish. We will pursue regulatory changes to make this a reality through the EU.**
- Ensure that whenever necessary changes are implemented to the single farm payment system, no risks are taken with the effective delivery of existing payments to farmers and their families.
- Review the working of the Agriculture Appeals Office and ensure that it fulfils its duties as effectively as possible.
- **Maintain farm consolidation support measures, such as continuing provision of stamp duty relief for qualifying farmers under fifty.**
- We will keep raising the thresholds in the leased land exemption scheme.
- We are committed to ensuring optimal take-up of the Farm Assist and Rural Social Scheme programmes.
- Work with the European Commission to secure the continuation of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme beyond 2010.
- Implement measures to support the further development of high added-value and specialist milk products by small and larger-scale operators.
- Introduce the €250 million Animal Welfare, Recording and Breeding Scheme for Suckler Herds currently before the Commission.
- Implement a Capital Investment Support Scheme for the beef and sheepmeat primary processing sector
- Ensure that farmers do not bear an unfair burden of any costs associated with any animal health and welfare disease scares.
- Put country of origin information labelling on poultrymeat, pigmeat and sheepmeat so consumers are properly informed.

Expand Organic Agriculture

What Labour will do:

- **Establish an Irish organic label to do for organic agriculture what 'Kerrygold' has done for conventional agriculture.**
- Work on establishing the levels and the kinds of supports necessary for the widespread production, processing and sale of indigenously produced organic food in Ireland and abroad.
- Resource adequate testing of organic food so the integrity of the market is protected.
- Initiate studies and relevant research aimed at promoting informed debate on GMO production. The aim of such debate will be to establish if it would be in Ireland's economic best interests to become one of the few GMO production-free areas in the world over the coming decade.
- Push for the strongest possible evidence-based rules in the EU governing the release of GMOs into the environment.

Food and Food Safety

- We will combat growing 'food fraud' by promoting widespread testing of food in Ireland and changes in EU regulation of imports to overcome current shortcomings in the traceability and labelling regulations governing food imported and sold in Ireland.
- **We will introduce traffic light food labelling which will allow consumers to decide easily whether or not certain foods meet their dietary requirements.**

Better Research

- Building upon existing high quality agri-food research in the universities and Teagasc, we will establish a national Environment Research Centre. The Centre's mission will be to provide research-based understanding of the chemical, pedological, biological, engineering and socioeconomic needs of the agri-food industry (including the artisan food sector) allied to the sustainable rural economy and the protection of Ireland's rural environment.
- We will stimulate the development of plastic materials and chemical agents from plants such as beet.

Animal Health and Welfare

We will:

- Replace the pre-independence 1911 Protection of Animals Act with legislation grounded in evidence-based animal health and welfare standards.
- Vest responsibility for all animal health and welfare issues, including animal experimentation and enforcement of the Dog Control Acts, in a single minister.
- In order for the eventual goal of free movement of animals and animal products within the island of Ireland to be achieved, we will support the North South Ministerial Council's work in developing all-island animal health policy and import regime.

Coastal Communities, Fisheries & Marine Environment

Our unique marine sector must be supported and promoted, especially during a period where it faces major challenges due to serious neglect over the past ten years. The Irish fishing industry is an important source of economic benefit to often disadvantaged coastal communities. We believe that properly managed, Ireland's sea fisheries have the potential to be both profitable and sustainable in the long-term.

Labour advocates that five key areas must be addressed in developing our sea fisheries and marine strategy. These are sustainability, profitability, local management of fisheries, supporting local coastal communities and enhancing safety and maritime workers' pay and conditions.

What Labour will do:

- **Establish a Sea Fisheries Sustainability Impact Assessment based on consultation with all major stakeholders to be brought before Dail Eireann on an annual basis before EU fisheries negotiations commence. An annual report of this nature would ensure that there is a regular evaluation of the Irish fish stocks and the effectiveness of current policy and quotas. Sustainability and profitability are complementary objectives for ensuring an Irish fishing industry that is globally competitive and has a vibrant long-term future.**
 - **Develop an Irish seafood strategy to grow the market profile and demand for Irish fish so as to benefit local fishing communities. Most of the employment and economic benefits of the fishing industry are centred in areas of relative socio-economic disadvantage.**
 - **Ensure that the new Sea Fisheries Protection Authority is urgently established and adequately resourced to carry out its vital management of Ireland's sea fishing stocks.**
 - **Establish a Sea Fisheries Stakeholder Advisory Group where industry representatives, the marine scientific community and all other stakeholders have clearly defined roles and a**
- major contribution to shaping national maritime policy.
- **Launch a new harbour refurbishment and development programme under the National Development Plan (NDP) particularly to resource smaller and neglected harbours and to assist the diversification of the functions of harbours and small port facilities (including for tourism and recreation purposes).**
 - **Ensure that the Irish Coast Guard has access to an Emergency Towing Vessel (ETV), as recommended by the Marine Department as far back as 1999. The Labour Party believes that safety issues and working conditions must be a critical part of our long-term fisheries strategy, as fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in Ireland.**
 - **Work with our EU partners to ensure that safety and working conditions, and seafarers and maritime workers' wages assume the highest priority in developing a maritime strategy and not be compromised in any way due to the unique nature of the maritime trade.**
 - **Continue to support sustainable aquaculture and fish farming, which are the fastest growing areas of world fish production. Labour in government will enhance the roles of the Marine Institute, BIM and Udaras na Gaeltachta, along with the producers and workforce, in developing the Irish aquaculture industry**
 - **Introduce legislation to further protect and closely regulate coastal environments that may be affected by increased aquaculture production.**
 - **Be committed to full consultation with all inland fisheries stakeholders before the establishment of the National Inland Fisheries Authority. Labour will give local fisheries advisory groups a key role in local ownership and management of inland fishery resources.**

Forestry

- We support the achievement of annualised planting targets of 20,000 hectares.
- We will increase the annual payment to farmers to keep the real value of the payments constant.
- **We will aim to at least double the carbon sequestered by sinks from 2.07 Mt CO₂ to 4 MtCO₂ in the next Kyoto period, with a corresponding increased role for farmers.**
- We will protect the Afforestation Grant Scheme and we will pay farmers the level of forestry premium payments over a shorter period of time.

