

One Ireland
jobs, reform, fairness

REFORM

An aerial photograph of a rural Irish landscape, showing rolling hills and fields. A prominent feature is a large, irregularly shaped white patch on one of the hills, which could represent a snowdrift, a field of snow, or a specific agricultural feature. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color.

Reform

Reforming Politics

TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour's pledge is that Ireland will never again be vulnerable to the kinds of abuses of corporate and political power that have risked our country's sovereignty. To restore confidence at home and abroad in public governance, Ireland must make significant changes in the culture and framework within which business is conducted.

That applies both to the formal rules of corporate governance and to the relationship between money and politics. Labour will rid Ireland of its 'Crony Capitalism' image, and restore trust in our democracy.

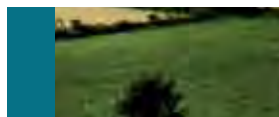
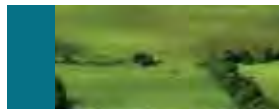
One Ireland
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THE FIRST STEPS

- End political cronyism by opening up positions on state boards to all qualified candidates, and require appointments to be scrutinised by the Dáil
- Make good corporate governance a legal condition of being listed on the Irish stock exchange
- Significantly reduce political donations and lower the threshold for disclosure of donations
- Regulate political lobbying, including ex-Ministers and senior civil servants working as private lobbyists after leaving public service
- A Whistleblower's Law to protect those in the public and private sector who expose corruption or misconduct



ENDING POLITICAL CRONYISM

Labour will end the system whereby appointments to state boards are used as a form of political patronage and for rewarding insiders. In future, appointment to boards must be based on a demonstrable capacity to do the job.

Labour intends to start this process immediately. To that end, the Labour Party will reserve the right to seek the resignation of all those appointed to State Boards since 22 November 2010. Labour will publicly advertise all vacancies, and invite applications from the public. A database of individuals who are willing to serve, together with their qualifications, will be established.

Oireachtas committees will consider the suitability of nominated candidates, including having candidates appear before the committee, and it will be a condition of appointment that board members appear before committees as required.

Labour will enact legislation to provide for a binding code of practice for corporate governance, which will be obligatory for companies wishing to be listed on the Irish stock exchange.

ENDING THE LINK BETWEEN BIG MONEY AND POLITICS

Labour will end the link between big money and politics. It is not enough to fold up the Galway tent. We have to end the culture that created it: a culture where money can buy access to power. To restore its citizens' faith in democracy, and our country's reputation abroad, we need to send a clear message that influence in Ireland is not for sale.

Labour will introduce spending limits for all elections, including Presidential elections and constitutional referendums and impose spending limits on political parties for a period of six months in advance of scheduled Local, European, General and Presidential Elections.

Labour's legislation will significantly reduce the limit on political donations to political parties and candidates to €2,500 and €1,000 respectively, and require disclosure of all aggregate sums above €1,500 and €600 respectively.

Labour will make good corporate governance the law, not an optional extra

CLEANING UP CORPORATE CRONYISM

Labour will make good corporate governance the law, not an optional extra. Fianna Fáil is happy with voluntary codes of regulation. Labour believes this is a blank cheque for corporate misconduct, and do not now provide sufficient reassurance to investors, who need to be convinced that Ireland is a fair, transparent place to do business.

ENCOURAGING OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is one of the most powerful weapons against corruption. Labour will introduce Whistleblower's Protection legislation that will protect an employee who reports misconduct from losing their job, or being otherwise penalised, to encourage greater transparency, both in the public service and in private institutions such as banks.

It is in the public's interest to know who is paid to seek to influence public policy and decision making, at national and local level. Labour will, for the first time in Ireland, regulate the practice of political lobbying. Labour will introduce a statutory register of lobbyists and a statutory code governing the practice of lobbying. This code will make it illegal for an ex-Minister or senior public servant to lobby in their previous sphere of influence for two years after leaving their post.

Labour will restore the Freedom of Information Act so that it is as comprehensive as was originally intended. The fee structure for Freedom of Information requests will be reformed so that cost does not discourage individuals and organisations from seeking information, and the remit of the Freedom of Information and the Ombudsman Acts will be extended to the Garda Síochána, the Central Bank and other bodies significantly funded from the public purse, that are currently excluded.

