



Senator Rachel Siewert

Australian Greens Senator for Western Australia

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Dear Brian

Thank you for the letter regarding 2016 Federal Election pledges for families. We too are concerned about the number of Australian families experiencing disadvantage. The Australian Greens have always fought to help the most disadvantaged families and provide support to vulnerable children. I have addressed your requested pledges below.

First, raise levels of financial support for child safety and wellbeing.

Our approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children is multi-faceted. Direct financial support to families is the first part of achieving this. We have continuously fought to protect families and their children from the erosion of payments from successive governments. We have committed to increasing the rate of Newstart by \$55 per week, reinstating single parents to Parenting Payment Single, and removing the pause on income thresholds. These measures will help the most vulnerable families provide for their children and help combat poverty and inequality.

Other threats to the safety and wellbeing of children can be addressed through funding of services. We have pledged \$5 billion over ten years to properly fund frontline domestic violence services to ensure victims of domestic violence, including children, have access to effective and appropriate support. To help the 603,000 children living in poverty, we will strengthen the social safety net. To achieve this we will develop a national anti-poverty plan, boost community service funding by \$504 million over four years, and work to provide guaranteed access to essential services.

Second, increase efforts to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians with particular regard to child protection.

We are concerned that current efforts are not sufficient to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. We are particularly concerned with the current trend in the child protection system that may lead to the creation of another stolen generation. To address this issue we are advocating for a system that actively invests in early intervention approaches that help to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from entering into out of home care in the first place. We need a system that focuses on early intervention and support for children and their families. We have pledged \$20 million over four years to reduce the number of children entering out of home care, and \$10 million over four years to improve the entire child protection system. Our proposed measures are culture and community based, and will ensure approaches to out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are culturally appropriate and effective.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians. In order to make progress where it is needed the Greens will invest in key health programs, and work to make sure the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan succeeds.



We will provide additional funding of \$179.4m over four years, including:

- \$42.3m to work to limit preventable blindness;
- \$99.8m to close the gap in hearing health;
- \$10m to address the challenges of chronic kidney disease, and
- \$27.3m to improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.

We will also restore the funding that the Abbott/Turnbull Government took out of Aboriginal services via the Indigenous Advancement Strategy by providing an additional \$556m, and we have committed to a national justice target as part of closing the gap.

Third, better support for adult survivors of child sexual and other abuse in institutions.

The Greens will implement the Royal Commission's recommendations for a single national redress scheme. The scheme will be primarily funded by responsible institutions, including the costs associated with administration, counselling and psychological care, and monetary payments. State, territory and Commonwealth governments will have direct responsibility for compensation where abuse has occurred in their respective government institutions. We propose to start work on the scheme in 2016-17, and start payments in 2018. The Parliamentary Budget Office costing shows the scheme will cost the Commonwealth \$250.5m over the forward estimates (2016-17 to 2019-20). The Greens are the only party with a fully costed scheme.

The scheme process will operate as follows:

1. Survivor applies through the scheme agency
2. Institution bears responsibility for all compensation unless the institution and its associated entities have ceased to exist or are exhausted of funds
3. Commonwealth and state and territory governments share responsibility for funding of last resort

The Greens will also establish a counselling and psychological support scheme, as per the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The scheme will:

- Provide counselling under Medicare for eligible survivors, including removing restrictions on the number of sessions
- Expand the services available under Medicare for eligible survivors, to include longer-term approaches suitable for treating complex trauma, without requiring diagnosis
- Provide case management style support
- Ensure counselling sessions for family members of survivors when required

In addition to support for all survivors, this package will also include:

- \$2m funding for practitioners who have not had the necessary training or experience to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors
- \$2m in funding for training rural and remote, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners, to work with survivors
- \$5m in funding for service provision to regional and remote communities

Thank you again for your letter.



Yours sincerely

Rachel Siewert

Australian Greens Spokesperson on Family, Ageing, Community and Disability Services