



CARING FOR PEOPLE A NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

The Greens' long term plan to reduce poverty in Australia

There are 2.3 million people living below the poverty line in Australia. Nearly 600,000 of them are children. The Greens are the only party talking about this, and who are willing stand up for vulnerable families by committing to a long term plan to address the underlying causes of poverty.

By world standards we live in a wealthy country but poverty is becoming increasingly entrenched in parts of our society. We cannot delay action any longer.

> OUR GOAL IS TO REDUCE AND ULTIMATELY ELIMINATE POVERTY

Currently, the underlying contributors to poverty such as affordable housing, food security and access to education and employment are being tackled separately, across different Government departments, and different levels of Government.

That's why the Greens are announcing our plan to begin work on creating a National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

A successful strategy will facilitate coordinated action across all levels of government and the community services sector to reduce poverty and address its underlying causes.

The Greens will:

- **Establish an expert group** to begin work on assessing the current landscape and put forth recommendations that could be adopted by COAG to facilitate coordinated action.
- Invest **\$12 million** over 4 years to advance the development of a nation strategy.
- Set **poverty reduction targets** to be reported against annually in Parliament

Much like a national action plan on mental health, or Closing the Gap, this initiative would ensure that action is undertaken in conjunction with service providers, in order to develop a national response that is focused on enhancing collaboration.

> WE NEED A COMPREHENSIVE, NATIONAL PLAN TO TACKLE THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

Piecemeal and inconsistent responses to poverty are inadequate and ineffective approaches.

There is no silver bullet to solve the long term challenge of poverty. The problems of poverty are too widespread and complex.

The underlying causes are complex and so our efforts to address the issue must be holistic and comprehensive. Yet the lack of coordination federal, state and local government will continue to result in wasteful overlaps and serious gaps in service delivery.

Addressing poverty requires a coordinated, systemic effort across areas such as income support, housing affordability and access to health and community services. We need concerted long term commitment at federal, state and local government levels.

In 2002, the Australian Senate established an extensive inquiry into poverty. That inquiry made 95 recommendations including:

That a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy be developed at the national level

Social justice and social welfare organisations such as Catholic Social Services and ACOSS are still consistently calling on the Government to implement this recommendation.



> TARGETS AND REPORTING

The Plan will be underpinned by specific goals, including targets for particular vulnerable groups like children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The strategy will require annual reporting to Parliament on achievements against these targets.

> POVERTY IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE IN A CARING SOCIETY

The old parties are ignoring poverty in Australia. A caring society invests in reducing and preventing poverty by addressing its root causes. We can't keep neglecting all those Australians who struggle to make ends meet.

The development of an overarching National Anti-poverty Strategy will complement the Greens' other work in this area including our targeted initiatives to:

- **Raise Newstart by \$50 a week** and effectively reversing the impact of the cuts to Parenting Payment, which will reduce the pressure on our most vulnerable families
- **Address homelessness** and the housing affordability crisis
- **Invest in better access to healthcare, denticare, mental health care and justice**

> THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF POVERTY

We need to invest in this now – not doing so has costly social and economic implications for our future.

While the old parties have turned their backs, the Greens are continuing to stand up for vulnerable people across the country

ⁱ The Senate, Community Affairs References Committee, *A hand up not a hand out: Renewing the fight against poverty: Report on poverty and financial hardship*, March 2004.