Tourism

Tourism is a vital market for Irish business and supports large numbers of jobs. Labour in government will seek to refresh and modernise the Irish tourism product.

Ireland's relatively unspoilt landscape is a key driver of our tourism industry. We believe that sustainable tourism depends on protecting and cultivating our natural environment. This should be the starting point for the growth of activity holidays and eco-tourism.

Ireland's recent success in attracting major sporting events bodes well for the future. We are fully committed to building on this success, and will work with sporting bodies seeking to attract international competitions to Ireland.

Developing cultural tourism should be a priority over the coming years. Protecting and investing in our heritage and the development of festivals around the country will enrich both our own cultural life and the experience of visitors to Ireland.

What Labour will do:

- Protect areas of great natural beauty from over-development and strictly limit development along the coastline.
- Our proposed new government agency, Sport and Recreation Ireland, will partner local authorities, OPW, Coillte and Waterways Ireland to further develop outdoor activity facilities such as treks, walks and cycle ways on an integrated local, regional and national basis.
- **Create a dedicated national cycle network.**
- We will develop and market niche elements of the tourism market where Ireland has considerable potential to shine, such as eco-tourism and culinary excellence.
- We will expand funding for festivals and encourage the development of a small number of landmark cultural festivals of international standing, preferably outside Dublin.
- **The online community is the world's biggest tourism market. We will grow regional tourism by ensuring that local communities and tourism interests have access to and visibility in this market.**

Transport

We will:

- Consistent with our plans to recast local government in Ireland we will create city and regional authorities that will have a number of functions, including transport. They will include city authorities in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, and the Athlone-Tullamore-Mullingar triangle. Regional authorities will be established in other regions of the country. These authorities will be responsible for strategic planning and for overseeing the delivery of region-wide services, which will include procuring, funding and operating joined-up public transport projects for their region, integrated timetabling and ticketing, development of new routes, linking land use planning to public transport and managing traffic flow.
- We will upgrade intercity rail connections to ensure that all major inter-city journeys are faster by rail than by car.
- Restore rail links between Ennis and Athenry as part of the Western Rail Corridor.
- Extend commuter rail services to the suburbs of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.
- **Support the careful rolling-out of the Rural Transport Initiative nationally, and expand its remit to include late night services.**

Communications and Infrastructure

What Labour will do:

- The national electricity grid will be strengthened in the west and north-west to facilitate larger off-shore wind farms and to support a greater density of industry.
- **Begin to close the digital divide by creating a Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband. Accessibility to broadband networks will assume the same character as the present expectation of universal access to the postal service or telephone network.**

- **An Post is an essential part of the fabric of Irish life, both urban and rural and has a very important social and commercial role in our country. We will establish a comprehensive strategy for An Post as the 2009 deadline for the fully liberalised market approaches.**
- Maintain the optimal number of local outlets in the Post Office network with transparent and accountable criteria supporting the network. This must include ensuring that the postal network is fully automated and maintained.
- Encourage a business model for An Post that embraces innovation, provision of new services and the establishment of mutually rewarding international alliances.
- Introduce a postal industry regulator or establish a separate postal operating division within ComReg to ensure that the Universal Service Obligation is upheld, complaints by householders and businesses are effectively dealt with and consumers' interests are represented in postal pricing policy.
- We will invest in rural water services to ensure access to clean, safe drinking water for all.

An 'alternative growth pole'

The development of an 'alternative growth pole' along the Atlantic Corridor will be pursued. At present Ireland only has one city capable of competing with other international cities for certain categories of mobile, high-value added industries. However, if combined, the populations of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford would provide the critical mass needed to compete with Dublin for investment. These cities could act in concert to form a major focal point of regional development. Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore could also combine their resources to form a growth centre, as could Sligo and Letterkenny-Derry.

An alternative growth pole depends on the cities/counties in question cooperating rather than competing for investment. Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure proper coordination between public authorities and agencies working in conjunction with the private sector.

CULTURE, SPORT AND HERITAGE

The Challenge

The spheres of sport, arts and culture have long been a distinctive part of the fabric of Irish life. In a sense they constitute an important part of who we are as a people. As a country we are proud of our sporting and cultural achievements, whether at a professional level, where our sportsmen and women and artists, writers and musicians continue to excel on the international stage, or at the amateur level, where the culture of volunteerism is a testimony to the spirit of community that is still alive and well in Irish life.

Nonetheless there is a sense that the sporting, cultural and recreational aspects of life are increasingly under threat. As our material prosperity increases many of us have less time for sporting, artistic and recreational pursuits.

This is particularly evident in the arts. For a country which prides itself on its musical, literary and artistic heritage, we have extremely low participation rates in cultural pursuits in comparison to our European counterparts. A recent Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Commission, estimated that one in three Irish people never attend a gallery, a museum or a play, or sample a variety of live music.

The picture appears to be brighter for sport. In 2003, for example, Irish people attended more sports events per capita than any other country in the EU15. Half a million of us regularly play sport, while 400,000 volunteer as coaches, match officials and referees.

