OUR PLAN

FOR A SAFER AUSTRALIA
AND A MORE
PROSPEROUS REGION
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KEY POINTS

The Liberal and Nationals Government’s international agenda is built on its strong domestic foundations – keeping our economy strong, keeping Australians safe, and keeping Australians together.

The values that guide our foreign policy and our national interests are a belief in liberal democracy, the rule of law, separation of powers, and equality, where every citizen has choice and opportunity to follow their own paths. We believe that the path to peace and liberty demands the pursuit of prosperity through private capital, rights to own property, entrepreneurialism, and free and open markets.

We believe in standing with nations that believe the same things as we do. But we also believe in being good neighbours and respecting others’ sovereignty, regardless of whether there are differences in how we see the world and run our respective societies.

That agenda is reflected in the key themes of the Government’s 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper - the first comprehensive strategy for Australia’s international engagement in 14 years.

The White Paper sets out a strong agenda to:

- Strengthen our alliances and strategic partnerships, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, to foster a stable region.
- Keep Australians safe from threats such as terrorism, cyber threats and health pandemics.
- Deliver sustainable and targeted overseas development assistance.
- Promote a robust international rules-based order to support global peace and prosperity.

OUR RECORD

Reflecting our commitment to our neighbourhood the Liberal and Nationals Government has taken Australia’s engagement in the Indo-Pacific to a new level by:

- Committing to a record number of 126 overseas diplomatic missions with a focus on additional posts in our region, including a commitment to diplomatic representation in every Pacific Island Forum member country.
- Establishing an Office of the Pacific to enhance our relationships with Pacific governments and regional organisations as part of our flagship Pacific Step Up initiatives coupled with record levels of assistance to the region.
- Elevating our relationship with over half of ASEAN member nations to Strategic Partnership or Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and hosting the first ever Australia-ASEAN Special Summit.
• Establishing the successful New Colombo Plan which, since 2014, has resulted in 50,000 scholarships and mobility grants to Australian undergraduates to work, study and learn languages across the Indo-Pacific.

• Initiating and implementing the India Economic Strategy which will transform our economic partnership with India and bring India into the top tier of our economic partners.

• Creating the innovative National Foundation for Australia-China Relations to promote further our wide-ranging relationship with China.

• Delivering sustainable, responsible and effective overseas development assistance.

We are also focussed on keeping Australians safe at home and abroad by:

• Strengthening health security in the region through an investment of $300 million towards the avoidance and containment of infectious disease threats.

• Boosting our ground-breaking International Cyber Engagement to bring Australia’s total investment in cyber cooperation to $48.3 million by 2022 placing us at the front of global efforts on cyber resilience.

• Implementing robust sanctions regimes, including in response to destabilising activities in Iran and North Korea.

• Defending the international rules-based order, including by dedicating $50.3 million to support prosecutions of individuals responsible for the downing of MH17 in which 38 Australians lost their lives.

• Contributing to the 79 member Global Coalition to Counter Daesh, seeing its territorial defeat in March 2019.

And growing our economy by:

• Securing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and landmark agreements with China, Japan, South Korea and Indonesia among others, so that we now have Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with seven of our top eight export markets and these agreements cover over 70 per cent of trade.

• Supporting the growth of ASEAN economies which are now collectively our second biggest trading partner.

• Expanding labour mobility with the new uncapped Pacific Labour Scheme.

**OUR PLAN**

**Strengthening our alliances and strategic partnerships**

In the face of changing geo-strategic dynamics, only the Liberal and Nationals Government can continue to drive our key bilateral strategic partnerships.
Only the Liberal and Nationals Government can be trusted to strengthen Australia’s alliance and enduring friendship with our closest ally, largest international partner and greatest source of foreign investment, the United States.

The Liberals and Nationals signed the ANZUS Treaty, formalising Australia’s alliance with the US. We understand that the alliance which is based on our mutual interests and shared values is at the cornerstone of Australia’s national security and economic growth.

