

2020 QUEENSLAND ELECTION

SCORECARD

OCTOBER
2020

In this 2020 QLD State Election Scorecard, ANTaR has provided a guide to the policies of the QLD Labor Government, the Liberal National Party (LNP) and the QLD Greens, in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Queensland.

In early October 2020, ANTaR wrote to the three major parties, seeking their policies and election commitments relating to:

1. TREATY

Despite the absence of national leadership a number of states, including QLD, have undertaken tentative processes of treaty making, to address the historical wrongs of the nation's 'unfinished business' with its First Nations Peoples.

2. STOLEN WAGES

In 2002, the QLD government introduced a Reparations Offer in acknowledgement of the historical injustice of stolen wages throughout QLD.

3. CLOSING THE GAP & THE INCARCERATION CRISIS

After the historic tripartite agreement between the Coalition of Peaks (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peak bodies), the Federal government and each state and territory, there is a new impetus to close the gap in life expectancy and health outcomes for First Nations Peoples in QLD.

4. HOUSING

Access to adequate and sustainable housing for First Nations Peoples is an issue of concern across Australia and progress continues to be slow.

5. CULTURAL HERITAGE

After the destruction of the Juukan Caves in WA in May 2020, there have been rising calls for much greater heritage protection in each State and Territory. Cultural heritage includes sites, language, oral traditions and many other elements that should be celebrated and protected.

At the time this Election Scorecard was produced, the [QLD Government](#) and [QLD Greens](#) had provided detailed responses which we have shared on our website in full. The LNP did not provide a response and we have drawn upon their publicly available policy positions and announcements to inform our analysis.

ANTaR recommends close consideration of the policies of the major parties contesting the QLD Election – and particularly the policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

1. TREATY

In 2019, the QLD Labor Government signed a Statement of Commitment for Tracks to Treaty¹, an initiative aimed at reframing the relationship with the First Nations People of Queensland. The subsequent Eminent Panel appointed to begin the considerations of Treaty for Queensland have now released several reports, containing eight broad recommendations for taking a Treaty process forward.

We asked each party to:

- 1. Detail how they will pursue the development of this treaty process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders for a shared future?**

		
<p>No public position given on current or future Treaty process in QLD. However, it has been reported previously that the LNP supports a process.</p>	<p>In government, QLD Labor initiated the Tracks to Treaty/Path to Treaty process during the last parliament.</p> <p>If returned, they will establish a Treaty Advancement Committee to advance the Path to Treaty process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and provide expert advice and guidance to the government on options to advance the treaty process.</p> <p>Dedicated to incorporating a framework for truth-telling as part of the State's Path to Treaty.</p> <hr/> <p> THUMBS UP Kudos for taking the first step, a long way to go.</p>	<p>The Greens support a treaty process that is led by the Indigenous community, and on this basis are committed to taking the current QLD government treaty-making process forward. This accords with Greens policy at a federal and state level.</p> <p>Prioritise treaty-making across Australia which includes the current QLD government process.</p> <p>Dedicated to a detailed and broad-ranging truth-telling process as a vital first step.</p> <hr/> <p> THUMBS UP</p>

2. STOLEN WAGES

For much of the last century, the Queensland Government controlled the lives of most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in QLD. This process began under the Aboriginal Protection and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 and continued into the 1970s. Wages and savings that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' earned were held by the Government in 'trust funds' and this money was spent on general Government expenditure including hospitals and roads used by the mainstream population. Stolen Wages were used to build Queensland – the Government owing to First Nations Peoples is now conservatively valued at \$500 million dollars.² In 2019, the Queensland Labor government agreed to paying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers a record \$190 million settlement for wages withheld from 1939 to 1972.³

We asked each party to:

- 1. Inform us of their plan to ensure all First Nations Peoples with a legitimate claim to compensation for Stolen wages will have restitution?**

		
<p>No Public position has been provided on the issue of Stolen wages.</p>	<p>Acknowledges the impacts of past policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and is committed to righting historical wrongs.</p> <p>Reached a settlement agreement (2019) of \$190 million, in addition to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reparations of \$55.4 million added to a fund established in 2002. • Further \$21 million provided through the Stolen Wages and Savings Reparations Scheme, following a commitment made in 2015. <p>Working to address other legacy issues including acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' contribution to the wealth and development of Queensland.</p> <p>Committed to reframing the relationship between Indigenous people and the QLD Government.</p> <hr/>  THUMBS UP	<p>The Greens acknowledge that ensuring governments return stolen wages to First Nations peoples is a priority.</p> <p>Its policy seeks to review and restart the stolen wages compensation process by providing restitution for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stolen wages and under-award payments.</p> <p>Understands that compensation needs to suitably account for the total stolen by the state, including all interest accumulated since the date it was stolen.</p> <p>At federal level the Greens advocate for a Royal Commission into Stolen wages if the issue is not resolved in the short term.</p> <hr/>  THUMBS UP