Yet, for all the enjoyment and benefits we derive from sport in Ireland, we could do better. Our elite athletes do not receive enough financial support. The standing of sports and PE in our schools is abysmal. Private sector leisure has overtaken public provision at local level, making participation in some sports dependent on income. Clubs around the country can find it hard to make ends meet, let alone invest in new facilities..

Like the arts and recreation, the public value of our shared heritage has been downgraded over the past ten years. Our heritage and natural environment belong to all of the people of Ireland, including future generations. We believe that our common culture and, language and heritage should be protected, not painted as obstacles to progress.

We are also aware, however, that as well as preserving the past, we need to keep a firm eye on the future. As a country we need to be prepared for the huge shifts in the cultural landscape which are set to take place in the coming years, particularly in the area of digital broadcasting.

Space for culture and recreation has been crowded out in modern Ireland. We believe that it is time to redress the balance.

Ireland can do better

Labour in government will put sport, arts and culture at the heart of the national agenda. We will provide the support, financial or otherwise, to ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to partake in the cultural and sporting life of the nation.

What Labour will do

The Arts

Art, music, literature and drama are regularly dismissed as being the preserve of the elite. Labour wants to challenge that perception. We believe that everyone, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to engage with the arts. Thus we are proposing a comprehensive and properly resourced cultural strategy, which will promote artistic excellence as well as ensuring greater access to arts and culture for all our people. A key aim of our strategy is to improve the quality of and opportunities for education in the arts so that all children and young people can maximise their creative potential.

We will:

- Create a designated Arts section within the Department of Education which will ensure good practice in teaching of the arts at both primary and secondary level. A review of the curriculum, particularly in primary schools, and ensuring that objectives within the curriculum are being met.
- Provide vouchers for music lessons at primary level to ensure where practicable, 30 hours of free tuition by qualified teachers is available to all students during one designated year.
- **Ensure minimum guaranteed funding for the Arts Council, to be administered on a contestable basis within a multi-annual framework, and resources to implement outstanding policy commitments.**
- A designated government fund for local arts development to bring local funding eventually to a level equivalent with central government funding.
- Coordinated strategies for Youth Arts development between relevant government departments and agencies, such as the Arts Council, the Department of Education and local authorities.
- Develop an initiative for bringing international arts and culture of the highest quality into this country.
- A National Endowment Fund for the Arts to help artists 'buy time' to train, to experiment or to think.

The spheres of sport, arts and culture have long been a distinctive part of the fabric of Irish life. In a sense they constitute an important part of who we are as a people.

Sport

Sport has a vital role to play in every society. Labour recognises the immense community, health and economic benefits of sport and will make the advancement of sport and recreation a central part of its policies in government. We see sport as an essential part of building a better Ireland for hardworking families and communities. As with our arts policy, we believe that the key to promoting a healthier and fitter society is to start at a young age. Thus one of our key commitments will be to enhance the role and profile of physical education in our schools.

We will:

- **Make PE an exam subject for the Junior and Leaving Certificates, giving it points status for third level entry in the latter.**
- Put the Irish Sports Council, to be renamed Sport and Recreation Ireland, at the heart of the public policy system, giving it an enhanced coordinating role in respect of capital and current expenditure by central government and its agencies, including local government.
- **For the elite amateur sector Labour proposes the establishment Gradam, an all-island scheme similar to the Aosdána scheme that has been such a success in the arts and culture sector.**
- Ensure a permanent home for the Community Games.
- Sport and Recreation Ireland will be given a formal role in the local government planning process, representing the cause of community and amenity development in the planning and zoning system.
- Sport and Recreation Ireland will also partner local authorities, OPW, Coillte and Waterways Ireland to further develop outdoor activity facilities such as treks, walks, cycle ways etc on an integrated local, regional and national basis.
- Introduce legislation to address the issue of access by hill walkers to upland areas, indemnifying landowners from liability for injury experienced by strangers entering on lands where they have not been invited.
- Provide funding to schools to upgrade their PE and sporting facilities, where appropriate in association with local sporting bodies.
- Funding will also be made available for the provision of specialist sport and physical activity teachers for all primary schools, initially in those schools in the most underprivileged areas.
- Introduce after-school and holiday sports schemes for students.
- Support and develop minority sports and recreational activities to ensure that all aspects and interests of our population are addressed.

Heritage

Our heritage and our natural environment are precious assets. Ireland's historical heritage is integral to our national identity and crucial to tourism and recreation; our economy is dependent on the natural environment. Both must be preserved and protected. Heritage and environmental conservation have been cast by the present government as inhibitors of progress, economic growth and development. This is a short-sighted and simplistic view and an inappropriate basis for the conduct of environment and conservation policy.

We will:

- We will strengthen the legal protection afforded to the cultural heritage of the people, including its archaeological, architectural, monumental, industrial, artistic and scientific heritage. We will ensure that newly discovered heritage objects, which shed light on our common heritage and history, would belong to the people. We will also seek to incorporate a commitment to intergenerational justice into legislation concerning environmental sustainability and our shared heritage.
- The duty of care for heritage and conservation out of the Ministry of the Environment, Heritage and Local government, will be transferred to our proposed Department of Climate Change, Energy and the Environment. Responsibility for conservation of the environment and heritage should not co-exist with responsibility for infrastructure.
- The Labour Party is opposed to the building of a motorway through the Tara-Skryne valley. We accept that the M3 is necessary to relieve commuter congestion and that it should be built in three sections. However, the section through the Tara-Skryne valley should be re-routed to avoid the destruction of our Celtic heritage.
- We are particularly concerned at the possibility of major development being attracted to the area around the motorway, which would contribute further damage to Tara and its environs. Labour in government will work to prevent such development taking place.
- We will incorporate ecosystem services and economic and social benefits into the cost-benefit analysis and environmental impact assessment of infrastructural projects.
- We will enhance environment and heritage education in our schools.