We will continue to guarantee the breadth, vitality and longevity of this deep bilateral relationship and promote greater economic opportunities for Australians and Australian businesses.

We have strengthened our dynamic partnership with the United Kingdom through close cooperation on international security issues and mutual support defending the international rules-based order: including our united stand holding Russia to account for the chemical weapon attack in Salisbury. The Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to protecting Australian businesses during the Brexit process, as well as tightening our strategic and economic bilateral ties through a new free trade agreement when the UK is ready to do so.

At the same time, we’ve begun negotiations on an EU-Australia FTA. We will ensure Australia has strong partnerships with European Union countries, including France. The Liberal and Nationals Government has elevated our joint commitment to addressing common threats with France through the Australia-France initiative (AFiniti), which builds on the 2017 Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

Stepping up Australia’s engagement in the Pacific Stepping up in the Pacific is at the forefront of the Liberal and Nationals Government’s foreign policy. The Government’s leadership on regional engagement has resulted in the closest relationship ever with our Pacific family. Our Pacific Step Up strengthens Australia’s security and our economic and people-to-people links.

The Government is investing a record $1.4 billion in Pacific development assistance, reflecting our strong commitment to a Pacific region that is secure strategically, stable economically and sovereign politically. We are committed to implementing the 2018 Pacific Islands Forum’s Boe Declaration on Regional Security which sets out the strategic challenges for the region, from cybersecurity and transnational crime to climate change.

Our key commitments in the region include:

- A new Office of the Pacific to support a suite of initiatives strengthening economic, security, community, church, education and sporting ties.
- Increased funding for gender equality and prevention of domestic violence, including a 10-year roadmap.
- Deepening collaboration between Australian and Pacific churches through the Church Partnerships Program thereby enhancing people-to-people links, humanitarian responses and gender equality.
• The Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) which will invest $2 billion to support vital infrastructure development in the region.

The Trilateral Partnership for Infrastructure and Investment, with the US and Japan, to mobilise private investment and deliver sustainable Pacific infrastructure.

The Papua New Guinea Electrification Partnership in which we will join PNG, Japan, New Zealand and the United States to provide electricity access for 70 per cent of Papua New Guinea by 2030.

A new Pacific-Australia Card (PAC) from mid-2019 to streamline access and travel to Australia for visiting Pacific island leaders.

Deeper educational links through new scholarships for Pacific students to study in Australian secondary schools and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector, an expanded school partnerships program to build teacher-to-teacher links with the Pacific and an $84 million, six-year investment in a new Australia-University of the South Pacific partnership to support the Pacific’s tertiary education needs.

The new Australia-Pacific Sports Linkages Program in Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu to boost leadership, gender equality and health and improve the lives of people with disability.

The provision of 1,000 hours of new Australian television content each year for three years to Pacific broadcasters in partnership with FreeTV.

Implementation of the comprehensive 2019 Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership, paving the way for closer security and economic links.

A renewed Strategic Partnership with Papua New Guinea.

A partnership with Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to install a high-speed undersea internet cable and take advantage of new digital opportunities.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will work more closely than ever with our Pacific family to address regional concerns, including climate change. We are on track to meet our commitment to provide $1 billion in climate finance by 2020, including $300 million to help our Pacific neighbours develop greater resilience.

**Building our economies together – labour mobility**

The Liberal and Nationals Government’s Seasonal Worker Programme and new Pacific Labour
Scheme is a genuine win-win partnership for Australia and the Pacific, strengthening our economies and supporting Australian farmers and Pacific workers.

We will roll out the existing uncapped Scheme across the Pacific, building on the success of the Seasonal Worker Programme that has matched Australian farmers with 33,000 Pacific workers. The labour mobility schemes have so far provided an extra $144 million in life-changing income for families and villages in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

**Our deepening partnerships in Asia**

The Liberal and Nationals Government’s increased focus on Australia’s engagement with Asia is critical to promoting the region’s stability and prosperity.

