

Labor's new agenda: Let's smash secrecy

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TOUGHER controls on ministers, spending by MPs, better Freedom of Information laws, and a more independent public service have been pledged by Opposition Leader Kim Beazley.

Mr Beazley's blueprint to use the public sector in a nation-building role was outlined in the Don Dunstan Oration in Adelaide yesterday.

He said ministerial accountability was now viewed as "a quaint but inconvenient relic of a past era".

"For 10 years, the public service has been misused and manipulated in the pursuit of political interest ahead of national interest," he said.

"The principles of accountability, democratic practice and ministerial responsibility junked in the mad rush to hold on to power."

Before his speech he visited the Golden Grove Homestead Community Childcare Centre, meeting childcare workers and children.

In his wide-ranging speech, Mr Beazley said a Labor government would ensure:

LABOR ministers would be subject to a strict code of conduct governing their behaviour

FALLING ON THEIR FEET

- Former federal defence minister Peter Reith went to Tenix Defence Systems.
- Former federal health minister Michael Wooldridge joined forces with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.
- Former NSW premier Bob Carr departed for Macquarie Bank as a part-time consultant.
- Former finance minister John Fahey went to work for stockbrokers JP Morgan.
- Former federal communications minister Richard Alston did consulting work for the Austereo network.



— on which clearly established is the action to be taken when conflicts of interest arose.

MINISTERS leaving Parliament would be required to wait a year before they could be employed in their most recent area of portfolio responsibility.

ALL MPs' spending would be examined annually by an independent auditor.

TAX deductibility for political donations would cease.

FREEDOM of Information laws would be reformed to reflect a pro-disclosure culture.

Mr Beazley said if a Labor government was to build a bright future for Australia "we will need a smart, dedicated and independent public service to do some heavy lifting".

He said he would uphold the highest principles of transparency, accountability and accessibility. "If Australia is to

compete and prosper in a ruthlessly competitive region, we need national leadership and nation-building vision," Mr Beazley said.

"We'll get superfast broadband into homes, train Australians to fix the skills crisis, rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, protect Australia from the great danger of climate change."

Mr Beazley accused the Howard Government of throwing ministerial propriety out the window and admonishing public servants who spoke out.

"Forget frank and fearless advice," he said.

"This Government deliberately incubates a culture where the only advice the Government seeks is the advice they want to hear."