Labour in government will put sport, arts and culture at the heart of the national agenda. We will provide the support, financial or otherwise, to ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to partake in the cultural and sporting life of the nation

Broadcasting

Public service broadcasting is a vital public service and resource that is essential in any working democracy. However, Irish public service broadcasting is in danger of being rendered obsolete by the 'digital age'. All EU member states are to have completed the switch from analogue to digital broadcasting by 2012. However, under the outgoing government Ireland has made very little progress towards this target. The next government will have to face the significant challenge of keeping public service broadcasting technologically and practically relevant in the digital age. If not, we are in danger of creating a 'digital divide' between those who can access new technologies and systems, and those who cannot.

We will:

- **Ensure a comprehensive digital broadcasting changeover strategy – including choice of platform(s) – is developed as a matter of urgency.**
- Guarantee that the digital switchover will be achieved equitably and ahead of the EU deadline of end-2012.
- Legislate to conserve the RTÉ Authority as a public corporation and the provider of free-to-air public service broadcasting services on radio, television and 'new media'.
- **Review the role of RTÉ as the state's public broadcasting corporation in light of the challenges posed by the increased diversity of Irish society and the digital changeover. We are committed to maintaining the integrity of public service broadcasting.**
- Conduct a public consultation on the existing television license fee and alternative funding formulas for public service broadcasting in the light of technological convergence, such consultation to be completed and acted upon within 12 months.
- Require the RTÉ Authority to review the current structure of its broadcasting operations and examine possible new, free-to-air public broadcasting services including public affairs broadcasting (i.e. parliamentary broadcasting, coverage of Northern Ireland and European affairs) in the light of the change-over to digital.
- **Require that the Authority's free-to-air public services are provided across all relevant platforms.**
- Mandate RTÉ to provide a number of periods of children's programming during the day when there would be no advertising and work at European level towards a ban on advertising aimed at children
- Create a new framework for the allocation and management of all radiospectrum (whether for broadcasting or other purposes). This would distinguish between Reserved spectrum (set aside to meet public interest, social and cultural objectives of government, including public broadcasting goals) and Commercial spectrum. The latter would be rights-based, assigned or allocated through market mechanisms with spectrum going to its highest value use.
- In the context of digitisation and technological convergence, decide whether the Authority's subsidiary company, RTÉ Networks, will remain with the Authority or taken into separate public ownership.
- Establish a policy-formulation, supervisory, management and regulatory regime, institutions and rules appropriate to the mixed economy in broadcasting and radio communications, technological convergence and digitisation.
- Insist that RTÉ programmes are broadcast in the UK.

The Irish Language

There must be a dramatic and fundamental change in the State's approach to the preservation and revival of the Irish language. Considerable resources continue to be invested in the teaching of Irish, yet the use of Irish has been declining since the foundation of the State.

Despite this clear failure of policy there is no clear, strategic plan for the future of the language. Furthermore, there is little meaningful dialogue between the State and the citizen on key unresolved issues, including possibility of widespread bi-lingualism.

Debate on these issues is urgently needed, but it must be open, generous and tolerant. We need to make a choice about the role of the Irish language in Irish society. At present, the real choices are being made by the people themselves. Usage is in decline in the traditional Irish speaking areas, especially among the young, but interest in its use is growing elsewhere, as demonstrated by the expansion of Irish-medium schools.

The vocabulary and idiom of the language have been adapted to the demands of contemporary society and culture. Irish language broadcasting has proven a great success, notably TG4 established by a Labour Minister, Michael D. Higgins.

Our objective in government is to stimulate a broad debate about the future of Irish as a spoken language and to use this as a foundation for future policy. It will be our aim to reform the approach of the State to Irish so that the efforts of communities and voluntary organisations are re-enforced by adequate funding and encouraged to flourish by a positive support. Our aim will be to raise the status of Irish as a vernacular and to re-enforce its role in cultural and academic life.

We will:

- Establish a Forum on the Irish Language involving all sectors of society and the relevant stakeholders.
- We will seek as early as possible a report from each Public Body named in the Schedule to the Official Languages Act 2003 and require it to

outline its programme on the Irish Language, its success in achieving policy objectives and details of the resources committed to achieving them.

Education

We will:

- Actively support those parents wishing to have their children educated through Irish.
- Remove administrative obstacles to the establishment and development of gaelscoileanna and gaelcolaistí and to ensure that they have adequate resources in terms of buildings, teachers and facilities.
- **Examine how Irish language literacy can be improved in Gaeltacht schools and gaelscoileanna.**
- We will introduce a range of measures to improve the teaching of Irish in English medium schools.
- **Explore the development of a new Irish curriculum for primary and post-primary pupils who are native speakers of Irish and those who are attending Irish-medium schools.**
- Encourage, and financially support, expansion of the gaelcolaistí.
- Tackle the crisis regarding the number and quality of teachers capable of teaching through Irish.
- Encourage third level institutions to expand the range of courses given through Irish and insist that Departments of Irish are properly funded and maintained.
- **We will examine the possibility of re-establishing an Irish language teacher training college.**

Launch a project on the "Recovery and Rediscovery of Our National Heritage" with the aim of editing, translating and publishing the vast store of material in Irish and Latin contained in the manuscripts housed in libraries at home and abroad.

Retain and expand the Departments of Old and Middle Irish and Medieval Latin in the universities and, along with the School of Celtic Studies, charge them with this task.

Fund the collection and publication of folklore and song as part of our heritage project.

