



# IMPROVING FIRST NATIONS HEALTH OUTCOMES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

The Australian Greens will work with First Nations peoples across all areas of government to ensure that their health outcomes are improved.

## OVERVIEW

First Nations peoples continue to experience much poorer health and wellbeing than the general Australian population in many key areas of health<sup>1</sup>. These include: life expectancy, mortality, hospitalisations, education, employment, child and maternal health, and disabilities<sup>2</sup>.

For First Nations peoples, good health is more than the absence of disease or illness; it is a holistic concept that includes physical, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological wellbeing, for both the individual and the community. This concept of good health emphasises the connectedness of these factors and recognises how social and cultural determinants can affect health<sup>3</sup>.

The Greens will work with First Nations peoples and communities to facilitate and fund community-led approaches in access to health care and social services in a wide range of ways which are outlined below. All of these are included in our broader 2019 election policy platform.

## ONE: IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Following the introduction of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, over \$500 million was cut from First Nations programs, including more than \$169 million of cuts to health programs<sup>4</sup>. This Strategy has resulted in funding uncertainty for organisations and a decrease in the number of organisations working in the communities they are serving. The Australian Greens will restore this funding and work to ensure that this restoration is led by communities<sup>5</sup>. In addition, we will address specific health issues through broader changes to the health system including:

- Addressing the proportion of First Nations Australians with long term health conditions which is 1.7 times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians. The Greens have a plan to reform Medicare to meet the needs of the millions of Australians living with chronic

<sup>1</sup> AIHW, Australia's Health 2018

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/7c42913d-295f-4bc9-9c24-4e44eff4a04a/aihw-aus-221.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<sup>2</sup> AIHW, Australia's Health 2018

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/7c42913d-295f-4bc9-9c24-4e44eff4a04a/aihw-aus-221.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<sup>3</sup> AIHW, Australia's Health 2018

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/7c42913d-295f-4bc9-9c24-4e44eff4a04a/aihw-aus-221.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-13/budget-2014-534-cut-to-indigenous-programs-and-health/5451144>

<sup>5</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20Justice%20for%20First%20Nations%20Peoples.pdf>

disease through additional funding for GPs and voluntary enrolment to provide coordinated care<sup>6</sup>.

- Working with communities and health professionals to design targets and interventions for diseases, such as rheumatic heart disease, trachoma and chronic otitis media, that are more prevalent in First Nations communities.
- Helping First Nations peoples who have poor access to high quality food, partake in insufficient physical activity and have high obesity<sup>7</sup>. The Australian Greens will address these challenges through our new independent preventive health commission<sup>8</sup>.
- Investing \$15 million per year to close the gap in the rates of new HIV diagnoses between Australian-born non-indigenous peoples and First Nations peoples. This funding will be used to ensure the needs of all First Nations peoples, including brotherboys, sistergirls and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are met in public health prevention and service provision.
- Investing in suicide prevention programs that work by providing \$500 million for community-based assertive outreach programs, with dedicated funding for First Nations peoples.
- Increasing the numbers of peer workers by providing \$166 million to fund a two-year national peer workforce trial with 1,000 places, with a dedicated number of places for First Nations peer workers.
- Investing in research which is controlled and led research by First Nations peoples. The Greens provide in principle support for increased funding for First Nations controlled and led research, either through the MRFF or the National Health and Medical Research Council and will be investing more money in research and development.
- Doubling Commonwealth AOD treatment funding to \$800 million over three years to improve treatment outcomes

## **TWO: IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES BY ADDRESSING AUSTRALIA'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Australia's health inequities are closely related to powerlessness, racism and a slow process of reconciliation alongside limited recognition of human, land and sovereign rights<sup>9</sup>. The Australian Greens will<sup>10</sup>:

- Provide \$50 million in funding to First Nations peoples' organisations to support a path towards treaties.
- Provide \$50 million for the establishment of a body, such as the suggested Makaratta commission, with the function of enabling agreement-making and facilitating a process of local and regional justice and truth telling.
- Support the establishment of such a 'voice to Parliament' enshrined in the Constitution to ensure that First Nations Peoples have a voice in decisions that affect them.

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<sup>6</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20World%20Class%20Universal%20Health.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> AIHW, Australia's Health 2018

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/7c42913d-295f-4bc9-9c24-4e44eff4a04a/aihw-aus-221.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<sup>8</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20World%20Class%20Universal%20Health.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Royal Australasian College of Physicians 2018 Indigenous Strategic Framework

<sup>10</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20Justice%20for%20First%20Nations%20Peoples.pdf>

- Provide \$10 million over four years to establish a National Centre for Justice Reinvestment that reinvests resources from the criminal justice system into initiatives that address the drivers of incarceration.
- Provide \$50 million over four years for a Justice Reinvestment Grants program to support local justice reinvestment initiatives.

### **THREE: IMPROVING ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES AND EMPLOYMENT**

A person's health is influenced by their home, school, workplace, community and experiences of social institutions and systems<sup>11</sup>. Household income differences between First Nations and non-Indigenous peoples contributes to almost 14% of the overall health gap, followed by differences in employment and hours worked (12%), and level of school completed (8.7%). The Australian Greens will address these causes by:

- Allocating a proportion of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) for quality community-controlled and culturally safe integrated early years services<sup>12</sup>. The CCCF provides grants to child care services to help improve access in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities.
- Funding unlimited free undergraduate university and TAFE. This will make higher education more accessible for all, including First Nations peoples<sup>13</sup>.
- Improving access to and the quality of our social safety net by increasing the single rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance by \$75 per week<sup>14</sup>.
- Abolishing punitive measures including income management, the Community Development Program and work for the dole<sup>15</sup>.
- Increasing the number of Indigenous Rangers to 5,000 by 2025. The Indigenous Rangers Program has been a resounding success. For every \$1 invested, it returns \$3 in environmental and socioeconomic benefits<sup>16</sup>.
- Allocating a proportion of our \$200 million Survivor Grant fund to First Nations community-controlled specialist frontline services working with family violence survivors
- Adopting a housing first policy by setting aside \$500 million per year to fund transitional housing and crisis services. We will work with First Nations organisations to ensure access to culturally appropriate crisis housing and long-term housing options for women and children experiencing family violence.

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<sup>11</sup> AIHW, Australia's Health 2018

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/7c42913d-295f-4bc9-9c24-4e44eff4a04a/aihw-aus-221.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

<sup>12</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20Child%20care.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Find out more

at [https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20Free%20TAFE%20and%20Uni\\_Q.pdf](https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform%20-%20Free%20TAFE%20and%20Uni_Q.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform-%20World%20Class%20Social%20Services.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform-%20World%20Class%20Social%20Services.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Find out more at:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Greens%202019%20Policy%20Platform-The%20Nature%20Fund.pdf>

