

# AUSTRALIA'S RIGHT TO KNOW

## AUSTRALIA'S RIGHT TO KNOW WELCOMES LABOR'S GOVERNMENT INFORMATION POLICY

The Australia's Right to Know media coalition today welcomed Labor's announcement of its commitment to improve public and media access to information.

On behalf of the media coalition members, John Hartigan Chairman and Chief Executive of News Limited said "This is a great step forward in the battle for better access to information for all Australians. We congratulate Labor for giving these issues serious consideration and responding positively.

"If elected we look forward to a Labor government giving these important reforms priority.

"We commend Shadow Attorney-General Senator Joe Ludwig's work on this policy."

In particular the media coalition welcomes Labor's commitment to:

- revising the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act to promote a culture of disclosure and transparency;
- putting in place the key findings of the 1995 ALRC Report "Open Government" including the creation of an independent statutory office of the Information Commissioner;
- abolishing FOI conclusive certificates;
- protocols to ensure journalists are not prosecuted for failing to reveal confidential sources;
- looking at reform of the use of suppression orders used by courts across different jurisdictions; and
- improving Commonwealth laws to protect whistleblowers.

However, more work is required to ensure Commonwealth legislative protection for journalists who reveal their sources, provides true protection.

The starting point must be a presumption of non-disclosure. Journalists should not be compelled to disclose a confidential source except in very exceptional circumstances.

Furthermore, as recognised by Labor, in addition to legislative change to the FOI Act, there must also be a cultural shift from secrecy to openness and transparency in government. This will be possible with strong leadership from the elected Government.

End

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