Teanga na Gaeilge

Caithfear athmheasúnú bunúsach a dhéanamh ar chur chuige an stáit maidir le caomhnú agus athnuachan na Gaeilge. Leantar d'acmhainní suntasacha a infheistiú i dteagasc na Gaeilge, ach mar sin féin tá laghdú ag teacht ar úsáid na Gaeilge ó bunaíodh an stát.

Cé gur léir gur tharla cliseadh polasaí níl plean soiléir, straitéiseach ar bith beartaithe do thodhchaí na teanga. Lena chois sin, níl mórán d'idirphlé idir an stát agus an saoránach maidir le príomhcheisteanna nár réitíodh, lena n-áirítear an fhéidearthacht dátheangachas forleithéadach a bheith ann.

Tá gá práinneach ann le díospóireacht ar na ceisteanna seo, ach ní mór go mbeadh sé oscailte, macánta agus fulangach. Caithfimid rogha a dhéanamh faoi ról na Gaeilge i sochaí na hÉireann. Faoi láthair, is iad na daoine féin atá ag déanamh na fíor-roghanna. Tá laghdú tagtha ar úsáid na Gaeilge sna ceantair ina labhraítear Gaeilge go traidisiúnta, go háirithe i measc daoine óga, ach tá suim in úsáid na Gaeilge ag fás in áiteanna eile, mar a léirítear le leathnú na scoileanna trí mheán na Gaeilge.

Rinneadh gluais agus cor cainte na teanga a oiriúnú d'éilimh na sochaí agus an chultúir nua-aimseartha. Tá éirithe go an-mhaith le craoladh na Gaeilge, go háirithe TG4 a bhunaigh Aire Saothair, Michael D. Higgins.

Is é ár gcuspóir sa Rialtas ná díospóireacht leathan a spreagadh faoi thodhchaí na Gaeilge mar theanga labhartha agus é seo a úsáid mar bhonn do pholasaí amach anseo. Is í ár n-aidhm ná cur chuige an stáit maidir leis an nGaeilge a leasú sa dóigh is go ndéanfar iarrachtaí pobal agus eagraíochtaí deonacha a athneartú trí mhaoiniú imleor agus go ndéanfar iad a spreagadh chun teacht i dtreis trí thacaíocht dhearfach. Is í ár n-aidhm ná stádas na Gaeilge a ardú mar theanga choiteann agus a ról sa saol cultúrach agus acadúil a athneartú.

Déanfaidh Páirtí an Lucht Saothair an méid seo a leanas:

- Fóram a bhunú ar Theanga na Gaeilge ina mbeidh gach earnáil sa tsochaí agus gach geallsealbhóir ábhartha bainteach.

- Chomh luath agus is féidir lorgóimid tuarascáil ó gach comhlacht stáit atá ainmnithe sa Sceideal le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 agus éileoidimid air breac-chuntas a thabhairt ar a chlár ar Theanga na Gaeilge, a rath maidir le cuspóirí polasaí a bhaint amach, agus sonraí ar na hacmhainní sainaitheanta chun iad a bhaint amach.

Oideachas

Déanfaidh Páirtí an Lucht Saothair an méid seo a leanas:

- Tacaíocht ghníomhach a thabhairt do na tuismitheoirí siúd ar mian leo go bhfaighidh a bpáistí a gcuid oideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge.
- Fáil réidh le bacainní riaracháin maidir le bunú agus forbairt gaelscoileanna agus gaelcholáistí agus a chinntiú go bhfuil acmhainní imleora acu i dtéarmaí foirgneamh, múinteoirí agus saoráidí.
- Tús a chur le hathbhreithniú beart chun feabhas a chur ar theagasc na Gaeilge i mbunscoileanna agus scoileanna dara leibhéal atá trí Bhéarla.
- Scrúdú a dhéanamh ar an mbealach ar féidir feabhas a chur ar litearthacht na Gaeilge i scoileanna na Gaeltachta agus gaelscoileanna.
- Scrúdú a dhéanamh ar fhorbairt de churaclam úr sa Gaeilge do dhaltaí bunscoile agus iarbhunscoile ar cainteoirí dúchasacha Gaeilge iad agus iad siúd a théann ar scoileanna Gaeilge.
- Spreagadh, agus tacaíocht airgeadais, a thabhairt do leathnú na ngaelcholáistí.
- Dul i ngleic leis an ngéarchéim maidir le líon agus caighdeán na múinteoirí atá ábalta teagasc trí Ghaeilge.
- Scrúdú a dhéanamh ar bhunú de choláiste oiliúna do mhúinteoirí Gaeilge.
- Institiúidí tríú leibhéal a spreagadh chun raon na gcúrsaí atá ar fáil trí Ghaeilge a fhairsingiú agus éileoidimid go ndéanfar Rannóga Gaeilge a mhaoiniú agus a choinneáil i gceart.

Tionscadal a lainseáil ar “Athshlánú agus Athfhionnadh ár nOidhreachta Náisiúnta” agus í d’aidhm aige eagarthóireacht a dhéanamh ar an stór mór ábhair i nGaeilge agus i Laidin atá sna lámhscríbhinní sna leabharlanna anseo agus thar lear agus é a aistriú agus a fhoilsiú.

Rannóga na Sean-Ghaeilge agus na Meán-Ghaeilge agus Laidin na hÉireann a choinneáil agus a fhairsingiú sna hollscoileanna agus, in éineacht le Scoil an Léinn Cheiltigh, an tasc seo a thabhairt dóibh.

Maoiniú a thabhairt do bhailiú agus d’fhoilsiú an bhéalóidis agus an amhráin mar chuid dár dtionscadail oidhreachta.

UNITING PEOPLE

The Challenge

Ireland stands at the cusp of a remarkable moment in its history. The coming together of both communities to govern a peaceful Northern Ireland is the culmination of a long and painful journey. Citizens on both parts of this island shared an important part of that journey when they voted overwhelmingly to support the Good Friday Agreement. Theirs was the strongest mandate for a new departure in Irish politics, north and south of the border.