We will continue to build our relationship with China – our largest two-way trading partner – including advancing our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. We are committed to a constructive relationship with China founded on mutual benefit. There will be issues on which we do not agree but we will continue to manage these on the basis of mutual respect.

Acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of the relationship, the Liberals and Nationals has announced a new and innovative National Foundation for Australia-China Relations. This high-profile platform will harness the private sector, peak bodies, NGOs, state and federal agencies and the Chinese-Australian community in engaging China.

Australia will continue to deepen our partnership with Indonesia, addressing common challenges together. In addition, since 2013 we have elevated our relationship with half of the 10 ASEAN nations to Strategic Partnership or Comprehensive Strategic Partnership status. We’ve also hosted the inaugural Australia-ASEAN Special Summit, underscoring our bilateral ties and reinvigorating our economic and security cooperation.

Through our development assistance, the Liberal and Nationals Government has supported Southeast Asian nations to unlock their economic potential: sharing our technical expertise to enhance productivity, promote reform and reduce poverty. As a result of this leadership, Australia’s trade with ASEAN countries is now greater than that with our second-largest trading partner, Japan.

We will ensure our engagement with ASEAN focuses on critical issues for the region, including infrastructure.

As our Southeast Asian neighbours transition from developing to middle-income economies, the Liberal and Nationals Government will invest $121 million to support them to manage infrastructure development and develop economic resilience. We are also contributing $30 million to support ASEAN member states to harness the opportunities and address the challenges of
rapid urbanisation, and $30 million to assist countries in the Mekong with water resource management.

Acknowledging that maritime disputes are a growing source of potential instability in a more contested Indo-Pacific, we will invest $40 million to support nations in the region to improve awareness of maritime territory, increase maritime safety and build capacity in international sea law. We will strengthen the focus on maritime issues within the region’s premier security forum, the East Asia Summit. And we will promote adherence to international norms, especially the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Our special strategic partnership with Japan and our growing relationship with the Republic of Korea will also continue to be a priority, including through our 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministers’ meetings. We have also elevated the relationship with India through our India Economic Strategy, which will transform the economic partnership over the next two decades, appointing Ministerial champions for education, agribusiness, resources and tourism to ensure Australia can support India’s growth and leverage the opportunities.

Investing in the next generation – the New Colombo Plan

The Liberal and Nationals Government’s flagship initiative for tertiary education, the New Colombo Plan (NCP), enables young Australians to study and undertake internships in the Indo-Pacific. More than 50,000 scholarships and mobility grants have been awarded since 2014. We’ve ensured the program’s ongoing success through strengthened private sector partnerships, providing work experience for students and developing a new generation of Australian leaders with cross-cultural skills for the modern workforce.

Greater security for our growing region

Regional security and associated cooperation fosters resilience, stability and economic prosperity. The Liberal and Nationals Government will continue to place particular emphasis on cooperation in relation to the challenge of transnational organised crime.

Close to home we are working with our Pacific neighbours to better share information, aggregate and analyse security intelligence and improve our responses to address transnational crime, cyber threats and other regional security challenges. New initiatives such as the Pacific Fusion Centre and the Australia-Pacific Security College will be critical tools in this endeavour.

We are supporting Papua New Guinea’s development of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force’s Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island. The base will increase defence force cooperation with Australia and our joint ability to tackle transnational organised crime such as drug trafficking, people smuggling and child exploitation.
The Liberal and Nationals Government has also positioned Australia as a regional leader in addressing human trafficking and modern slavery. We are investing $80 million in the ASEAN-Australia Human Trafficking program to strengthen criminal justice responses and protect the rights of victims. We will continue to support ASEAN in our mutual aim to eliminate human trafficking.

