



CARING FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

EQUITY, ACCESS & RESPECT

The Greens' plan to ensure older Australians are treated fairly

The Australian Greens will stand up for older Australians and ensure that the issues that are most important to them aren't ignored by policy makers.

A caring community treats its older people with dignity and respect, and provides support services so that they can remain healthy, happy and safe wherever they chose to live.

The Australian Greens have fought for better services for older Australians - from campaigning to increasing the base rate of the pension, amending aged care legislation to raising awareness about the impact of age discrimination in the workforce. Yet, there are still many barriers and service gaps that prevent many older Australians from ageing well while continuing to participate fully in their communities.

The Australian Greens will stand up for older Australians and ensure that the issues that are most important to them aren't ignored and underfunded by policy makers.

> THE GREENS PLAN TO DELIVER BETTER ACCESS

The Australian Greens have a broad vision of positive ageing that focuses on the strong, positive contribution that older Australians make to our communities, rather than buying into the stereotype that older people are a burden on our health, aged care or taxation systems.

The Greens plan for older Australians is to ensure that older Australians can access the services and support they need in each of the major policy areas. Our initiatives include:

- Supporting **human rights**, and opposing ageism and elder abuse
- Ensuring **access to an adequate standard of living**
- Breaking down barriers to employment
- Delivering **affordable, appropriate aged care** regardless of capacity to pay.
- Emphasising **primary care and preventative health**
- **Investing in Dementia research**
- **Including over 65s in NDIS (DisabilityCare)**
- Providing **appropriate, affordable housing**

> HUMAN RIGHTS

The UN Principles for Older Persons set out that older persons should be guaranteed Independence, Participation, Care, Self Fulfilment and Dignity. The Australian Greens believe that these principles should be integrated into Government policy making, and will look at ways to **adopt the UN Principles**.

We believe that discrimination is a significant issue that impacts how older Australians are treated in our communities, which is why we support the call from COTA for an **anti-ageism campaign** that continues and builds on the work of the Age Discrimination Commissioner.

The Australian Greens will also take a leading role in **preventing elder abuse** by supporting advocacy and maintaining existing funding, as well as strengthening the powers of Aged Care Commissioner.

As well as **making sure older Australians are aware of their rights as consumers**. This is critical in aged care, but also important in other areas such as mortgages, finance and insurance.

> LIVING STANDARDS

The Greens are standing up for people under pressure, and will ensure that older Australians have access to quality care and can live with dignity, regardless of their personal financial circumstances.

The Greens actively campaigned to ensure that the recommendations from the Harmer Pension Review were implemented, leading to an increase to the aged pension. However, we recognise that there are still pressures on older Australians and that pensions and allowances need to keep pace with community living standards.

The Australian Greens would **retain the current method of indexing pensions**, as well as **increasing allowance payments like Newstart by \$50 a week**.



The Greens also ensured that there were significant supplements made available to pensioners in the clean energy package, to fully **offset any impact of the price of carbon** on energy bills.

> EMPLOYMENT

An adequate income is also important in the decades before people seek to retire because the life that most retirees can look forward to is very reliant on how much they saved during their working life (including whether they bought and paid off their own home).

Yet, a significant cohort of those in their forties and fifties who find themselves outside the workforce are unlikely to re-enter it. A third of all the people on Newstart are over 45 and while costs of housing and living are increasing rapidly, the base single rate of Newstart is still less than \$250 a week (or \$269 for over 60's).

The Greens will help older Australians who want to re-enter the workforce by:

- **Providing all eligible mature age job seekers with more intensive support** (such as a minimum of Stream 2 assistance through Job Services Australia) as soon as they enter JSA system as well as ensuring that specialist job services that can address other barriers such as partial disability or low educational achievements are available to older workers.
- Ensuring that all job seekers over 45 are able to **access re-training through their job service provider** and are fully informed of their right to retraining funding.
- **Hold an inquiry into why our job services are failing** older Australians and investigate ways to better integrate job services with training, work experience and social services.

> WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS TO END DISCRIMINATION

These initiatives will give older workers the best possible chance of re-entering the workforce quickly. However, given that most of the complaints that the aged commissioner receives are in the area of employment (68% of complaints in 2011-12), these initiatives will also need to be reinforced by:

- **Continuation of current programs to tackle age discrimination**
- **Continuation of programs that provide incentives to employers to take on an older worker.**

The Greens believe that all older Australians should be able to access the workforce if they want to, and participate fully without being discriminated against.

> BREAKING DOWN OTHER LEGAL BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The Greens supported the recent reforms that have helped older Australians access the workforce beyond the official retirement age of 65. However, there are still a number of practical barriers to employing older workers.

The Greens will address the legal barriers as well as confront the sources of workplace discrimination that lead to exclusion from the workforce by:

- Working across jurisdictions to **implement changes to workers compensation and work-related insurances**, to remove unnecessary legal barriers to employing an older person.
- Securing the **right to flexible work** for all older workers, particularly carers.
- **Examining disincentives and barriers in the pension and superannuation systems**, and options to make these systems fairer.

> AGED CARE

Older Australians, their carers and families should have the right to choose appropriate and affordable care services that meet their needs and maintain their dignity, independence and quality of life. Access to high quality, appropriate health and aged care services should be on the basis of need and not the ability to pay or the place of residence.

The Greens approach to aged care is focused on **supporting access** to the aged care system; an emphasis on **wellness; a strong and sustainable workforce**, both paid and volunteer; and delivering **quality residential and community care**.

The Greens worked hard to improve the Living Longer, Living Better aged care legislation that was passed through Parliament earlier this year. One of our key amendments ensured that there is now an independent body, the Aged Care Financing Authority that will monitor the financial impacts of the legislation on both consumers and providers as it is implemented and make recommendations to Government.