The Official Secrets Act will also be repealed, with criminal sanction only retained for breaches which involve a serious threat to the vital interests of the State.

Labour will restore the Freedom of Information Act so that it is as comprehensive as was originally intended

Reform

Reforming government

TIME FOR CHANGE

This is the second time in a generation that Ireland has been confronted by a profound economic crisis, that is a direct result of bad governance. It is not enough to remove Fianna Fáil's grip on government – we have to change government itself.

We need to put power back in the hands of the Irish people, and make practical changes so that our government, at every level, better serves the people's interests.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- A Constitutional Convention to draw up a new Constitution for the Ireland of the 21st century



- Abolish the Seanad, but make the Dáil stronger, with a longer working day, a longer working week, less holidays, and with more powers to hold the Government to account



- Ministers and senior civil servants to be made legally accountable for decisions they make



- An Independent Fiscal Advisory Council to advise government on the economic impact of its policy decisions



- Restore democratic accountability to local government, and devolve more decision-making powers to local communities

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A FRESH START WITH A NEW CONSTITUTION

It is time for a fundamental review of our Constitution, by the people to whom it belongs. Labour proposes a Constitutional Convention, a coming together of all strands of Irish society to rewrite our Constitution.

The Constitutional Convention would have an open mandate, and comprise 90 members. Thirty of its members would be drawn from the Oireachtas, thirty would be members of civil society organisations and other people with relevant legal or academic expertise, and thirty would be ordinary citizens, chosen by lot. The mandate would be to review the Constitution and draft a reformed one within a year.

MORE EFFICIENT, MORE EFFECTIVE, MORE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

Labour believes that a nation of our size, scale and composition only needs one strong, single-chamber, directly elected parliament with real legislative and oversight powers to effectively do the people's business in the 21st Century. We will be proposing to the Constitutional Convention that the Seanad be abolished.

As part of Labour's Comprehensive Spending Review, all quangos and bodies significantly funded by the taxpayer will have to justify their existence as a separate entity. Any new bodies established will have a sunset clause, that requires them to either justify their continued existence, or be folded up.

Labour will also introduce a package of changes that will bring about a 50 per cent increase in Dáil sitting days. Dáil Éireann will in future meet four days a week. 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".

The Dáil will be made more effective and more democratic through reforms that give opposition TDs and backbench government TDs more power to propose and scrutinise laws. Elected representatives will have stronger powers to hold government, and publicly-funded state bodies to account.

Citizens will also be able to petition the Oireachtas to look into issues of national importance, similar to their rights to petition the European Parliament.

Labour proposes a Constitutional Convention, a coming together of all strands of Irish society to rewrite our Constitution

AN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Labour will establish an independent Electoral and Public Offices Commission that will subsume the Standards in Public Offices Commission; the powers of Referendum and Constituency Commissions; and the responsibilities of local authorities and the Department of the Environment in relation to the electoral register and elections. Labour will also revise the terms of reference for the revision of constituencies to ensure the fairest and most proportionate distribution of seats possible.

HOLDING MINISTERS AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS TO ACCOUNT

Labour will introduce new legislation making Ministers and senior civil servants legally accountable for their decisions, and for the management of their departments in the public interest. Where a responsibility is delegated through several civil service grades, each grade will be held accountable for their element of it.

Restrictions on the nature and extent of evidence by civil servants to Oireachtas committees will be scrapped, and replaced with new guidelines for civil servants that reflect the reality of authority delegated to them, and their personal accountability for the way it is exercised. Labour will also publish the Attorney General's advice to government when it is appropriate to do so.

EMBEDDING FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY IN GOVERNMENT

Labour will put an end to the boom and bust economics that defined Fianna Fáil's approach to governance.

Labour will establish an independent Fiscal Advisory Council, separated from fiscal decision-makers in government, that would undertake macroeconomic and fiscal projections and monitoring. The Fiscal Advisory Council functions would include identifying and advising on cyclical and counter-cyclical fiscal policies and structural deficits; the cyclical or temporary nature of particular revenues; and the need to maintain an appropriate and effective tax base. All of its recommendations will be published.