We have also established the Bali Process, co-chairing with Indonesia a forum that brings together 45 regional countries to develop practical solutions against people smuggling and human trafficking. The Bali Process has developed regional police capacity to disrupt human trafficking, strengthened cooperation between law and justice officials and improved national legislation to better support victims.

**Supporting a more robust international rules-based order**

Australia will be safer and more prosperous with global differences managed by agreed rules rather than by the exercise of power alone.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will support an Indo-Pacific region in which the rights of all states are respected and adherence to rules delivers lasting peace. Internationally, we are committed to promoting and protecting the rules and institutions that support stability and prosperity and enable collective action to meet global challenges.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will ensure Australia engages constructively in the reform of international institutions.

We will continue our efforts to reform the United Nations to make it more accountable, transparent and efficient. We have an abiding interest in keeping markets open and support an open global economy to create more jobs and economic opportunities for Australians. We will continue to take a stand against protectionism and advance trade liberalisation bilaterally and through the World Trade Organization (WTO).

We need to ensure the rules-based trading system remains fit-for-purpose and we will support efforts to improve and strengthen the WTO, recognising some of the legitimate frustrations of the US and others. We will pursue a pragmatic trade agenda underpinned by trade liberalisation.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will continue to support Australia’s role as a member of the G20, the premier international forum for global economic cooperation. The G20 plays a central role in bolstering institutions and policies that contribute to global prosperity and the integrity of international financial and tax systems. Under the Liberal and Nationals Government Australia successfully chaired the G20 in 2014, culminating in the Leaders’ Summit in Brisbane.

Our Government will continue to uphold international law, support international accountability
mechanisms and use our development assistance to help our partners comply with international rules. We will continue to call out behaviour that is inconsistent with our values, including the biased targeting of Israel in the United Nations General Assembly and other UN forums.

The Liberal and Nationals Government initiated and secured our successful candidacy for the 2018-20 term of the UN Human Rights Council, where Australia is taking a strong leadership role on the protection and promotion of global human rights. We will continue to champion the indivisibility, universality and inalienability of human rights – principles underpinned by our fundamental commitment to democracy, the rule of law, individual freedom and the dignity of the individual.

Australia’s priorities include pursuing the global abolition of the death penalty, ending discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and the protection of the rights of LGBTI people, ensuring freedom of religion and belief, advancing Indigenous peoples’ rights globally, championing the rights of people with disability, promoting gender equality and supporting the role of civil society and national human rights institutions.

**Holding Russia to account – MH17**

The Liberal and Nationals Government leveraged our membership of the UN Security Council in 2013-14 to strengthen its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. In July 2014, Australia led the Security Council’s response to the downing of Malaysia Flight #17 (MH-17) over eastern Ukraine and the horrific deaths of 298 civilians, including 38 Australians. Australia’s efforts secured a resolution that called for an independent tribunal to prosecute those responsible, as well as immediate and unrestricted access to the crash site.

In May 2018, the Liberal and Nationals Government, along with the Netherlands, held Russia to account for its role in the downing of MH17. We remain committed to obtaining justice for the families and loved ones of the 38 Australian victims, having dedicated $50.3 million towards the Dutch prosecutions of those responsible.

**Increasing our commitment to international security at home and abroad**

Building on our reform of Australia’s domestic security arrangements, the Liberal and Nationals Government has introduced new legislation which allows Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) officers to better protect Australia’s national security interests when serving overseas in dangerous circumstances.

We have also cancelled or refused hundreds of passports in connection with the Syria/Iraq conflict to ensure foreign fighters cannot return to our shores until the safety of the Australian community can be assured.
In addition to our extensive counter-terrorism efforts both at home and abroad the Liberal and Nationals Government will also strengthen Australia’s reputation as a contributor to national and global policy in arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and counter-proliferation.

We will work with partners to counter the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction including by North Korea and Iran. We will continue to implement UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions, as well as our own to counter proliferation activities and will maintain support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran – subject to Iran’s ongoing compliance – and advocate for the strengthening of security arrangements relating to Iran which are of international concern.