There is still a lot of work to be done before our aged care system can meet the needs of all older Australians and we believe that the ultimate success of the reform process will require **working towards implementing more of the Productivity Commission's recommendations**, including introducing more ways to assist people to access the equity in their homes, and Pensioner Savings Schemes.



We want to see an **end to government rationing of aged care funding**, but recognise that this will require those who can afford to pay more for their own care to do so. We will work with peak bodies like the National Aged Care Alliance to build a better aged care system and support the call from the aged care sector for a **cost of care study**.

> CARING FOR THOSE WHO DELIVER AGED CARE

We want to improve the **aged care workforce**, with both better wages and access to training and career development. We respect the role allied health professionals play and we understand the difficulty that many providers have in attracting and retaining quality staff. We will ensure that any mechanism that is meant to increase wages will actually **pass the full benefit of increases on to workers**.

We also recognise and value the role that volunteers play in supporting older Australians with essential services, particularly services that help them age in place and support programs that facilitate volunteering.

Informal, family carers play an important role and there needs to be adequate **support for carers** of older people, including **respite services, access to information, income support and tax benefits**

> COMMUNITIES OF HIGH NEED

The Australian Greens are committed to ensuring that there is a focus on providing **culturally appropriate services** for culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people (LGBTI) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

> DEMENTIA

We also believe that the issue of dementia care needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency given that 400,000 people are expected to have dementia by 2020. We are committed to improving access to support services, provide better quality care, early diagnoses and improved research and development.

This is why the Australian Greens will provide:

- Better care, including **access to community and respite care** for people living with dementia
- Better **training for staff** to manage difficult behaviors without anti-psychotic drugs
- An **investment in dementia research** with \$40mil/year over the forward estimates.

> HEALTH

Health care is a critical component of ageing well, and by investing in services which help people remain fit and healthy, we can contribute to an improved quality of life and help manage the increasing incidences of chronic diseases and hospital admissions.

Accessible and coordinated medical treatments, which include provisions for mental and dental services, must be fundamental components of the health system we develop for the future. This is why we have campaigned to have dental care become a core component of Medicare.

Increasingly, the cost of health care is being borne by the health consumer. This is raising a barrier to care for those on limited incomes and undermining the universality of our health system. All Australians should have a right to health care no matter what their income or situation.

The Greens will reverse this trend and stand up for an efficient and equitable health system. The Greens will put **greater emphasis on primary care and preventative health** so that healthcare is sustainable for the long term.

Our health initiatives include:

- **Denticare** – bringing dental care into Medicare, so that going to the dentist will be just like going to the doctor.
- Investing in primary care to keep costs to health consumers down.
- **Properly funding hospitals** so they are there when people need them most.
- **Investing in rural health** so that country people can access the services the rest of us take for granted.
- Properly funding **mental health services** including in country Australia. We will also continue to lobby for better **access to mental health services within residential aged care**, because some older Australians are missing out.
- **Shifting the focus to preventative health** so that more of us can stay out of hospital longer and ensure the health system is sustainable in the long term
- **Prevent avoidable blindness** and slow the effects of eye disease through regular eye tests

> ACCESS TO THE NDIS FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

The Australian Greens do not believe that access to supports and services should be different for someone who acquires a disability after the age of 65. The Australian Greens moved amendments to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)



legislation to remove the age limit, unfortunately our amendment wasn't supported by either the Liberals or Labor. We also raised this issue through the debate on the aged care reform legislation and secured a commitment from both the Ageing and the Disability Ministers that they would work together to review the access of over 65s to appropriate services. Until this issue is fully resolved, the Greens will continue to campaign for **no age restriction on access to the NDIS when the scheme is fully rolled out.**

> HOUSING & URBAN DESIGN

The Greens are the only party that is standing up for people under the most pressure in our housing system. The old parties have turned their back on the housing crisis.

We know that affordable housing is one of the most significant problems for those who don't own their own home. The Greens have a number of policy initiatives to address housing affordability, such as encouraging the **conversion of unused buildings for rent.**

Even for those who do own their own home, rising council rates and the use of reverse mortgaging to pay living and care costs threatens housing security. The Government has not done much yet to address **reverse mortgaging** – this is an issue that we would like to see resolved, with greater safeguards and cooling off periods.

The Australian Greens are the only party with a comprehensive housing policy (<http://www.greens.org.au/policies/housing>) that improves the affordability of home ownership; improves rental affordability; increases the supply of social housing; addresses and prevents homelessness; and makes housing more liveable for older people. We want to see the **needs of older persons specifically included in urban planning and design** – ranging from universal design standards for adaptable housing to accessible transport and community facilities.

The Greens have also released a fully costed national housing affordability platform, that tackles issues such **homelessness** and **housing affordability**, protects **renters rights**, and builds new **social housing**. The Greens are advocating for the **NRAS scheme to be reviewed** and improved, and extended by at least another 50,000 places, as the government originally promised. The Australian Greens also support **a review of Commonwealth Rent Assistance**; support the Liveable Housing Guidelines and will implement a **home modification and maintenance program for older people**, with a preventative focus.

The Greens are proud to be taking a costed national housing affordability plan to the election, because a caring economy and caring society has a home for all.

> MORE INFORMATION

Detailed information about our costed health initiatives and other Greens policies can be found at the Greens web site, including:

- Denticare
- Funding for Hospitals
- Investing in Medicare
- Rural Health
- Mental Health and Rural Mental Health
- Housing
- Dementia
- Addressing Poverty: A better start for jobseekers