3. CLOSING THE GAP & THE INCARCERATION CRISIS

The Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report in February 2020 stated only two of the continuing targets are on track nationally, with QLD's only progression seen in early childhood education. There is renewed hope that progress will be improved with the commitment to 16 new targets to tackle Indigenous disadvantage under the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap.⁴

The Queensland government recorded that the age-standardised rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners in QLD was 1,824.6 per 100,000 adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, compared with 170.1 per 100,000 non-Indigenous people - this means First Nations Queenslanders are currently 11 times more likely than non-Indigenous persons to be in prison.⁵

We asked each party to advise:

1. What will they be doing to meet their obligations under the new National Agreement if they form Government?
2. And specifically, what are their party's policies to address the persistent and ongoing over-representation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates within QLD?

		
<p>The LNP has not made any public comments on its future commitments to Closing the Gap in life expectancy and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.</p> <p>Its Federal colleagues in the Coalition Government have signed up to the new National Agreement and are looking for each State and Territory to make firm commitments.</p> <p>The LNP has been almost silent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs with some media coverage suggesting it will look to introduce mandatory sentencing for youth offenders which has proven disastrous in WA for young Aboriginal people. It has also recently proposed youth curfew laws for regional QLD, in places like Townsville which will likely target young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.</p>	<p>QLD Labor supports the implementation of the new national Closing the Gap agreement, with \$9.3 million as part of a national joint funding effort with the Federal government and other states and territories.⁶</p> <p>Committed to improving life outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders.</p> <p>Introduced the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Agreement.</p> <p>Passed the Health Legislation Amendment (Aug 2020) that: directs each Hospital & Health Service (HHS) to develop a strategy to achieve health equity with First Nations; directs each HHS to have one or more First Nations persons on its Board.</p> <p>Supports schools to: develop and deliver Aboriginal language programs in collaboration with their local Communities; funding The Building Cultural Capability initiative to support teachers to work effectively with First Nations students.</p> <p>Increasing the engagement, participation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in STEM through a number of initiatives.</p> <p>A re-elected Labor Government will retain the Murri Court and the Drug and Alcohol Court, that act to break the cycle of offending.</p> <p>Commits to the retention of the</p>	<p>The Greens are hopeful the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap will bring success, and are therefore committed to funding it robustly and ensuring it is Indigenous-led.</p> <p>Committed to pursuing justice for First Nations people in QLD to the extent that the party is given representation.</p> <p>Support campaigns such as the Family Matters which aims to eliminate the issue of over-representation of First Nations children in Australia's child protection systems by 2040. The Greens consider the 2040 target date is shameful.</p> <p>The Greens Youth Justice policy is committed to: raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years; ensuring the government delivers on a full range of services to prevent the over representation of youth in the criminal justice system.</p>

3. CLOSING THE GAP & THE INCARCERATION CRISIS CONT.



Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC).

Will maintain the principle of imprisonment as a last resort (except for sexual offending against children and for offences that result in physical harm to another person).

Continues to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison to reintegrate with their communities and break the cycle of reoffending, by providing a new minibus to transport Elders to several north Queensland correctional centres.

Committed to increasing representation of First Nations membership on government boards such as First Nations Advisor for Housing and the QLD First Children and Families Board (to reduce over representation in the child protection system).



THUMBS DOWN



THUMBS DOWN

While it is commendable that the Labor Government has signed up to the new National agreement, the initial commitments are small and not good enough.



THUMBS UP

Although as a party of Government, QLD Greens would need more detail on how they would do better.

4. HOUSING

A key factor to Closing the Gap and supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is access to a safe and secure home. Not having access to affordable, secure and appropriate housing can have negative consequences, leading to disadvantages. Housing has become an extremely important issue in 2020 with the global pandemic forcing us to isolate at home.

We asked the parties to:

- 1. Notify us of your party's policies to secure adequate and sustainable housing for First Nations Queenslanders, in particular the work you will undertake to achieve:**
 - increased home ownership amongst First Nations Peoples;
 - increased housing assistance services available;
 - a high quality of housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
 - decreasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders facing homelessness?