Labour in government will also bring forward and reform the annual Estimates cycle, so that it becomes more timely, transparent and

Labour will introduce new legislation making Ministers and senior civil servants legally accountable for their decisions

relevant. 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 Book of Estimates will also 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.

DÁIL INVESTIGATIONS INSTEAD OF COSTLY TRIBUNALS

Labour will establish a strong, bi-partisan Investigations, Oversight and Petitions Committee of the Oireachtas with the power to investigate matters of national concern.

The Committee would receive parliamentary petitions from individuals and groups in the community seeking the redress of grievances connected with the public services of the State and with the public administration generally.

Where particular petitions warranted detailed investigation, the Committee would be empowered to order such investigations through a Parliamentary Investigator, who would be appointed from within the public service. Where

the Investigator was unable to establish clear facts, the report of a parliamentary investigator would if necessary be followed by either a formal parliamentary inquiry or other statutory investigation, as appropriate.

REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government needs significant reform. Its approach to delivering services can be fragmented and costly, and it is prevented from adapting to local needs by excessive control from central government.

Labour fundamentally believes in devolving power to local government, and putting local communities in control. That is why Labour is committed to reforming local government to make it more democratic, more effective in responding to local needs, and better value for money.

PUTTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL

Labour will return democratic accountability to elected councillors. The position of County Manager will be abolished and replaced with that of Chief Executive, with a limited range of executive functions. The purpose of the Chief Executive will be to facilitate the implementation of democratically decided policy. As resources allow, Labour favours the introduction of democratically elected mayors, beginning with an elected mayor for Dublin.

Labour will give councillors the power to seek reports from, and question in public, the providers of public services in their area

A democratically-decided Regional or City Plan will replace the top-down Strategic Planning Guideline model.

Labour will give councillors the power to seek reports from, and question in public, the providers of public services in their area. Councillors will also be empowered to question private sector service providers, such as internet and digital TV providers, local banks or private schools, on their public service remit.

The voting age in local elections will be reduced to 16, so that teenagers have more of a say in local services.

BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY

The Local Government Director of Audit will be directed to produce an annual report covering all of his functions to the Oireachtas Committee on the Environment. This will determine where local government can produce greater efficiencies.

Labour will also examine what services could be converged between two or more local authorities, such as technology support, human resources and fire services. Labour will also introduce a single national building inspectorate service.

Local authorities that deliver efficiencies, either alone or through sharing services, over and above that which is required will be able to re-

invest a proportion of that saving in local initiatives.

MORE EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF LOCAL SERVICES

In the longer term, Labour favours a fundamental reorganisation of local governance structures that will allow for the devolution of much greater decision-making powers over local services to local people. This restructuring could give local communities more control over transport and traffic, economic development, educational infrastructure, and local responses to crime and local healthcare needs.

Reform

Reforming Public Services

TIME FOR CHANGE

The Labour Party believes that the most important needs of our society should not be left solely to the market to provide. The values that underpin public services are different to those of for-profit private businesses, but that does not mean public services cannot be delivered efficiently, cost-effectively, and when and where users need them.

It is time to reform and modernise our public service so that it is fit for purpose in a fair society, and a rejuvenated economy.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- An Office of Public Sector Reform, headed by a Minister at Cabinet, established for a limited period, to get the job of public service reform done
- A reduction in the number of quangos and duplication of agencies and government departments
- Government departments and agencies accountable for meeting joined-up government objectives
- Fewer management layers in the civil and public service, but more freedom for managers to manage staff and budgets
- One phone number, one website or one public office for multiple public services, to make it easier for customers to find what they need



DRIVING REFORM

Labour will establish an Office of Public Sector Reform with responsibility for all matters in relation to the public service and headed by a Minister who sits at Cabinet. This Office will have particular responsibility for planning and implementing the change agenda and for ensuring that all aspects of that agenda are communicated fully to the public and to public sector staff.

A COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW OF ALL PUBLIC SPENDING

Labour will undertake a Comprehensive Spending Review of all government spending to assess its effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes, and its value for money for the taxpayer.

