



ACTION, ADVOCACY, ASSISTANCE

A PLAN TO HELP YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

The Greens will create opportunities to benefit the next generation

Every generation should aim to pass on a fairer, more caring and prosperous society to the next one. Tony Abbott's Coalition and the Labor party are ignoring the views and needs of Australia's youth, who are struggling to get by and fulfil their potential.

The old parties are focused on policies that help the mining industry and the big end of town, rather than looking out for ways to listen to the younger generation and give them the means to improve their own future. By ignoring the gaping needs confronting the youth of Australia, the old parties are leaving them to battle on with fewer opportunities and higher pressure.

The Greens are the only party committed to challenging such short-term thinking. We will stand up for a safe, healthy and prosperous future for all young Australians and those that follow in their footsteps.

> 10 WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR YOUTH

For Australia to make the most of its future, it has to be built on new ideas and the endless potential of the next generation. The Greens are the only party putting forward new ideas to solve old problems and provide new opportunities.

The Greens have listened to young Australians to develop our **10 Point Youth Plan**, which works comprehensively across policy areas to give young people the support they need. **The Greens will:**

- **Commit to including the federal Minister for Youth in Cabinet**, to prioritise youth issues in government and require Cabinet to consider the impact of policies on young people.
- **Establish an Australian Youth Parliament** for 226 young people, to be held in each term of parliament over 2 sitting days, to promote youth influence and empowerment.
- **Raise Youth Allowance by \$50 a week**, to lift young people and students out of the poverty cycle.
- **Defend penalty rates and job security**, to ensure better rights and conditions for weekend and casual workers.

- **Make housing for young people more affordable**, by expanding rental assistance, protecting renters' rights, and funding new 20,000 new student rentals.
- **Value and promote young artists** through living wage support and royalty schemes for young and emerging artists, startup funding for new arts businesses, and live music protections.
- **Remove hurdles for young LGBTI people** by leading the charge on marriage equality, removing discrimination in the employment laws, and funding more services for young LGBTI people in rural and regional Australia.
- **Stand up for an educated generation**, by reversing Labor's student scholarship cuts, boosting funding for universities and restoring TAFE as a key vocational training institute.
- **Defend the NBN** against Tony Abbott's dud broadband plan, and protect young people's phone and internet privacy.
- **Help young people stay happy and healthy**, through Medicare-style dental care for all young people under 20 by 2017 and new funding for mental health and suicide prevention, especially in regional and rural places.

> LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

The Greens are the party that listens to young people and works towards the priorities set by them. Our Youth Plan draws on and accords with the findings of large-scale surveys of young Australians.¹ Young people care about higher education cuts, job security, marriage equality, housing affordability, climate change, foreign aid, and fair treatment of asylum seekers.

The Greens are working towards a clean economy and a compassionate society, to give the next generation the chances they deserve. We care about listening to people as well as empowering them to take action themselves.



> LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE THAT WORKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TOO

Currently the Minister for Youth is not part of Cabinet. In fact, since the establishment of the Youth Affairs portfolio in 1980, the Minister has been a member of Cabinet just over 30% of the time. The Greens believe that the Commonwealth Minister for Youth is too important to be relegated to the outer Ministry. In Vic, SA, WA, the ACT and the NT, the youth spokesperson is automatically a member of Cabinet. We think it makes sense to give youth issues equal respect on the federal level too.

We are committed to ensuring that the Minister for Youth is part of Cabinet, to prioritise youth issues and make sure that the impact of policies on young people is a key consideration in all government policy deliberations.

> AN AUSTRALIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT TO INSPIRE AND ENGAGE

Young people are keen to contribute to the direction of Australian politics and policy, but feel shut out and disconnected as the old parties fight amongst themselves. The next generation is switching off from decisions that affect them.

The Australian Greens will establish and support a new National Youth Parliament to give young people from all backgrounds a chance to develop their political voice and skills. The Australian Youth Parliament will involve 226 young people, to be teamed with the 150 members of the House of Representatives and the 76 Senators.

It will also feature a special youth-focused Question Time with young MPs and real MPs on a sitting day. With \$1.5 million funding over each parliamentary term, the Youth Parliament program includes money to cover the participation of young delegates from all backgrounds, ensuring that no one will miss out on a unique learning and political advocacy opportunity.

> SUPPORTING FAIR YOUTH WELFARE

Young people need support now more than ever. Those who are at university, TAFE and other higher education institutions are facing bigger bills and fees than any earlier generation. Some students are regularly missing meals to save money and lots of students are under so much financial stress that it's affecting their studies.

Student poverty is a real barrier to equitable access to further education in Australia. Current payments don't cover the cost of living, so many students are forced to spend long hours in low-paid jobs, taking their focus away from their studies or even forcing them to miss classes.

The Greens are the only party proposing to increase Youth Allowance and Austudy by \$50 per week, to give young people a reasonable income while studying or undertaking an apprenticeship, and a good basis to kick start their career.

> DECENT PAY AND JOB SECURITY FOR YOUNG WORKERS

We know many young people work in weekend and evening jobs around their home life and studies, and heavily rely on the extra pay rates that traditionally apply to out-of-hours work. We understand the importance of penalty rates for young workers slaving away on weekends. Penalty rates are a fair recognition of the unsociable and demanding work hours. The Greens have reaffirmed their support for penalty rates and will stand up against any changes from a future Abbott government.