To appreciate how far we have come we should take stock of what we are leaving behind. More than 3,500 deaths on this island over the last 30 years were directly linked to the sectarian conflict in the North. Around 100 people a year on this small island were murdered every year since 1969, simply because of who they were, where they came from, who they voted for or what church they prayed in. And for every murder victim there were was an ever-increasing circle of the injured, the bereaved and the frightened.

Politicians calcified the bitterness, handing it on to their successors. Communities were brutally segregated. The politics of the last atrocity overshadowed the wider tragedy. The 'national question' dominated Irish life for decades when we could have been questioning what kind of social and economic future we wanted for ourselves and our children, whether those children lived in Dublin or Derry.

But that is the past. Today we have an opportunity to ask what kind of Ireland we want for all of its inhabitants, and the opportunity to create it. There is a new dispensation on the island of Ireland. We have the chance to make anew the relationship between the people of North and South and between previously divided communities in Northern Ireland.

Labour in government will continue working for peace. We are ambitious for a peace that is not simply the absence of aggression, but which results from a willing and easy sharing of space, a peace between people at ease with each other and working to assist each other.

However, despite all the signs of hope at political level, the scourge of sectarianism remains. While the long-awaited high-level engagement between political leaders is welcome, society in Northern Ireland is now more sustained in its divisions, such as where people live, where they socialise and where they send their children to school, than it was three decades ago.

Ironically, while the argument is often made that politicians in the North were out of step with the lives and relationships of ordinary people, the risk now is that politicians have shown an ability to share a communal life that has become entirely foreign to most of their constituents.

Ireland can do better

It is time to put partition behind us, and to explore how cooperating on an all-island basis can benefit all of the people of Ireland and enrich our shared culture and traditions.

What Labour will do

- Labour fully supports the “Shared Future” initiative. All of us on this island need to invest in policies and frameworks that will deliver good relations and a shared future in Northern Ireland. We will put reconciliation and measures to improve relationships between the communities in Northern Ireland, and between the people North and South, at the top of our agenda in government.
- Following the re-establishment of the Assembly and Executive, Labour wants to see swift implementation of all outstanding elements of the Good Friday Agreement – an agreement that we continue to support wholeheartedly as the best way of achieving a fully peaceful, democratic and lawful Northern Ireland and island of Ireland.
- All parties with a democratic mandate must signal their support for the Police Service of Northern Ireland. They must take their seats on the Policing Board and the District Policing Partnerships, and demonstrate proactive participation in the policing and criminal justice structures in the North.
- The PSNI must be given all the support and resources necessary to tackle dissident republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations that continue to be involved in criminality.
- Labour in government will work to further develop North/South political, economic, cultural and social links. This must, in the first instance, be achieved through the immediate establishment of the North/South Parliamentary Forum, to allow better relationships and understanding develop between political representatives North and South.
- We will support all efforts to develop the Northern Ireland economy, improve cross border trade, implement an all-island spatial plan and further progress the North/South agenda as laid out in the National Development Plan.
- We welcome the major progress that has been made in implementing the Patten Report, ensuring a new beginning to policing in

Northern Ireland. We will ensure increased structural co-operation and new relationships at every level, including the level of joint training, between the Garda Síochána and the PSNI. And we will prioritise the policing secondment and lateral entry provisions of the Patten Report to allow exchanges – either on a temporary or permanent basis – between members of each police service.

Centenary of the 1916 Rising

In the South, we have our own memories, some of them quite bitter. And we have our own task of reconciliation. This State was founded after a spontaneous insurrection, then a war of independence and, almost immediately after that, a civil war.

The civil war cost more lives than had died in the war of independence – all of them Irish. It also cost more lives – around 4,000 in just eleven months – than died during 30 years of troubles in Northern Ireland. Both sides carried out brutal acts. Senior figures, now prominent as icons of our political parties, died at the hands of the other side. And it left Irish society deeply divided for generations. Its influence in politics is still evident today.

It is time for us to recollect and to reconcile.

- **We will put in train preparations for the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, in a manner that honours the contribution of the men and women of Easter Week, while also showing respect for all traditions on the island.**
- Labour will ensure that Connolly’s socialist outlook and the place of Labour in Irish history are fully represented in these preparations.
- As part of the preparations for the centenary we will commission the preparation of a definitive list of all those who died in the conflict on our island in the period from Easter 1916 to the end of the civil war. The list will be inclusive. It will include northerners and southerners, British and Irish, combatants and non-combatants, and it will include a description of the circumstances of each of their deaths.

A FAIRER WORLD

The Challenge

Labour, since its foundation, has been an international party. Its founders believed in the interdependency of the different peoples of the world, the indivisible nature of the task of justice and the mobilising power of solidarity.

Globalisation has greatly benefited Ireland, but with it has come ever greater responsibility. The free market economy, the diffusion of arms and military capability, climate change and the global reach of new technologies mean that we now have an unprecedented capacity to help or to harm those far beyond our national borders.

Labour's core ideals of freedom, equality, community and democracy have always informed our solidarity with all people in all nations, and particularly those in the developing world who are most in need of our support. In 2007, that support is needed more than ever.

The UN's Millennium Development Goals are still some way from realisation, with only five countries reaching the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for overseas aid. It is essential that developing countries are also able to trade their own way out of poverty. The WTO's Doha Development Round, which was supposed to have concluded by 2004, collapsed in 2006. Meanwhile, in the absence of the development-friendly trade agreements it was intended to produce, bilateral trade treaties have proliferated. These bilateral treaties offer little of the protection afforded by the negotiating blocs of the WTO, leaving the least developed countries open to exploitation.

