

Victorian Greens ANTAR Survey Response

1. The advancement of Treaty in Victoria

- Now that the Framework has been announced with bipartisan support, what would a Greens Government's ambitions be for a state-wide Treaty with Victoria's First Peoples?
- What would a Greens Government's ambitions be for the traditional owner treaties?
- How will your Government ensure the Self Determination Fund is adequately resourced and quarantined from interference from your government?

The Greens strongly support self-determination and will continue to push for treaties to truly deliver peace, justice, rights and healing for the First Peoples of this land. When passing the treaty legislation in Victoria, we pushed for improvements regarding self-determination and secured recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Treaty legislation.

Only the Greens joined the community in speaking out against swearing allegiance to King Charles III after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and called for Australia to form a republic founded in respect for the Traditional Owners of the land through Treaty. We also spoke strongly against the erasure of the Maroondah Hospital name when the Labor Government chose to rename it the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. Respect is the foundation of strong Treaty negotiations and we will continue to speak out on this.

In the Victorian treaty negotiation process, the Greens support calls by First Nations communities who want control over their own affairs, to be permanently represented in parliament, to have land and sacred sites returned, to have greater protection and respect of their culture and heritage, greater economic opportunities, reforms to justice and child protection systems, and to have greater legislated rights and resources for self-determination.

We believe that all First Nations in Victoria must be resourced to participate equally in Treaty. We are concerned that the funding committed by the government for the Self-Determination Fund is not sufficient for the task of ensuring all Traditional Owners can negotiate on equal footing with the government and that no money has been committed as yet for building prosperity. We will monitor this closely and hold the government to account on fully delivering on the legislated requirement for equal footing and building prosperity. Further, we believe funding for the Self Determination Fund should not be subject to budget cycles and want to see independent funding secured.

The Greens are strongly committed to returning land and building prosperity of First Nations people. That's why this election we have committed to a \$1 billion land buyback fund that would see sacred sites and lands returned to Traditional Owners.

The Greens have also committed to providing an additional \$1.5 million for additional salary for the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria members so they can fully participate in the work.

2. Closing the Gap – The National Agreement

- What are the Greens' next steps to support the four core priority reforms and the 16 target outcomes stated in the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-2023?
- How will your Government provide the Aboriginal Community-Controlled service sector with more resources and authority to support their self-determination in delivering for their communities in Victoria?
- What will an elected Greens Government do to further develop and advance the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-2023, in order to address the issues of high incarceration rates, lower employment and school rates, the health priorities and overcrowded housing in Victoria?
- Will your Government mandate cross-cultural safety training for mainstream services across the board?
- Will an elected Greens Government create an Aboriginal Accountability Commission that reports to parliament as proposed by VACCHO?

The Greens are committed to Closing the Gap and support the implementation plan. The Greens are passionate about self-determination of First Nations communities, and thus we support ACCOs having more resources and authority to provide services to First Nations communities. We also believe mainstream services must be made culturally safe and support cross-cultural safety training in all public services for the community.

The Greens support VACHHO's calls to establish an independent Aboriginal Affairs Commission to evaluate services that should be delivering outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We agree these organisations should be subject to accountability in the same way that government services are.

The Greens recognise that the government is making some progress on the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-23, but the Greens believe the investment and ambition must step up. We want more than words, reports and recommendations that largely sit on a shelf, we want action on the pressing issues that are oppressing First Nations communities and holding so many people back. Whether that be the systemic racism in the justice system, or the lack of housing so essential to building a stable and healthy life, we need action now.

That's why the Greens have campaigned so strongly in recent years for ending systemic racism in the justice system. We have introduced legislation into the Victorian Parliament to raise the age of criminal responsibility, and to reform our bail laws to make remand in prison a last resort. These changes to the law would significantly reduce the incarceration of First Nations people, including First Nations women who are the fastest growing demographic in Victorian prisons.

We will continue to fight for these and other justice system changes and we have committed to provide an additional \$24.5 million to the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to ensure First Nations people have proper legal representation.

Further, we will close two prisons and invest the money back into wrap-around support services, including child protective services, family violence services, housing, drug and alcohol support services, health services and more.

This election the Greens are strongly prioritising public housing and housing affordability, as we understand that secure, safe and stable housing is a fundamental foundation for closing the gap. In recent years, we introduced legislation into the parliament to end homelessness and set targets for building public housing.

This election the Greens plan includes:

- A big build of 200,000 new accessible and sustainable public and affordable homes over the next 20 years. One hundred thousand of these homes would be public housing, which would be enough for everyone on the waiting list and would reduce overcrowding in homes.
- As part of the big build, we would provide community-controlled and appropriate housing for First Nations people and families. We will also ensure First Nations people are given priority access to new public housing through the Victorian Housing Register.
- Limiting rent increases to stop out of control rent rises and stopping people being priced out of their homes.
- Introducing a public and affordable housing levy, so developers have to contribute their fair share to affordable housing.
- Long-term provision of affordable housing through the Housing First Model.
- Long-term guaranteed funding for homelessness services.
- Ensuring appropriate housing options for young people, women, the LGBTIQ+ community and people with disabilities.

The Greens are also prioritising genuinely free, local public schools. We know the out-of-pocket cost of public schools is a big problem. The Labor Government is underfunding our public schools and Victoria has the lowest-funded public schools in Australia. This underfunding is yet another barrier to kids participating fully in school.