We will also back measures to ensure that there are stronger rights for the large, often youthful, workforce on casual contracts. The Greens want to see people on long term casual contracts be treated as permanent employees and gain all the benefits that come with that. We want all workers to have a legally enforceable right to request flexible working times so that employees can best choose how to balance their work/life/study priorities. At the moment the employer has all the discretion, but the young worker has none.

Finally, the Greens are aware of the skyrocketing level of debt accrued during education. The old parties will make it harder by scrapping the Start-Up Scholarship Scheme and converting it into a HECS debt. The Greens oppose this and other measures that will increase the HECS burden on young workers.

> AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS A RIGHT FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

Rents have increased by an incredible 23% across the country in the last five years, while student allowances have increased by a mere 12%.ⁱⁱ To take the pressure off one-third of Australians caught in this rental housing supply crisis, the Greens have announced a policy to build 20,000 new premises specifically for students under the National Rental Affordability Scheme and extend eligibility to universities to provide student housing. This plan is affordable having been independently costed at \$28 million over the forward estimates.

We will also provide funding for over 15,000 new rental homes under our 'convert to rent' scheme which creates incentives for owners to turn empty or disbanded properties into homes. We have a plan for improving rental standards nationally for a minimum quality of security, comfort and efficiency as well as provide a greater stability of rental tenure. While the Greens care about more than just a roof about young people's heads, Tony Abbott and Labor are offering nothing to Australia's young renters.



> YOUNG ARTISTS ARE VALUABLE

Many young artists have a hard time juggling their artistic endeavours with the need to earn a basic living. The intense pressure can force them to give up their art practice altogether. The Greens want to make arts careers an option, in music, design, photography, craft, sculpture, paint, illustration, dance, performance or literature.

Our young and emerging artists' policy will allow artistic activities that provide community benefits and assist securing future employment to be eligible for Centrelink mutual obligation requirements. We will also invest an additional \$3 million into the ArtStart program that provides business training and financial support to those just starting out in their artistic trade.

The Greens know that many young artists would be happy just to break even after spending their money on equipment, materials, transport and venue hire. In recognition of the value provided to the broader public, without the artist themselves having to solely bear the costs, we will establish a \$3 million fund to enable payments for artists performing, exhibiting or speaking about their works to the general public.

> STANDING UP FOR LBGTI YOUTH

Like the great majority of young Australians, the Greens believe who you love is far more important than an outdated marriage law. Our continued pressure and the community campaign for marriage equality has already changed hearts and minds across the community. The Greens MPs are unanimous in their support for marriage equality, unlike the ALP or Tony Abbott's Coalition who are divided on this inevitable reform.

The Greens will also remove exemptions in anti-discrimination laws that allow LGBTI people to be discriminated against in employment or when receiving services. We will replace the School Chaplaincy program with comprehensive support services for students, including addressing bullying, with particular attention on the experiences of LGBTI students. Knowing that bullying is causing huge distress to young people, our rural and regional mental health package will assist young LGBTI people cope with the unique challenges facing them.

> HIGHER ASPIRATIONS THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

The short-term thinking of Tony Abbott and Labor has seen them promise to cut \$2.3 billion out of universities just as conservative state Premiers are endlessly ripping hundreds of millions out of TAFE. Only the Greens are backing future productivity by committing to a trained and educated workforce. Our fully-costed policy not only reverses these cuts, but also lifts the base funding of all our national universities by 10%.

In our budget-balanced platform, we have highlighted the importance of TAFE as vocational training for skilled workers. The Greens don't believe in redirecting massive funding redirected towards privately run courses. We will invest an additional \$1.2 billion in TAFE to ensure that it is the preferred provider of courses. Combined, this is to a significant \$5 billion dollars investment by the Greens in our national universities and TAFE centres over the next three years.

> ONLINE FREEDOMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The Greens have successfully led the charge against every government restriction on internet use. The widely condemned internet filter that was intended to blacklist government determined websites was abandoned. Our campaigning has also scared off both Labor and the Coalition's plan to require ISP companies to retain all the information of what you do on the internet and your smartphone.

The Greens will not let this important tool of global civil society be turned into a tool for global surveillance. We will also prevent any of Tony Abbott's cheapskate changes to the National Broadband Network. By retaining the slow and ancient copper wire the costs will simply be deferred until inevitably, young Australians will have to pay for the upgrades later.

> YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ENTITLED TO MENTAL AND DENTAL HEALTHCARE

As part of our agreement with the last Government the Greens delivered Medicare-style dental care to children aged 2-17 in FTB-A eligible families. That has meant that since 1 January 2014, 3.5 million teens and children have been eligible for Denticare. We have now launched our fully-costed Denticare expansion scheme to be rolled out next to low-income earners, including other children and teens, pensioners and concession card holders. By 2017, we want to see Denticare to be rolled out to all children and young people up to the age of 20.

As part of our broad policy contribution to youth well-being, we have also crafted a mental health package to expand preventative treatment, suicide prevention and research, to address the ongoing problem of youth mental illness and suicide. The Greens can be relied upon to stand up for the health and well-being of young people in the new Parliament.

For all these Greens' policies and others, including our Clean Energy Roadmap, see <http://www.greens.org.au/initiatives-and-policies>

ⁱ Top issues survey [UN Youth Representative](#); [The Australia Institute Youth Survey](#); and [National Union of Students](#).