As part of that review, Labour will examine the number, range and activities of bodies funded significantly from the public purse, including at local government level, and reduce their numbers where appropriate. In future, when proposing a new agency, the relevant government department will have to prove that its functions cannot be carried out within an existing framework.

A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

For ten years in government, Fianna Fáil's first response to any problem was to throw money at it. This lack of clear government priorities meant that public spending was less effective than it could have been.

Labour in government will provide clear and unambiguous long, medium and short term strategic priorities, which will be clearly communicated to the public service and to citizens. Strategic priorities will be translated into high level goals for all relevant Departments, on a 'whole of government' basis, and in consultation with Ministers. Performance indicators will be identified to allow progress on the high level priorities to be monitored.

Each government department and public service agency will be expected to demonstrate how it will deliver on stated strategic government objectives. Annual reports of government departments and state agencies will include output statements and audited financial accounts prepared on generally accepted accounting principles. The performance information provided in output and outcome-focused measurement will feed into the decision making process for future plans at political and senior management level.

DEVOLVING SPENDING WITH GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY

Labour will introduce increased delegation of budgets, subject to detailed plans, relevant performance reporting and audited accounts compiled in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, that will allow managers greater autonomy and increased flexibility, aligned with greater accountability.

Labour will establish an Office of Public Sector Reform to drive change in the public service

Departmental and agency budgets will be prepared for the medium term as well as on an annual basis. Detailed business cases will be required for major projects, with review and reporting requirements built in to the plan. Sanctions will be imposed at an early stage for significant overruns.

In demanding better accountability, Labour will change the current emphasis on performance reporting to performance management. All medium to long-term projects that involve significant public spending will be subject to a cost benefit analysis, and to ongoing evaluation. Results of programme evaluations will be published on a programme evaluation website, and programmes not meeting their objectives will be wound down.

MORE MODERN MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES

The proliferation of management grades in the civil service creates huge gaps between the front line and the decision makers, and creates unnecessary internal bureaucracy. Labour will review the grading structure of civil service departments and in the public service, and reduce the number of management grades, to move away from bureaucratic box-ticking, and towards a management structure that allows for innovation and flexibility.

Public service managers will be given greater autonomy in deciding how they use staffing budgets and resources to achieve agreed outcomes. Labour will remove barriers to mobility across the public service, so that staff can be matched to areas of greatest need and to areas where their skills are most appropriate.

The capacity of managers in the public service will be improved through management skills training

Labour will review the grading structure of civil service departments and in the public service

with particular focus on strategic management and evaluation, project management, resource management and communications. High level strategic goals will be reflected in individual goals in a new performance management and development system for staff.

Staff recognition schemes will be developed and devolved, with particular emphasis on team awards. Staff will also be encouraged to put forward suggestions for improving service delivery and organisation efficiency and effectiveness.

Public and civil service staff will be encouraged to contribute their views and suggestions for reform through channels such as staff forums and blogs. Incentives will be put in place to promote good internal communications and to ensure staff are widely consulted within public sector organisations and given the opportunity to influence their work and working environment.

MORE USER-CENTRED SERVICE DELIVERY

Labour takes a "citizen-centred" approach to public service reform. Government services websites, public offices, telephone services, and helplines will be reconfigured to facilitate access to the broad range of government services through a single point of contact.

The Comprehensive Spending Review will also seek the input of civil and public servants, and the

users of public services, to assess how frontline services could be made better from the point of view of the customer. The success of frontline service delivery from a user's point of view will be central to a department or agency's performance review.

The Office of Public Service Reform will be responsible for developing a whole-of-government approach to electronic service delivery. Websites will be developed to provide maximum information to the public about progress on national and departmental goals and facilitating public comment and suggestions.

Reform

Reforming Social Protection

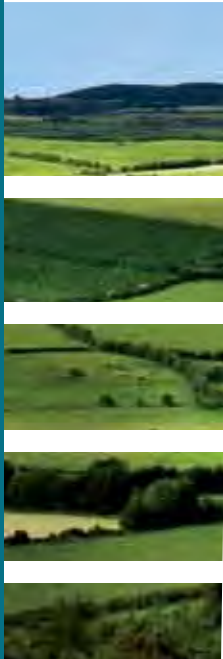
TIME FOR CHANGE

Labour's plan to radically reform Ireland's fragmented job-seeking, training and welfare supports into a single National Employment Service will put work and training at the heart of social protection.

