



Michael Berkman MP
For Maiwar ▲

14 October 2020

Mr Paul Wright
National Director, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
Via email: paul@antar.org.au

2020 Queensland state election - policy platform

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your email of 1 October 2020, enquiring about the Queensland Greens' policy platform ahead of the 2020 Queensland state election.

It's clear that Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) is setting a vital agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs policy in Australia.

For your reference, the **Queensland Greens' election platform for the 2020 State Election is online at:** <https://greens.org.au/qld/plan>. Our long-standing broader policy platform is here: <https://greens.org.au/qld/policies>.

As I'm sure you would understand, if the Greens find ourselves in a balance-of-power scenario there is an enormous list of competing priorities, and the final decision on any negotiated outcome rests with the party as a whole. However, many of the priorities you have identified align with our agenda. [Our fully costed plan](#) sets out our agenda to create thousands of good secure jobs and fully fund public health and education, funded by making big mining corporations, banks and developers pay their fair share in tax.

As requested, I have responded to your priorities below. All statements are complementary to statements by the Greens' spokespeople, including myself, and other policy documents that are on the public record.

1. Treaty

The Greens firmly support a treaty process, to be led by the Indigenous community, and on this basis we are committed to taking the current Queensland government treaty-making process forward. This accords with Greens policy at both a [federal](#) and [state](#) level.

The Greens' newest federal Senator, Lidia Thorpe, is a Gonnai Gunditjmarra woman who has [firmly placed treaty on the national agenda](#), and we will continue to prioritise treaty-making across Australia, including through the current Queensland government process, noting the recent [well-founded criticism](#) of that process by members of Queensland Labor's own Indigenous policy committee.

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In line with statements from Senator Thorpe, I believe that a detailed and broad-ranging truth telling process is a vital first step, and I would be honored to help make that a reality in any way I can.

2. Stolen wages

Ensuring governments return stolen wages to Indigenous people is a priority for the Greens. The Queensland Greens' [policy](#) seeks to review and restart the stolen wages compensation process, by providing restitution for Aboriginal stolen wages and under-award payments. Compensation needs to properly account for the sums stolen by the state, with interest since the time it was stolen. At the federal level, we have advocated for a Royal Commission into Stolen Wages to be established if the issue is not resolved in the short term.

3. Closing the Gap and the incarceration crisis

The Greens are hopeful that the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap will be successful, and are committed to funding it robustly and ensuring it is Indigenous-led. That agreement applies to governments, and while the Queensland Greens are unlikely to form the next State government, we are committed to using our position in Parliament to pursue justice for First Nations people in Queensland.

The Queensland Greens' [Youth Justice policy](#) calls for a child protection system, complemented by other social measures, which addresses the over-representation of Indigenous Queenslanders in the child protection system.

We support robust resourcing for government strategies to address this issue, including the Family Matters campaign which aims to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia's child protection systems by 2040.

While we support this objective, we believe 20 years is far too long to wait. It is a disgrace to Queensland that our so-called child protection system is at risk of creating a second Stolen Generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids.

We see justice as a key area for closing the gap. During this term of Parliament I've been working to implement the Queensland Greens' [youth justice policy](#), and raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years. I am very proud to be the only MP to state my unequivocal support for raising the age. I've been [asking Ministers about it in Question Time](#), [speaking on this](#) in Parliament and working with stakeholders including the Youth Advocacy Centre and Amnesty to ensure this becomes a reality. I look forward to working with ANTaR in the next term of Parliament on this vitally important and long-overdue reform.

4. Housing

The social housing waitlist is too long, and too many Queenslanders are experiencing homelessness. This is especially the case with Indigenous Queenslanders. Ahead of this election, the Greens have launched a [plan](#) to deliver 100,000 public homes over the next four years.

Funded via a levy on the big banks and higher royalties on mining corporations, the Greens would establish a Queensland Housing Trust that would finance the construction of 250,000 homes over 10 years, with a long-term target of 20% of all housing stock as public housing. Of course, this should include allowances for accessible housing.

We are firmly committed to ensuring high-quality, environmentally and culturally appropriate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

In 2019, I supported a group of Aboriginal tenants in Toowoomba [attempting to resist eviction from their homes](#) after their community-run social housing provider was defrauded by outside investors. My office, along with Greens Councillor Jonathan Sri, Greens member Jasmyn Sheppard and our local Toowoomba Greens branch members worked to attract media attention and support local community organising, but we were unsuccessful in stopping some of the homes from being sold at auction. I am committed to better supporting community-run housing providers and putting control in the hand of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

5. Cultural heritage

The Greens were shocked to see the destruction of the site of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura people by Rio Tinto recently. We need strong cultural heritage laws and we need to keep mining companies in check.

I hold similar concerns about the potential loss of the culturally and ecologically significant Doongmabulla Springs, which are threatened by Adani's proposed Carmichael coal mine in central Queensland. Two years ago, in Queensland Parliament I introduced a [bill to ban coal mining in the Galilee Basin](#) and cancel Adani's mining licence with no compensation. Unfortunately, the Labor government never brought it on for debate, although both major parties opposed it during the inquiry process.

The Greens are the only party who doesn't take donations from the mining lobby, so our policies, at the [state](#) and [federal](#) level, recognise the huge impact that mining has on our environment. We have a plan to [phase out thermal coal and tax mining companies more effectively](#) so that all Queenslanders can share in our state's natural wealth.

Last week's fiasco with the Queensland Resources Council (QRC) has really flushed some of these issues out into the open: several large mining companies have split from the peak mining body, showing that its anti-Green advertising [has gone too far](#). It turns out that the QRC may have [significantly breached electoral laws](#) in campaigning against the Greens. It is no secret that only the Greens will properly regulate and tax the mining industry so that it works for Queenslanders, not its own massive profits.

The Greens will keep campaigning to keep mining companies working for Queenslanders, not for their own profits and wanton destruction. This will be a key priority in the next term of Parliament. The principle of free, prior and informed consent guides our position in relation to the impacts of mining on First Nations cultural heritage.

I would be happy to work with ANTaR to ensure these priorities guide Queenslanders on its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, into an inclusive future.

I hope that this information is of assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 07 3737 4100 if you would like to discuss this matter in more detail.

Kind regards,



Michael Berkman MP