

St Vincent de Paul Society - Australian Greens response

Thank you for reaching out about these critical issues.

The Greens are fighting for transformative solutions that put people and compassion first.

1. Supporting a Safety Net for All Australians – including increases to working-age payments, better access to healthcare, and stronger employment services

The Greens want to see all income payments - including JobSeeker, Disability Support Pension, Youth Allowance and Age Pension - raised above the poverty line. In a wealthy country like Australia, no one should live in poverty. Lifting income support above the poverty line is one of the single strongest interventions the Government can make to end poverty. Income support would keep up with the costs by indexing them twice a year to the higher of average weekly earnings or CPI.

The Greens will also allow people to earn more while receiving income support by lifting the income-free area to \$300 per fortnight, enabling greater financial stability for low-income workers.

The Greens will triple the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) bulk billing incentive payments for all Medicare card holders, this will enable more GPs to bulk-bill appointments.

Additionally, the Greens will support GPs to spend more time with patients by implementing a 20% increase to Medicare patient rebates for longer appointments. This will incentivise GPs to offer longer appointments to those who need them.

The Greens will establish 6 free local healthcare clinics in each federal electorate. At these clinics, people will be able to access a GP, psychologist, nurse, or dentist for free. These clinics will ensure that people do not have to worry about an out-of-pocket cost to access healthcare. The Greens will add dental services to Medicare to ensure that every person who holds a Medicare card will be able to access the essential dental services they need.

Our plan will see an improvement in health and wellbeing, a decrease in dental disease, infection and follow-on conditions such as heart disease and dementia.

2. Housing Security Across the Country – through more affordable and secure housing, rental reform, and recognition of housing as a human right

During this term, we've already secured \$3.5 billion in additional social housing funding and the first-ever national inquiry into the rental crisis, but there is still much more to do. The Greens will keep pushing to make housing truly affordable for all.

The Greens are pushing for a massive expansion in public and affordable housing. Our plan includes doubling federal funding to states and territories for homelessness services and for public and community housing. We will also deliver 610,000 affordable homes over the next decade through a new public developer that builds good-quality homes for people to rent and buy at genuinely affordable prices.

Right now Australia has some of the worst rental protections in the developed world, and we desperately need stronger and actually enforceable national tenancy laws to make renting cheaper. The Greens will establish a new National Renters Protection Authority with powers to investigate breaches, issue fines, and advocate for tenants. We will also work with the states and territories to make renting cheaper and more secure including: freezing rents for two years then capping rent increases long term at 2% every 2 years, giving tenants the guaranteed right to lease renewal and longer-term leases, and establishing minimum standards covering ventilation, heating, cooling and insulation. The Greens have supported increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance in Parliament.

The Greens know that tax handouts like negative gearing and the capital gains tax put billions in the pockets of big property investors, making it easier for investors to outbid first home buyers, and drive up house prices and saddling mortgage holders with more debt. Our plan would scrap negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount for people with more than one (existing) investment property to level the playing field for first-home buyers.

3. Meeting the Needs of First Nations Peoples – by progressing truth-telling, raising the age of criminal responsibility, and investing in community-led solutions

Australia has a responsibility to acknowledge the truths of its past, respect the sovereignty of First Nations people, and build a future founded on justice, self-determination, and cultural preservation.

The Greens will establish a National Truth and Justice Commission to acknowledge and document historic and ongoing injustices experienced by First Nations peoples, with \$250 million in funding to the Commission to hold hearings, compile reports, and develop processes for embedding localised truth-telling across the country. We will also engage communities in grassroots consultation on models for a national treaty or treaties, ensuring collaboration with First Nations peoples, governments, and key stakeholders throughout the process.

The Greens are working to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 across the country, and replace harmful practices with community-based support and culturally safe programs to give young people hope and a brighter future.

We will also invest in First Nations-led organisations and solutions, including through \$750 million in funding to Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations

(ACCHOs) for advancing policies and programs within the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and \$113 million in grants to get First Nations kids out on country and strengthen connections to culture, language and country.

4. Rising to the Refugee Challenge – including access to basic supports and ending inhumane offshore detention.

The Greens will end offshore detention, bringing all persons still in Papua New Guinea or Nauru to Australia and into the community, with the option of permanent settlement.

Offshore detention is an enormously cruel policy designed to deter and punish people who are seeking a better life in Australia. Nauru and Manus Island have long been places of misery and death, which is a stain on Australia's national conscience. Prolonged detention - both on and offshore - has a profound effect on a person's mental health that can lead to self-harm and suicide. Australia should never have started this practice.

People who come to the community seeking to build a better life should be welcomed and provided the basic rights we all need to thrive. The Greens will introduce a 7-day general limit for people held in immigration detention, and ensure that people seeking asylum living in Australian communities would receive fair levels of support from the government, including income support, housing, access to healthcare, trauma and torture counselling, English language courses and employment assistance. We will also properly fund the Humanitarian Settlement Services Program and increase the SRSS payments to the same rate as JobSeeker.

The Greens will always back people and the community, over the big corporations and billionaires making record profits.

For the full details of our plan to make the big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share to fund world-class public services and genuinely tackle the housing, climate and environment crisis. please see our website: <https://greens.org.au/platform>