



Amy MacMahon MP
Member for South Brisbane



3 October 2024

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Dear Blake and Anne,

Thank you for the opportunity to engage with ANTAR's key policy priorities ahead of the 2024 Queensland State Election. The Queensland Greens recognise and appreciate the vital work ANTAR has done for over two decades to support the rights, justice, and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We welcome the opportunity to outline our policies on these issues, developed collaboratively with our First Nations members, including the Greens First Nations Networks and Advisory Groups, as well as First Nations people and stakeholders within our wider communities.

Our First Nations Peoples policy can be read [here](#), and further details on our key election initiatives [here](#) are here.

We are pleased to support your key election priorities, as detailed below. This letter also details broader Greens policies regarding healthcare, housing, education and early learning and economic empowerment.

1. Closing the Gap

Inequality in Australia is growing. According to the Australian Council of Social Service's Inequality Report, in the last five years, nearly half of all new wealth has gone to the wealthiest 10%, while the bottom 60%, the vast majority of people — especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — accrued just 14% of new wealth. It is unsurprising that this growing inequality is borne out in slow, stagnant, and in some instances negative progress on Closing the Gap outcomes.

Our vision for a future where everyone has what they need to live a good life demands transformative change across Queensland as a whole, as well as specific initiatives and

measures directed towards the particular challenges associated with the legacy of colonialism and injustices faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The structural inequalities embedded in our social and economic systems manifest in ongoing disparities in health, housing, education, and employment opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage, and marginalising First Nations communities.

Addressing these harms requires not only acknowledgment of the past but also bold, transformative policies that tackle these systemic barriers at their root. Below I detail the Greens policies for ensuring housing, healthcare, education and economic justice.

- **Housing**

Queensland's housing crisis is severe, and has dramatically escalated over the last term of government. Successive governments have withdrawn from the provision of housing — particularly social housing — as well as transforming it from a socially necessary good to a financial asset, while failing to address the soaring cost. Federal and state demand subsidies are inflationary, contribute to an inefficient price bubble, and do not assist those locked out of housing. There are now 10% less social housing relative to Queensland's population than in 2015.

This crisis particularly affects First Nations people, who are more likely to be renters and less likely to own their homes or have secure housing. The number of Indigenous Community Controlled housing dwellings in Queensland has declined from a peak of 5,400 in 2019 to 5,184 in 2023. As of March, 8,744 very high-needs Indigenous households were on the social housing waitlist.

The government must act decisively to reduce growing housing inequality, including taking a more direct and increased role in constructing social housing. Unfortunately, the Housing Investment Fund is not functioning as intended; not a single new social housing dwelling has been completed with its funds, and none are expected before the state election. The Homes for Queenslanders plan overemphasises concessions to the development industry rather than direct government investment in housing.

Existing measures, such as the Housing Investment Fund, need recommitment based on genuine social housing need rather than subsidising private housing development. This includes direct funding for the construction of housing and housing services.

In addition to honouring and refocusing existing government funding, the Greens have a [comprehensive and fully costed plan to build 100,000 public homes over six years](#). A portion of these homes would be dedicated to servicing the needs of the most vulnerable and clearing the social housing waitlist of more than 45,000 high needs applicants, within 4 years. Addressing the needs of these tenants will require cooperation with the community housing sector, including First Nations-controlled services, to manage a portion of the new public housing stock and provide necessary support to tenants.

After meeting the needs of the most vulnerable, the remainder of new public homes would be made available through a ballot to any Queenslanders with a connection to the area who doesn't have ownership in an existing property. This would not only preference households with existing employment, school enrollments, or community involvement in a locale, but also prioritise local First Nations people of that area.

By contracting Queensland builders and ensuring homes are constructed in identified areas of need, this government project pipeline would provide greater stability to an industry often affected by boom-bust cycles. This bold solution has the potential to revitalise communities and offer housing security for tens of thousands of Queenslanders while boosting industry confidence.

[25% of these houses would be delivered through an expanded QBuild](#) which would also create 3,000 apprentice positions, contributing to the supply of qualified tradespeople at a time when private firms struggle to maintain apprenticeship continuity.

- **Education and early learning**

The state government's implementation of 600 hours of free kindy for 4 year olds represents real progress towards matching the Greens' target of fully free and accessible kindy. But we know that not only is 15 hours a week (two short days), for 40 weeks of the year insufficient, but that gaps in access are widening inequality between cohorts.

