



Friends of the Earth

Federal Election Questionnaire

Party policies on nanotechnologies and their products

1. Does your party have a policy on nanotechnology? (please send)

Yes. In February 2010, Federal Labor released the National Enabling Technologies Strategy – a framework for the responsible development of nanotechnology, biotechnology and other emerging technologies.

The strategy provides a comprehensive national framework with three funding components:

- \$10.6 million to support policy and regulatory development, industry uptake, international engagement and strategic research;
- \$9.4 million for public awareness and community engagement to increase understanding of enabling technologies; and
- \$18.2 million for the National Measurement Institute to improve measurement infrastructure, standards and expertise and ensure that Australia leads the way internationally.

A copy of the strategy is attached to this email.

Will your party, in opposition or government, advocate and vote to:

2. Treat nanomaterials as new chemicals, requiring them to face nano-specific safety assessment before being permitted for use in commercial products, as recommended by the United Kingdom's Royal Society?

Federal Labor supports ongoing work by the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) regarding the regulatory reform of industrial nanomaterials.

In November 2009, NICNAS released a discussion paper that included legislative and administrative options to address the issue of assessment of nano-forms of existing chemicals (i.e. chemicals already listed on the national inventory).

3. Base safety assessments on the precautionary principle?

The Gillard Labor Government's agreed position on nanotechnology is based on three key overarching principles. These are that we must:

- protect the health and safety of humans and the environment;
- foster informed community debate; and
- achieve economic and social benefits from the responsible adoption of nanotechnology.

4. Establish a mandatory register of all commercially available manufactured nanomaterials?

Federal Labor will consider the issue of a mandatory register in the context of other initiatives by regulators relating to information about nanomaterials.

For example, NICNAS has included the possibility of introducing a mandatory notification and assessment program in its discussion paper on the regulatory reform of industrial nanomaterials.

In 2008, Safe Work Australia developed a list of organisations believed to be using nanotechnology or nanomaterials. This list will be revised and validated in 2010, and Safe Work Australia will also develop a database of nanotechnology-related products that may be used in Australian workplaces.

5. Ensure that Material Safety Data Sheets provide relevant, nano-specific safety information to workers?

Federal Labor supports ongoing work by Safe Work Australia regarding information about nanomaterials contained in Material Safety Data Sheets.

In June 2010, Safe Work Australia published a report that evaluated the adequacy of information provided in Material Safety Data Sheets for products containing engineered nanomaterials.

Safe Work Australia has confirmed that this report will be used to inform revisions of the model Codes of Practice for Material Safety Data Sheets and labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals.

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6. Introduce mandatory labelling of all nano-ingredients in food, food packaging, sunscreens and cosmetics, industrial and agricultural chemicals, and substances used in workplaces?

Under existing regulations, manufacturers, producers, suppliers and importers of goods and services are already required to provide appropriate information to consumers about the safety of certain products.

For example, current labelling requirements for workplace chemicals require that specific hazards and risks of the material are identified on the label, irrespective of the size and form of the material.

7. Support greater funding for nanotechnology risk research?

The Gillard Labor Government provided \$107.7 million for nanotechnology research and projects in 2008-9 (from the *2008-09 National Nanotechnology Annual Report*).

This included funding from agencies including the Australian Research Council, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Projects undertaken include research into hydrogen storage materials, energy conversion, nanotechnology OH&S and the fate of manufactured nanoparticles in the environment.

Federal Labor has also responded to concerns about the cessation of funding for the Australian Research Council Nanotechnology Network (ARCNN). Through the National Enabling Technologies Strategy, the Gillard Labor Government will provide the ARCNN with \$50,000, enabling the network to pursue long-term funding options.

8. Support greater funding for nanotechnology social research, including ethical, socio-economic, human rights aspects?

Federal Labor supports research into the social and economic impacts of nanotechnology under the National Enabling Technologies Strategy and through mainstream research funding programs.

In May 2009, the Gillard Labor Government released a review of international and national literature on the social and economic impacts of nanotechnology, conducted by Monash

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University. This has formed the basis of ongoing work into the social and economic impacts of nanotechnology, overseen by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

9. Support a greater role for public participation in decision making about nanotechnology research, development and governance?

Under the National Enabling Technologies Strategy, Federal Labor has committed to establishing a Stakeholder Advisory Council. The council will advise Government on the implementation of the strategy, and will include representatives of industry, unions and non-government organisations, along with researchers, ethicists and social scientists.

Federal Labor has also committed to establishing an Expert Forum, made up of foresighting experts, researchers and industry representatives, to monitor emerging trends.

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