

Election 2016: Response from Australian Greens to Australian Cross Disability Alliance election platform

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Australian Cross Disability Alliance's (ACDA) impressive election platform. The work of the ACDA in supporting and advocating for people with disability is incredibly important.

1. Recast the National Disability Strategy as a mechanism for change

The Greens agree that the National Disability Strategy (NDS) should be strengthened and improved, we are disappointed that the Government seems to be ignoring the strategy. We would support including additional key areas in the NDS such as justice, housing, employment and other areas. The NDS can be improved by including concrete measures, and providing transparency through better mechanisms and reporting. We can also ensure the NDS is responsive to and inclusive of diverse groups, many of whom may face multiple barriers to participation. We support your calls for improvements to the NDS, and I look forward to working with you in relation to these issues in the coming Parliament.

2. Effective engagement with people with disability and their representative organisations

We absolutely support the incredibly important work of community groups and representative organisations that provide a voice for people with disability. The Greens believe strongly that we need an inclusive society that ensures everyone's voices are heard. As a party, the Greens are completely committed to consulting closely and extensively with community groups and disability advocacy organisations. I look forward to doing that in the next Parliament, and to working together to ensure governance systems are put in place to make sure that the voice of people with disability is heard.

3. Fully fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Greens want a fully funded rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, so it can be the best that it can be. The Greens will retain the NDIS component of the Medicare Levy, to ensure a stable funding base for the NDIS. The Greens absolutely reject savings measures that link a fully funded NDIS to cuts to human services and social security spending. We don't need to hurt one vulnerable group to provide adequate services to another.

The Greens support increased funding for disability services outside the NDIS, and have committed an additional \$504m in funding for community service organisations, including disability advocacy services.

4. Prioritise closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability

The Greens are committed to ensuring full, equal access to the NDIS for all. The Greens will work to ensure there is appropriate coordination and connection between the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the National Disability Strategy.

The Greens recognise the complex social circumstances affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability, and are committed to supporting community-led solutions. The Greens have committed an additional \$556m to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, to reverse Coalition cuts to key services.

The Greens are concerned about the disproportionate rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration, and have announced:

- A commitment to implement key recommendations of the *Change the Record* campaign, including a national justice target, and funding for community projects to help reduce the incarceration gap.

<http://greens.org.au/atsi>

- A justice reinvestment approach, which will invest in disadvantaged communities, including a National Centre for Justice Reinvestment, and \$50m in grants to support justice reinvestment projects. <http://greens.org.au/justice-reinvestment>
- A commitment to provide an extra \$716m over four years to ensure key legal services are able to operate and advocate. <http://greens.org.au/access-to-justice>

The Greens also initiated an inquiry into the indefinite detention of people with cognitive and psychiatric impairment, including a focus on identifying the best approaches and support for people with cognitive and psychosocial disability.

5. Establish a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability

The Greens are committed to establishing a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability. As you know, I initiated and chaired the Senate inquiry into this issue. The Senate inquiry was a snapshot of the widespread and systemic issue, and showed that the system had failed to protect the most vulnerable. The Greens want to establish a Royal Commission, that can fully investigate this issue. As part of our policy platform, we have committed \$400m to the establishment of a Royal Commission. <http://greens.org.au/royalcommission>

6. Establish a National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse

The Greens are committed to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, including for a single national redress scheme. Survivors deserve a fair system that ensures just redress across the country, and provides appropriate counselling and psychological support. As part of our costed election platform, the Greens have committed to a national redress scheme, to be implemented in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The redress scheme will include:

- Redress payments ranging from \$10,000 to \$200,000
- Providing counselling under Medicare, and
- Providing case management style support.

In line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the scheme will be funded by institutions. Where this is not possible, then Commonwealth and state and territory governments will split responsibility for providing funding of last resort. Full details of the scheme are available at <http://greens.org.au/redress>

7. End disability discrimination in immigration policy

The Greens are very concerned about this issue, and have spoken about it a number of times. Our [fundamental policy principle](#) is that the inclusion people with disability and valuing their contribution should be an important part of Australian culture and society. Our society should be absolutely free of discrimination on the basis of disability, including in immigration policy. We will continue to pursue this issue in the next Parliament.