That's why the Greens support

- Free kindy for three- and four-year-olds, delivered in a way that is genuinely free for more than two short days a week.
- A workforce plan to ensure there are enough qualified kindergarten teachers and allied practitioners to resource the system.
- Targeted investment for cohorts and areas of most need.
- The development and growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services.
- Implementation of the National Quality Framework
- Connecting health checks, ongoing support for kids, early education, and other supports to form a holistic early childhood system that supports child developmental outcomes from birth to school

We need a workforce strategy, that includes measures for recruitment, professional development and retention strategies, to boost Queensland's supply of kindergarten teachers, particularly in remote and Indigenous kindergarten services. This plan should include:

- Supported study pathways, including free university and TAFE courses.
- Location incentives for teachers in regional and remote areas.
- Support for leaders.
- Quality placements and mentoring.
- Access to appropriate, affordable housing and services.

- Better wages for kindergarten teachers, on par with school teachers.

Beyond kindergarten, our state schools should be fully funded and genuinely free. The Queensland Labor government underfunds state schools by around \$1.7 billion every year. This means that schools don't have the staff and resources they need, and schools are having to charge parents and carers more and more in out of pocket expenses.

The average school is missing out \$3000 per student, per year in minimum-needs funding. And because all parts of the SRS are ubiquitously underfunded — including loadings for First Nations children — approximately 80% of whom are educated at state school — are missing out on a greater quantum of funding.

The Greens will be fighting to fully fund Queensland State schools to 100% of the national minimum standards, including all loadings, with \$8.4 billion extra over four years. This will reduce class sizes and allow for additional learning, developmental, and other support in schools. We will also abolish resource fees and all out-of-pocket costs at State schools, including laptops, uniforms & excursions with another \$4.4 B in extra funding over four years.

We will also introduce a universal free school breakfast and lunch program at every public school.

- **Healthcare**

Ensuring early and continuous access to healthcare is essential to receiving the best opportunity in life. But not only does it result in better individual outcomes, it improves long term planning and sustainability of healthcare services as well as ensuring we can all continue contributing to our communities. Quality healthcare is an essential investment to ours and future generations' shared prosperity.

The Greens remain committed to a fully funded healthcare system capable of providing the services needed for a healthy, productive, good life. Our plan for renewed investment in healthcare includes funding for an additional 2,000 hospital beds, two additional hospitals, and 200 free GP clinics across the state.

We are further committed to expanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled health services to lower the barriers to healthcare access faced by First Nations people. We have advocated for increased funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled health services. This also includes expanding alternative means of healthcare access including at-home checks, checks at preschools and early learning centres, schools, and community centres.

- **Economic empowerment and opportunities**

Queensland is an incredibly wealthy state in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. But while billionaires and big corporations make record profits, ordinary people are falling through the cracks in a political and economic system that is rigged against them. Massive and growing

inequality is indicative of an unequal distribution of opportunities and resources — no more is this evident than in the massive divergence in incomes and wealth between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

These inequalities began with the mass dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and wealth, and have been maintained not only through an economic system where economic surpluses systematically accrue to the wealthiest but also a history of racist property laws and cultural prejudices limiting opportunities for First Nations people.

The Greens believe that the government should play a greater role in organising an economy for the benefit of all people, not profits of a small few. This includes redistributing wealth through the taxation of profits and investing it in new opportunities.

The Greens support a proactive approach to funding opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through

- Prioritising government procurement from First Nations businesses, co-operatives, and other firms with a proven track record of delivering outcomes to First Nations people through their employment and operations
- Empowering and deferring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities in economic and development decision making
- Proactive recruitment targets, policies and initiatives in the public service and government jobs alongside education and measures which improve cultural safety
- Targeted investment and grant funding to stimulate economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Investing in access to education, traineeships, and business mentorship and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The Greens also propose reversing privatisation in the electricity sector and investing in publicly owned housing, energy, and construction.

In developed countries like Australia, investment in state-owned enterprises when compared dollar-for-dollar with private sector investment, generates greater economic growth, delivers more revenue for the public, employs more people from disadvantaged cohorts, and results in better pay and conditions for workers. This is because state-owned enterprises can be governed for the greatest social good, rather than the greatest return to shareholders.

2. Cultural Heritage Protection

Development, mining, and infrastructure can risk harm to the environmental and cultural heritage we all share, including impacting the cultural heritage which has particular significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures. Queensland's Traditional Owners are connected to this land by more than 60,000 years of custodianship — First Nations stakeholders must be included in decision making around development, with free, prior and informed consent, and supported in their role as ambassadors and custodians of the history and culture of this land.