		
<p>No public position has been provided on the issue of Housing.</p>	<p>Committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019 – 2023 by partnering with Indigenous people to strengthen decision making and enable community-led, place-based responses. This will be led by The First Nations Housing Advisor working with the government.</p> <p>Committed to \$1.8 billion Queensland Housing Strategy 2017 – 2027, providing pathways to safe, secure and sustainable housing for vulnerable Queenslanders.</p> <p>Following consultations between QLD Minister for Housing and Mayors from Remote communities regions in Sept 2020, a returned Labor government is committed to providing broader place-based local housing plans. These will include the full spectrum of housing issues from homelessness to home ownership.</p> <hr/> <p> THUMBS UP Although more can and should be done.</p>	<p>The QLD Greens have launched a plan to deliver 100,000 public homes over the next four years.</p> <p>Establish a QLD Housing Trust that would finance the construction of 250,000 homes over 10 years, with the long-term target of 20% of all housing stock as public housing, including allowances for accessible housing.</p> <p>Committed to ensuring high-quality, environmentally and culturally appropriate housing.</p> <p>Committed to better supporting community-run housing providers and putting control in the hand of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <hr/> <p> THUMBS UP</p>

5. CULTURAL HERITAGE

On 17 June 2020, Aboriginal land councils and traditional owner groups from across the nation came together to respond to the cultural heritage crisis highlighted by the tragic destruction of a site of the WA Puutu Kuntji Kurrama and Pinikura people with 46,000 years of human occupation, by mining company Rio Tinto. Although there is a National Heritage Act, heritage protection is largely a state government responsibility.

We asked each party:

1. What are their plans to protect and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage and sacred sites across Queensland?

		
<p>No public position has been provided on the issue of Cultural Heritage.</p>	<p>A re-elected Labor Government will finalise the review of the 2003 Cultural Heritage Act with a view to ensure legislation is consistent with the broader objective to reframe the relationship, and continue to protect and conserve cultural heritage, while facilitating business and development activity that is vital to QLD.</p> <p>The Sept 2020 <i>Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy</i> has been developed in partnership with representatives from various language groups and acknowledges the ongoing impact of historic practices that separated families and prohibited people speaking their own language.</p> <p>Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020- 2030 has committed a further \$24M to double the number of Indigenous land and sea rangers.</p> <p>Labor's recently announced First Nations Naming Project identifies national parks across QLD for possible renaming in First Nations languages.</p> <p>The Gurra Gurra Integrated First Nations Framework 2020- 2026 is designed to assist staff in the Dep Environment & Science to develop better working relationships with First Nations People. This is in order to align with the government's commitment to advance self-determination by recognising the rights and interests of First Nations.</p> <hr/> <p> THUMBS UP A review of the QLD Cultural Heritage Act is imperative and must provide adequate protections.</p>	<p>The Greens policies at both a state and federal level recognise the huge impact that mining has on our environment.</p> <p>Plan to phase out thermal coal and tax mining companies more effectively so all Queenslanders can share in the state's natural wealth.</p> <p>Dedicated to properly regulating and taxing the mining industry to work for citizens.</p> <p>Continue campaigns to keep mining companies working for Queenslanders and will be a key priority in the next term of Parliament.</p> <hr/> <p> THUMBS UP</p>

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ANTaR is a national advocacy organisation working for Justice, Rights and Respect for Australia's First Peoples. We do this primarily through campaigns, advocacy and lobbying.

We also engage in national advocacy across a range of policy and social justice issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including native title, languages and cultures, economic and community development, remote communities services and infrastructure, health and human rights.

ANTaR is a foundational member of the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, the Change the Record Campaign Steering Committee and the Redfern Statement Alliance.

ANTaR has been working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and leaders on rights and reconciliation issues since 1997.

ANTaR is a non-government, not-for-profit, community-based organisation.

ENDNOTES

TREATY

¹ QLD Path to Treaty: <https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/tracks-treaty/path-treaty>

STOLEN WAGES

² <http://antarqld.org.au/campaigns/stolen-wages>

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/qld-govt-settles-landmark-stolen-wages-class-action/11293230>

CLOSING THE GAP & THE INCARCERATION CRISIS

⁴ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement-closing-gap-glance>

⁵ <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/crime-justice/crime-justice-statistics/justice>

⁶ <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/90330>