**Protecting Australians from cyber threats**

The Liberal and Nationals Government will continue to strengthen our responses to deter malicious foreign cyber actors and ensure they cannot act with impunity.

Since December 2017, the Liberal and Nationals Government has joined partners in attributing seven separate cyber intrusions to specific countries, namely North Korea, Russia and China.

The Government has strengthened Australia’s cyber security foundations, undertaking unprecedented investment and significant legislative and policy reform to ensure the Australian people and national interests are better protected.

As part of our $230 million investment under the 2016 Cyber Security Strategy the Liberal and Nationals Government has expanded its investment in our International Cyber Engagement Strategy by providing an additional $9 million for Australia’s Cyber Cooperation Program. This brings Australia’s investment in cyber cooperation to $48.3 million by 2022 for the development of cyber security centres and secure cyber infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific. This includes the establishment of more than 40 cyber security and accessibility projects across 24 South east Asian and Pacific nations since 2016. We have also appointed Australia’s first Ambassador for Cyber Affairs.

Our funding commitments put Australia at the forefront of international efforts to promote cyber resilience and a safer online environment.

**Delivering effective and targeted overseas development assistance**

Our development assistance is vital for Australia’s strategic and economic interests and those of our development partners – especially in our Indo-Pacific region.

We have a clear aid policy: promote prosperity, reduce poverty and enhance stability. We have
10 clear strategic goals to ensure our aid program is effective, targeted and achieves value for money.

And we’re delivering meaningful results.

Unlike Labor’s ad hoc plan, our commitment to overseas development assistance does not harm the Australian economy or risk Australian jobs. Our plan is about growing prosperity for Australia, as well as our neighbours.

In providing more than $4 billion in Official Development Assistance in 2019-20, Australia is helping tackle poverty and building a stronger and more resilient Indo-Pacific. Our humanitarian assistance will increase to $450 million in 2019-20 to meet record levels of need. We invested over $1 billion in 2018-19 in Aid for Trade activities such as capacity building, trade and economic infrastructure initiatives.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is investing a record $1.4 billion in development assistance to the Pacific, reflecting our strong commitment to prosperity, peace and stability in our region. Australia’s top 10 bilateral programs are all in our region, with significant backing of our two closest neighbours: we will support Papua New Guinea with $512.3 million and Indonesia with $255.7 million to ensure new levels of economic and security cooperation.

The Liberal and Nationals Government’s aid program responds to evolving global challenges in an increasingly contested region, promoting economic growth and pathways out of poverty. All our new aid investments explore ways to promote private sector growth or engage the private sector.

We will target our investment to those who need it most and ensure measurable outcomes for Australia and our developing and donor partners.

Labor’s claim that Australia cannot achieve sustainable growth, poverty reduction and inclusive development without an increase in foreign aid is false. We have achieved all of those goals more effectively and with no extra pressure on the Budget or the economy.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is determined to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly, affordably and sustainably on Australia’s overseas aid program.

**THE CHOICE**

Unlike the Liberal and Nationals Government, Labor has never developed a comprehensive foreign policy strategy.

Labor’s policy is simply to hope for the best, reacting to foreign policy decisions on the run.
When last in office, Labor damaged our relationships in the region and shunned our traditional partners. It plunged the nation into debt and misspent taxpayers’ hard-earned money – diverting $475 million in two years from the aid budget to pay for its failed border protection policies, making the Gillard Government one of the of the largest recipients of its own aid program. Labor failed to start and conclude a single FTA during their time in Government.

By contrast, the Liberal and Nationals Government offers steady, strategic and economic diplomacy that reinforces security and stability in our region.

Labor simply can’t be trusted on foreign policy.

THE COST

The Liberal and Nationals Government’s foreign affairs and aid policies will not place additional costs on the Budget.