To protect First Nations cultural heritage:

- The definition of ‘prescribed activity’ which determines when cultural heritage laws apply should be as broad as possible in order to catch all activities which require the input of traditional owners.
- Consultation should occur for all activities in high-risk areas, so there is no excluded activity.
- First Nations people should be supported with funding and other resources to manage increased consultation about cultural heritage protection.
- A First Nations advisory group should lead development of a new assessment framework.
- Cultural heritage mapping should be incorporated into planning processes for state and local governments so that risks to cultural heritage are identified and addressed in the early stages of project planning.
- The definition of significant area or object should be appropriately broad, to reflect the many ways this criterion can be met.
- The cultural heritage acts must cover intangible cultural heritage.

3. Incarceration & youth justice

First Nations people in Queensland are more likely to be targeted by police, less likely to be offered cautions or diversion, and more likely to be sentenced to a period of incarceration. The Greens are committed to reducing the over-incarceration of First Nations children and adults in Queensland, by breaking the cycle of criminalisation and investing in public services and community-led solutions rather than more prisons.

Poor progress on reducing rates of Indigenous incarceration reflects governments neglecting to invest in services, communities, and opportunities needed for young people to thrive while prioritising reactive measures that can only ever respond to, never prevent, crime.

In the last 12 months, the Queensland government has passed two significant pieces of legislation using the override provisions in the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* to evade their obligation to act compatibly with human rights in. First, to introduce technical breach of bail by children and young people as an offence, and second, to permit the continued detention of children and young people in police watch houses for extended periods of time. The result has been more young people held in appalling conditions for longer periods of time.

The Greens are the only party who strongly opposed those changes. Not just because the changes are entirely incompatible with the rights of children and young people, and breach the requirement for override provisions to only be used in exceptional circumstances, but because they would do nothing to keep the community safer. The Greens will always do everything we can to ensure laws are compatible with Queensland’s Human Rights Act.

In line with our commitment to upholding the rights and interests of children and young people, and the broader community, we commit to:

- Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age;
- Enhancing strategies to reduce the high rate of young people on remand;
- Preventing the detention of children and young people in police watch houses;
- Restoring the principle of detention as a last resort;
- Addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection and youth justice systems, including through sufficient and ongoing resourcing of community-controlled organisations and bodies to provide culturally appropriate programs and support; and
- Reducing the criminalisation of children in residential care;
- Proactively investing in services, communities, and opportunities which promote prosocial behaviours rather than reactive and punitive responses to crime after the fact.

In 2021, the Queensland Greens introduced a private member's bill to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old. That bill was voted down by all other parties represented in Parliament at that time.

We want to see funding redirected to public health and wellbeing, disability support services, education and housing, culturally appropriate support programs, intensive case supports, and early intervention. These are the measures that will contribute to the safety of all people in our communities.

4. Treaty and Truth Telling

The Greens support Treaty, Truth and Voice and the key role these processes will play in substantive justice for First Nations people and the wider transformative change that is required.

The Greens support whatever provision of resources to the Treaty Institute that is necessary to developing treaty-making frameworks, bodies, processes and capacities of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

But we also know that for a **Treaty** process to be meaningful, it must go hand in hand with addressing economic and social injustices that First Nations people experience.

There can be no true agreement between parties of unequal capacity to represent themselves, and right now there is no treaty making capacity for an incarcerated child, for those dying from preventable disease, or for families struggling to keep a roof over their head. First Nations people have solutions to these challenges, solutions that need to be properly funded and supported.

If we are sincere in our commitment to meaningful treaty then we need more than the platitudes and tokenisms of governments past. We need tangible change from the get go.

Existing investment and funding of not only the Treaty Institute, but addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advantage generally, is inadequate.

The Greens firmly believe that addressing the historical injustices faced by First Nations peoples through the process of **Truth Telling** is long overdue. It is essential to acknowledge the violence and resistance that have shaped this country's history, and it is important to do it properly.

The Greens share the concerns of some within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding the timeframe of the Truth Telling and Healing Inquiry as it presently exists. The experiences drawn from the Yoorook Justice Commission in Victoria highlight that a three-year limit may be insufficient for such an important initiative. Therefore, we advocate for a government commitment to extending the Inquiry in response to any recommendation from the Inquiry to do so .

Additionally, there is a pressing need to address the Inquiry's lack of powers to compel information from non-government entities. Given the significant role that non-government entities have played in perpetuating the injustices of colonialism, it is vital that the Inquiry is empowered to compel information from these bodies if it believes it is in the interests of the Inquiry to do so.

Despite these concerns, the Queensland Greens strongly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' Truth Telling as well bringing the wider community together to recognise history, demand justice, and champion the survival of First Nations people and their cultures.

Thank you for your ongoing advocacy for justice and rights for First Nations people. We look forward to working with you to progress your priorities in the next term of Parliament.

Kind regards,



Amy MacMahon
Member for South Brisbane