But we also need to tackle the unemployment traps that keep people in poverty, and ensure that social protection is fair, transparent, and that it works for those who need it most.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Root and branch efficiency reforms to eliminate poverty traps, speed up social protection claims, and save money
- A major crackdown on welfare fraud, so that the social protection system is fair and transparent
- Reduce reliance on Rent Supplement in favour of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, with rents negotiated directly with landlords
- Cut down on bureaucracy by replacing multiple means tests with a single unified means test
- Share the cost of social protection with insurance companies where possible

TACKLING POVERTY

Eliminating poverty from Irish society is one of the core principles of the Labour Party. Labour is committed to tackling Ireland's fiscal crisis fairly, and will endeavour to protect those most at risk of poverty. As a first step, Labour will reverse the cut in the minimum wage implemented by Fianna Fáil and the Green Party in government.

Labour will introduce new anti-poverty targets with a particular emphasis on carers, those living alone and on people with a long-term disability. We will revise how poverty is measured to give greater weight to reasonable household costs as opposed to the current narrow focus on income.

Labour will complete and publish a strategy to tackle fuel-poverty, and a new national anti-poverty strategy.

- Providing for a far more extensive and frequent engagement with jobseekers through interviews and consultations.
- Changing operational guidelines for deciding officers.
- Reforming eligibility for Back to Education Allowance.
- Improving information available to jobseekers
- Promoting existing in-work benefit schemes.

Labour will issue clear new guidelines to ensure the Habitual Residence rule is applied consistently, transparently, and fairly, with specific guidelines to facilitate returning emigrants. The Habitual Residence rule will be abolished in the case of family carers. Labour is also committed to the completion and publication of the Carers Strategy.

This economic crisis has exposed the particular vulnerabilities of people who are self-employed. Labour will review the position of the self-employed in the social protection code.

Labour is committed to replacing the One Parent Family Payment with a parental allowance when resources permit. We will cap the rates at which moneylenders can lend.

Labour will reverse the cut in the minimum wage implemented by Fianna Fáil and the Green Party in government

ELIMINATING POVERTY TRAPS

The Labour Party will tackle poverty and unemployment traps in the social protection system by:

- Amending the 30 hour rule for Rent Supplement and Mortgage Interest Supplement for people moving from welfare to work.
- Activating people on a reduced week who refuse extra day(s) employment

A ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH TO WELFARE FRAUD

The Labour Party believes that fairness must be at the heart of resolving our financial crisis. Labour is committed to tackling Ireland's financial crisis so that the burden does not, as far as is possible, fall on those who are dependent on social welfare for their income.

However, it is imperative that every cent of our social welfare bill goes to those who need it most.

Labour will implement a zero tolerance policy in relation to welfare fraud, underpinned by a major anti-fraud enforcement drive.

The integration of social welfare supports for people of working age and employment services will be accompanied by more intensive activation of people who are long-term social welfare claimants. As well as more regular interviews with advisors in the National Employment Service, Labour will undertake other anti-fraud measures, including a public services card with photo ID, the automatic registration of fathers on birth certificates, and better sharing of data across government departments and agencies.

GETTING BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY

Labour will introduce efficiencies in the social protection system that will deliver a better service for users, and save the Exchequer money.

Labour will progressively reduce reliance on Rent Supplement, with eligible recipients moving to the Rental Accommodation Scheme. In future, landlords will be paid directly by the state or local authorities, so that rents can be negotiated to achieve the best value for taxpayers, while a new deposit retention scheme will yield further savings. Rent will only be paid to tax-compliant landlords offering decent quality accommodation, to root out fraud.

Labour will divert staff from elsewhere in the public service to clear the social welfare appeals backlog, and introduce a consolidated appeals process, to save on unsuccessful appeals.