The Greens will invest \$1.46 billion dollars over the next five years into Victoria's public schools. We will push the Federal Government to increase funding. With this additional investment, the Greens will make quality, public schools genuinely free, abolishing out-of-pocket school costs for families, including 'voluntary' fees, subject costs, and digital devices. With fully funded public schools, there will be less barriers to students attending and more resources to support any students that are struggling.

The Greens also support free Kinder for 3 and 4 years olds. We will invest \$100 million to support the expansion of community, not-for-profit childcare, with a focus on planned development and services that meet community needs, including First Nations communities.

When it comes to health, the Greens want to make it easier for people to see a free GP, dentist or community health service. We will free up hospital beds by investing in preventative and community care, and give our hard-working public health workers better pay.

Our plan also includes decriminalising personal drug use and legalising cannabis. We know the tough on crime approach to drugs only harms and criminalises people who use drugs, and contributes to the disproportionate over-policing and incarceration of First Nations people. Instead of pouring money into policing drugs, we will invest money saved in this area into drug and alcohol support services and health services, including VACHO. The Greens are also calling for an inquiry into the quality of healthcare provided in prisons, including the adequacy of culturally safe health services for First Nations people in custody.

3. Addressing the injustice of disproportionately high incarceration rates

Can you inform ANTA of the Greens' Victorian state policies in the following areas:

- Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison, in particular women and young children;
- Confront and initiate changes to reduce the high rates of Indigenous children in out of home care and child protection in Victoria;
- Raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 with no carve-outs;
- Returning to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody principle of imprisonment as a last resort when it come to bail laws;
- Addressing the excessively high rates of family and domestic violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; and
- the Delivery of health services to prisoners/detainees in a culturally safe way (by ACCHOs).

Over recent years, the Greens have joined First Nations and legal organisations in strongly campaigning for reforms to stop the over incarceration of First Nations people. We have introduced legislation and bill amendments into the Victorian Parliament to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14, and legislation to reform our bail laws to make remand an act of last resort.

This Victorian Labor Government has built a discriminatory justice system that punishes and jails the most vulnerable people, for no reason other than their social and economic disadvantage or the colour of their skin. Report after report has been written highlighting this, but few acted on.

This election the Greens will fight for:

- No longer locking up primary school aged children, by raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years, as recommended by medical experts, the UN and First Nations Communities.
- Reducing deaths in custody by changing our bail laws so they stop disproportionately locking up First Nations people for minor offences – like women caught shoplifting.
- Ending mandatory sentencing.
- Closing two prisons and investing the money back into wrap-around support services, including child protective services, family violence services, housing, drug and alcohol support services, health services and more.
- Independently monitoring police and prisons to address racism and discrimination and stop mistreatment of prisoners.

- Provide an additional \$24.5 million to the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to ensure First Nations people have proper legal representation.
- Creating an independent commissioner to monitor progress on implementation of recommendations of both the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and coronial inquests.

4. Ensuring heritage protection

Can you inform ANTA of the Greens' policies and commitments to addressing:

- The loss of ancient cultural heritage sites in particular through the impacts of global warming on Australia's environment;
- The support of and engagement with the 'Heritage and Climate Change' project; the protection of First Nations languages and the delivery of outcomes for the UN International Decade of Indigenous Language, and
- Prioritising self-determination of First Nations people in retaining their Cultural Heritage and supporting the Heritage Council of Victoria Strategic Plan 2021-2025

First Nations people have lived on Country in what we now call Victoria for tens of thousands of years. Across the land, there are many significant sacred cultural sites for First Nations, such as the Djab Wurrung sacred trees, but the Victorian Government and its current laws are failing to protect these sites from desecration and destruction, and are not protecting First Nations lore and culture. Too many precious sites, like the Sacred Eel, are now on privately owned land and at risk of destruction.

This election, the Greens are strongly committed to protecting First Nations cultural heritage. Our plan includes:

- A \$1bn private land buyback fund to return sacred sites to First Nations communities.
- Rights for First Nations to veto destructive developments, such as mines and highways, that threaten sites of high cultural significance. If veto rights were in place, the Djab Wurrung sacred trees would not have been destroyed and threatened.
- Strengthening cultural heritage protection laws with self-determination rights, so that Traditional Owners are the decision makers over developments and issues that affect their communities, their heritage and land.
- Deepening teaching and respect of First Nations cultural heritage and language by introducing more First Nations cultural education, including languages, into the Victorian school curriculum.
- Ensuring that over time, in consultation with Traditional Owners and local communities, the names, monuments, symbols, celebrations and histories told about our communities better reflect and respect First Nations culture. We will fight to reverse the erasure of the Maroondah Hospital name.

The Greens are not only fighting to protect sacred sites, we are leading calls for action on climate change and protecting land and totems. Only the Greens are committed to stopping all new coal and gas projects, ending native forest logging now and acting in accordance with what science requires to stop catastrophic climate change. Only with strong, rapid action can Country and cultural heritage be protected from climate change.

This election, we're fighting for:

- A ban on new oil and gas drilling in our oceans and an end to coal burning in Victoria by 2030, helping to protect Country.
- Ending native forest logging by 2023 and stopping extinction, including of totem animals.
- A \$1 billion a year ongoing Zero Extinction fund, to protect and restore Victoria's environment. This includes a Dedicated First Nations Ranger training and employment program to bring Traditional Owner cultural knowledge to caring for Country.
- A moratorium on new water licences, centering First Nations rights to water and a plan to return water for healthy rivers.
- Ending native duck hunting in accordance with calls by Traditional Owners and an overhaul of wildlife laws that currently allow large-scale wildlife killing permits.