A globalised economy also means a globalised arms trade, and one that is rapidly expanding. Arms components come from all over the world, including Ireland, while the movement of production facilities, technology and brokers is more fluid than ever before. Ireland's public support for an Arms Trade

Treaty and a ban on cluster bombs is a welcome step in the right direction. However, is it essential that the forthcoming Control of Exports Bill, intended to update our legislation on arms trading and brokering, precipitates greater transparency in Ireland's export and brokering of military, security and police apparatus and small arms.

International security must be achieved through adherence to international law. We are fully committed to the United Nations and reform which would make it a more effective, more democratic institution. Ireland must respect international law within its own borders and proactively support it abroad. Our defence forces should be developed to respond to new peacekeeping challenges and natural disasters and to build on their proud history in UN and EU peacekeeping missions.

In an increasingly interconnected world, Ireland has a real choice to make about its interaction with the global community. We believe that that choice must be an ethical one.

Ireland can do better

The Labour Party invites public support for a New Departure towards an ethical Irish foreign policy that is rights-based, that respects international law, that promotes human rights and development and gives concrete expression to our ideals of international solidarity.

What Labour will do

Overseas Aid

We will:

- **Pass our Development Cooperation Bill to establish Ireland's official development aid expenditure as 0.7 per cent of GNP annually. The equivalent of 0.7 per cent of GNP will be paid in quarterly installments into our proposed Development Cooperation Ireland Fund regardless of whether funds from the previous year have been spent or not.**
- Reverse the decision to decentralise Irish Aid.
- Ensure that Ireland Aid is appropriately resourced to deliver the highest standard of oversight, transparency and value for money in the spending of Irish development aid. We will initiate a genuine dialogue on 'good governance'.
- **Work with local partners on the ground in countries receiving Irish development assistance to ensure that aid is recipient-driven and targeted where it can be most useful.**
- Publish current and planned Irish aid contributions in Irish Aid programme countries and encourage other donors to do the same.
- Work within the Council of Ministers to ensure that EU aid is transparent and clearly targeted at achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals.
- Press for the extension of human rights into the development arena, for example the right to water.
- Ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
- Favour the establishment at the level of the UN of a Rapid Response Agency for natural and human disasters.

Trade

- **We support the Doha Development Round and the delivery of fair trade rules for the developing world.**
- We will seek to develop special measures for developing countries within the WTO which allow them to regulate essential domestic services.
- We will work to ensure that Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and African Caribbean states are not exploitative and are compatible with the realisation of the UN Millennium Development Goals.
- We will ensure that government departments purchase Fair Trade goods wherever possible.

Arms

- We support an Arms Trade Treaty that will effectively control the international trade in arms, including small arms and light weapons.
- We support a universal ban on cluster bombs and will actively encourage other governments to do the same
- **We will ensure full and transparent reporting of arms trading and brokering as detailed in the Control of Exports Bill.**
- We will apply extra territorial controls to brokering of small arms, torture equipment and death penalty equipment, as well as those weapons covered by the EU Code of Conduct.
- We will reinstate the practice of publishing export licensing data on the website of the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment.
- We will develop the initiative of the New Agenda Group in relation to the Non-proliferation Treaty as to nuclear disarmaments, and press under the Treaty for the compliance of the nuclear powers with their commitment.

Climate Change

We have set out our commitment to domestic greenhouse gas reductions earlier in this document. We recognise that tackling global warming is indivisible from supporting development. Development aid will be wasted if, within a few decades, the populations we are seeking justice for are struggling indefinitely with more disease, flooding and drought.

We also support the creation of an international Climate Change Fund to help vulnerable developing countries adapt to changing weather patterns arising from global warming. This fund should be strictly separate to development aid.

Peace, Cooperation and Defence

Labour remains committed to the principle that Ireland should not become party to any mutual defence treaty or any EU agreement for common defence. The Irish people prize their tradition of military neutrality and we intend to uphold our Labour tradition of positive neutrality.

However, military neutrality does not bind us to isolation or inactivity. We are committed to seeing the Defence Forces playing a full part in the whole range of humanitarian and peace-related tasks, including tasks of combat forces in crisis management. We believe in putting positive neutrality into practice, for example with regard to human rights protection.

In relation to international security, Labour is committed to the United Nations, which, however imperfect, is our closest approximation to a universally accepted institution based on international law. We will also play an active role in the development of European Foreign and Security policy, such as is derived from the principles of international law.

Promoting peace at home

- **Labour believes that the international community should learn from the recent illegally declared war in Iraq. We believe that positive compliance with international law and the policy principles of positive neutrality require us to not allow our airspace or facilities to be used for such purposes as facilitating such a war, or preparing for such a conflict. We will institute a regime requiring compliance with human rights obligations that will be implemented through monitoring and inspection measures.**
- Furthermore, in government we will not allow Shannon Airport or other Irish facilities to be used for the prosecution of any war, or military preparation for such, outside of international law, international humanitarian law, or in breach of the Charter of the United Nations.
- In the case of Shannon, and consistent with our policy for more balanced regional development, Labour in government is committed to facilitating the development and growth of civilian traffic volumes using the airport.
- In accordance with the Chicago Convention on Civil Aviation, we will put in place an adequate and effective regime for the inspection and search of civil aircraft, so as to ensure that no aid or assistance is given to 'extraordinary rendition' and to guarantee the compliance of Ireland with international law and related conventions.