The process of multiple means tests for the same individual or household will be replaced with a single, unified means test, with a single 'change of circumstances' adjustment if required.

In future, household benefits packages will be put out to tender, so that the Exchequer benefits from reduced prices.

Labour will raise the issue of the payment of Child Benefit in respect of non-resident children at EU level, and seek to have the entitlement modified to reflect the cost of living where the child is resident. Labour will examine all possible flexibility within existing European legislation to reduce the cost of this payment.

SHARING THE COST OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Labour will require private institutions, which benefit indirectly from social protection payments to their clients, to cooperate in reducing the total cost of social protection.

Insurance companies will be required to compensate the Department of Social Protection for illness or disability payments arising from

traffic collisions or other such accidents or personal injuries, where an insurance policy exists, and where the value of social welfare entitlements are deducted from the gross claim settlement.

Labour will implement a zero tolerance policy in relation to welfare fraud

Reform

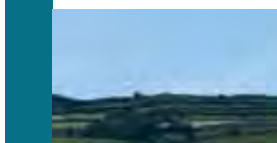
Reforming Policing and Justice

TIME FOR CHANGE

Crime has increased substantially within the last 25 years, serious drug use has spread nationwide, and even though much crime goes unreported, the detection rate is on the decrease. Re-offending rates are high and it is the law-abiding community that suffers as a result. There is no simplistic or quick fix, but there are solutions. Labour will tackle crime focusing on five key areas: protecting victims, strengthened legislation; tackling the drugs crisis; reforming the Gardaí and a more effective sentencing and prisons policy.

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THE FIRST STEPS

- Victims' needs put at the heart of the criminal justice system
- Dealing firmly with offenders through strengthened criminal justice legislation
- Tackling both drugs supply and demand through a revitalised National Drugs Strategy
- Reforming the Gardaí to prioritise community policing
- Ensuring that the punishment fits the crime, and benefits the community where possible



PROTECTING VICTIMS

Delays in the bringing of cases to trial must be tackled. Such delays can mean that opportunities are missed to respond to offending behaviour before it becomes more serious. These delays will be reduced by reform of the court system, a nationwide implementation of a case management system, and the appointment of more criminal judges when resources allow.

Victims of crime are still often treated by the criminal justice system as no more than prosecution witnesses. Labour 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.

New sentencing legislation, which will be introduced by the Labour Party, will make putting the victim in fear of injury a serious aggravating factor in any offence against the person.

Labour will oblige Gardaí to maintain adequate contact, through identified liaison officers, with victims of crime, to report progress to victims on the investigation and the prosecution of their case and to ensure adequate advance notice is given as to the proposed release of offenders.

STRENGTHENING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Labour's objective is to have a criminal justice system that is fair, efficient, and that puts victims of crime first. Labour will strengthen the armoury of criminal justice legislation in order to ensure that the right balance is arrived at between protecting the community and providing for appropriate safeguards. Stronger legislation is only a part of the solution, but it is a necessary part of the community's response to an increasing crime problem. Labour's legislative programme will include the following:

- A Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Bill to reduce the time period CAB have to wait before forfeiture of Proceeds of Crime, from seven years to two years.
- A Witness Protection Programme Bill to put the Witness Protection Programme on a statutory basis.
- Measures to halt white collar criminals transferring assets to spouses or others – any such assets will be available for court fines or compensation.
- Civil orders against serious offenders following conviction. This could include, for example, post-conviction restraints on consumption of alcohol, curfews, or restrictions on the use of the Internet by those convicted of child sex offences.
- A register of violent offenders so that post-release supervision and notification requirements are imposed on such offenders, akin to those on sex offenders.

Labour will ensure that victims and their needs are at the heart of the justice process

- Harmonised and extended detention periods for all violent and serious crime to avoid anomalies that now exist.
- Statutory provision to enable the prosecution to make a submission on sentence, which would include drawing attention to non-incarceration options.
- Greater pre trial case management such as U.K. style plea and directions hearing.
- Removal of anomalies in laws, rules and procedure that restrict the due administration of justice.