8. Guarantee equity of support for older people with disability

You are probably aware that the Greens tried to address this issue when the NDIS legislation was being debated, but unfortunately were not successful. As we said in our [additional comments on the original NDIS bill](#):

The Australian Greens believe that either we need to completely remove the age restriction and include over-65s in the existing launch sites as appropriate, or the Government needs to put in place specialist support services for those over 65 who have a non-age related disability, that will not be picked up by the early intervention component.

We have continued to raise this issue in the Parliament whenever possible. The review of the *Living Longer, Living Better* legislation will provide another opportunity to raise this issue.

9. Prioritise a Jobs Plan for people with disability

We agree that the current system is failing people with disability who want to move into the workforce. People with disability deserve support that meets their needs. I have spoken out multiple times against the Coalition's cuts to the Disability Support Pension (DSP). Many of the people forced off the DSP onto Newstart do not receive appropriate supports, and must deal with an under-resourced system that does not provide the right kinds of support; these lower levels of income support are another barrier to employment.

As part of our inequality package, we have announced a commitment to reverse Work for the Dole, with the resulting savings to be directed towards community based initiatives that provide genuine support to deliver real employment outcomes. We need evidence based, wrap-around services that are designed with local communities. <http://greens.org.au/inequality>

10. Guarantee a fair and equitable social welfare system

The Greens are committed to a strong social safety net. As part of an extensive inequality package (greens.org.au/inequality), the Greens have announced a commitment to:

- Increasing the single rates of Newstart Allowance and independent Youth Allowance by \$55 a week;
- Changing the indexation for these payments from the consumer price index (CPI) to the higher of CPI, Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Cost of Living Index.

This will help more than half a million people struggling with poverty across Australia. The Parliamentary Budget Office has costed this measure at \$10.2 billion over four years.

The Greens will also move more than ninety thousand single parents from Newstart Allowance to Parenting Payment Single, by increasing the qualifying age of the youngest dependent child from eight to 16 years. This will give single parents an increase of up to \$166 a fortnight. This change, and removing the pause in the income threshold indexation, will cost \$1.9 billion over four years.

The Greens are also committed to reversing Coalition cuts to the Disability Support Pension, at a cost of \$187m over the forwards. We must ensure that there is a strong social safety net available for all people, regardless of disability. The Greens will continue to fight cuts by the old parties to the DSP, to make sure support is available for those who need it.

11. Invest in affordable accessible housing

The Greens have announced a major housing affordability package, with a focus on reforming unfair tax concessions to improve housing affordability across the sector. As part of our campaign, we are committed to working for more accessible housing. Senator Scott Ludlam has done extensive work on accessible housing, including how it can be better integrated into Perth's urban design. As a member of the NDIS Joint Standing Committee, I have also been extensively involved in an inquiry into the NDIS's interaction with affordable housing. We support your calls for a COAG agenda focussed on accessible housing, and a focus on better design standards. Everyone with disability should have access to affordable housing that is appropriate for their needs. No one should be forced to live in specialist disability accommodation in order to receive the supports they need.

<http://scott-ludlam.greensmps.org.au/content/media-releases/design-perth-vision-saves-billions>
greens.org.au/housing

12. Ensure our education system is inclusive

The Greens fully support the ACDA platform for making education more inclusive. As part of our education platform, we have announced specific policies to increase funding for students with disability. The Greens will:

- Provide funding based on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data

- Provide an additional \$1.1b into disability in schools for 2016-17, with that figure increasing at 4.7 per cent across the forward estimates
- Develop a National Strategy to ensure that all students with disability benefit from evidence-based, best practice programs.

As chair of the Community Affairs Reference inquiry, I heard extensive evidence in relation to the use of restrictive practices, including in schools. We strongly oppose the use of restrictive practices on students with disability, and will continue to campaign with you to end this.

13. Make our infrastructure and communications accessible

The Greens fully support inclusive, accessible spaces, and will continue to campaign for standards that ensure access for people with disability in different contexts. As part of our election platform we have committed to ensuring that the ABC's current trial of audio description through iView is made permanent, to provide ongoing access for blind or vision impaired people. The Greens will also review audio description by Government and commercial broadcasters, and legislative requirements, and develop an action plan for rolling out audio description more widely.

<http://greens.org.au/initiatives/wa/audio-description>

I look forward to working closely with the Australian Cross-Disability Alliance in the coming years.

Yours sincerely

Senator Rachel Siewert
Australian Greens Spokesperson on Disability Services