Peacekeeping and defence

- Our defence forces will participate in international missions only where they involve the protection of international peace and security and where they are lawful under the UN Charter and in accordance with international law. Under no circumstances whatsoever will the Irish army engage in or assist international aggression or any other act which is contrary to international law.
- **Participation in battlegroups under EU auspices will be in accordance with these governing principles. Labour is committed to maintaining the 'triple lock': we will ensure that participation in the Nordic Battlegroup is limited to peacekeeping, peace enforcement and other actions which have government, UN and Dáil approval.**
- We will invest in the future of the Defence Forces as a modern, world class, light infantry force, capable of participating in the full range of UN peacekeeping missions in as large a complement as possible.
- We will further encourage and develop opportunities to contribute to international tasks for all branches of the military including the Reserve Defence Forces and also for the Garda Síochána.
- We will actively encourage lawfully resident non-nationals to enlist in the Defence Forces.
- We will actively encourage the recruitment of women into the Defence Forces and take a determined approach to stamping out bullying and harassment.

Conduct of Foreign Policy

- We are committed to supporting the United Nations and its institutions, including the Bretton-Woods institutions, while calling for necessary reform of these bodies.
- **Drawing on our rights perspective in foreign policy, we stress the importance of our positive neutrality policy in developing strategies of**

human rights protection through the agency of the United Nations. We are committed to the forward movement towards the indivisibility and universality of human rights.

- Labour supports the delegation of peace keeping functions to regional authorities by the UN, under appropriate mandate and control so as to enable speedy conflict prevention and resolution.
- We will work towards the development of new institutional relationships that will assist in the anticipation of conflicts that are increasingly intra-state and are thus not amenable to being addressed by conventional, and especially military, strategies.
- In relation to the continuing loss of life in Palestine and Israel, Labour believes that any enduring peace will have to be based on acceptance of the principles of international law; the resolutions of the United Nations; with the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to a viable state and the right of the people of Israel to live in security and peace and an end to violence of all kinds
- We believe it is urgent that countries such as Ireland give a lead in encouraging a dialogue with moderate Islam.
- Labour will give the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs a more active role in the initiation of policy proposals, research and publication.
- Irish appointees to the Bretton Woods institutions will be required to be ratified by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs, and to appear annually before the committee.
- We will seek to eliminate the backlog in relation to ratification of UN conventions relating to human and natural welfare. Labour favours the movement away from a dualistic approach to international law, and favours the entry into Irish domestic law of such international principles as are agreed by the more advanced and rights-driven members of the international community.

The European Union

The Labour Party is committed to a united and peaceful continent of Europe, and a union of states working together to the benefit of all. We believe that a democratic and inclusive Europe offers a more prosperous, culturally enriching and secure life for Irish citizens, for other Europeans and for the citizens of the rest of the world.

In light of this we will work for:

A More Relevant Europe

Incorporation of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights into the proposed EU Constitutional Treaty reflect our long-standing commitment to a more just and equal Europe for all. This is why we support the Constitutional Treaty. However, the momentum of the European project has stalled, largely because the public have not been persuaded of the need for change. To address this critical problem, we will

- **Support the convening of an Intergovernmental Conference to agree Protocols on three key policy issues of great concern to Europe's citizens. These are climate change, global poverty and human trafficking – all complex problems which cannot be solved without a high degree of international cooperation. These protocols would set out the powers necessary to deal with these challenges, state the intention of the Member States to act through national and EU structures and set out the concrete steps to be taken if the Constitutional Treaty enters into force.**
- Support a greater level of EU co-operation in tackling cross border crime particularly in the trafficking of drugs and people and will work constructively with our European partners to ensure progress in this area.

- Promote in advance of the review of EU spending in 2008/09, a national debate involving the Oireachtas and social partners on the future of the EU budget.

A More Democratic Europe at Home and in Brussels

Labour has worked hard in recent years to ensure the Oireachtas can properly oversee what our governments do in Brussels. We will continue to ensure greater democracy at home in relation to EU matters.

- **We will work to enhance Oireachtas scrutiny of EU proposals and EU decision-making.**
- We want all EU legislation to be made in public.

A Social Europe

We want a Europe that ensures a better quality of life for all its citizens. We reject the race to the bottom as epitomised by the Irish Ferries debacle. Through our allies in the PES we have developed a firm vision for the future of a renewed social Europe which values communities but embraces economic and social reform.

We will strive in government to promote these values Europe wide particularly by:

- **Urging the Commission to adopt clear headline targets for the EU to reduce the levels of poverty measured against GDP by 2010 and a clear way of measuring progress in this regard.**
- Pressing the Commission to produce a draft Framework Directive on Services of General Interest (i.e. public services) clarifying the rights and duties of such services under EC law.
- Supporting reform of the EU social model which is based on the core values of the EU member states: equality, solidarity, redistribution.

A Globally Responsible Europe

The EU is a major economic world power. It needs to use this power for development, to eradicate hunger, control the arms trade and foster democracy and human rights. In the WTO we need to ensure greater openness and a fairer world trade system particularly for the developing world. Labour will work for a globally responsible Europe by

- Recognising the key importance of the EU Neighbourhood Policy and relations with the Russian Federation. We believe as an EU partner Russia must show a strong commitment to human rights and real democracy.
- Ensuring the fundamental spirit of the integration project which sought to create a true zone of peace, stability, prosperity and justice in Europe continues to be offered to our neighbours.
- Supporting EU action to promote peace and stability on the continent of Europe – as in Bosnia and Kosovo where Irish troops and police serve with distinction – and beyond, as in Gaza and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Working to ensure that EU aid and trade policies do not undermine the efforts of the poorest countries to grow and develop. We particularly believe that the NEAP process needs to be re-examined in this light.

The Labour Party invites public support for a New Departure towards an ethical Irish foreign policy that is rights-based, that respects international law, that promotes human rights and development and gives concrete expression to our ideals of international solidarity.