TACKLING THE DRUGS CRISIS

Drug use is an escalating social problem and is often characterised by multiple drug use, alcohol abuse, violence and gun crime. Labour supports the principles and objectives of the National Drugs Strategy. In government we will give renewed impetus to the fight against drugs and we will ensure that the Strategy once again becomes relevant and effective.

This will include expanding rehabilitation services at local level in line with need and subject to available resources; integrating drug and alcohol abuse strategies at local level; strengthening the supply reduction effort and criminal assets seizures, particularly at local level; expanding the drugs court; developing compulsory as well as voluntary rehabilitation programmes; and reducing the flow of drugs to our prisons.

MAKING COMMUNITY POLICING A PRIORITY

Labour wants to build a modern and effective Garda force, where Gardaí work in communities they know,

Labour will require the Gardaí to give greater priority to community policing

serving people they know. Labour will require the Gardaí to give greater priority to community policing that will see more Gardaí on patrol in the communities worst affected by anti-social behaviour. This will be complemented by Labour's strategy to deal with anti-social behaviour in local authority-funded accommodation, as detailed in our housing policy.

Labour will build on the existing community policing partnerships and forums to enhance trust between local communities and their Gardaí. The community Garda service should also be supported by members of the Garda Reserve drawn from the community.

By building a relationship with the communities they serve, community Gardaí can better tackle the plague of low level crime and anti-social behaviour that is so destructive of community life. Labour's commitment is to ensure that, within available resources, there are more Gardaí on patrol in local neighbourhoods, and to make policing more responsive to those communities' needs.

MAKING THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME

Labour is committed to ensuring that the punishment fits the crime, and protects and serves the community if at all possible. A key foundation of this approach will be to introduce a Sentencing Bill which will set out aggravating and mitigating circumstances to be taken into account by the Courts, and bring greater consistency.

Information on sentencing practice will be collected and made available on a systematic and timely basis.

A MORE EFFECTIVE PRISONS POLICY

No one could describe Ireland's present penal system as effective, and least of all cost-effective. Ireland's prisons are overcrowded, and our prison system is among the most expensive in the world. As well as the human cost, it is clear that we cannot afford to commit ourselves to spending ever-increasing amounts of public money on a system that has little or no impact on re-offending rates.

The Labour Party will bring in major reforms to ensure that the criminal justice system provides for a safer society at a lower cost to the taxpayer, by switching away from costly prison-based sentences and towards less costly non-custodial options and greater use of open prisons for appropriate prisoners. Labour's proposals to reform penal policy include:

- Reducing the number of prisoners in our jails when alternative sanctions would serve the same corrective purpose by specifying in law a core rule that imprisonment is a penalty of last resort for non-violent offenders.
- Reforming sentencing practice at District Court level to reduce the number of very short prison sentences handed down for minor, non-violent crimes.

- Progressively implementing the Children Act 2001 and the National Youth Justice Strategy to tackle youth crime, and continuing to resource policies which divert young people from criminality, and provide for alternative sanctions.
- Rolling out the Drugs Court initiative.
- Making much more effective use of alternative sanctions, such as the Community Service Order scheme.
- Addressing the issue of major overcrowding in Ireland's prisons.

JUDICIAL REFORM

Labour will legislate to establish a Judicial Council, with lay representation, that will provide an effective mechanism for dealing with complaints against judges.

A FAIR IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

A comprehensive statute to regulate immigration and set out the rights and duties of migrants in Ireland is overdue by almost ten years. Failure to legislate for a fair, transparent immigration process has resulted in an ad hoc system that can be confusing, inconsistent and anomalous. Processing of applications and decision-making is subject to long delays, while the absence of legislation means there is frequent resort to the Courts for judicial review.

Every country has the right to determine who may and who may not come to live within its jurisdiction. Labour in government will enact comprehensive and transparent legislation on immigration within 12 months, setting out the rights and obligations involved. The administrative process will be streamlined and speeded up and, an

Labour will enact comprehensive and transparent legislation on immigration within 12 months

independent appeals mechanism for the review of immigration-related decisions will also be introduced.

The Labour Party will promote policies which integrate minority ethnic groups in Ireland, and which promote social inclusion, equality, diversity, and the participation of immigrants in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities.