



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Policy Category: D. Care for People

Issued: May 2009

### Principles

*The Australian Greens believe that:*

1. the Australian Constitution must recognise the prior occupation and sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a strong cultural and spiritual connection with the land, and their rights and obligations as owners and custodians must be respected.
3. Australia must comply with international agreements that recognise the rights of indigenous peoples.
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a right to self determination and political representation, and must be partners in the development and implementation of public policies, programs and services that affect them.
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to retain, and benefit financially from, the Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and heritage rights invested in traditional knowledge and in the biodiversity of their own lands and waters, in accordance with the UN International Convention on Biological Diversity.
6. where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have been dispossessed from their lands and waters, they have a right to redress through measures that assist them to acquire, own and/or manage their land and waters in a way that enhances their social, cultural, spiritual, economic and environmental wellbeing.
7. all Australians, including those living in remote communities, have an equal right to essential government services such as health, education, training, housing, community infrastructure, employment support, and policing.
8. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have the same life expectancy and living standards as other Australians.
9. Australian governments must recognise the continuing effect of past treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provide restitution to the stolen generations.
10. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are particularly vulnerable to a wide range of climate change impacts.

### Goals

*The Australian Greens want:*

11. a treaty that recognises the prior occupation and sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be enshrined in the constitution.
12. equality of access to essential services and development opportunities within a decade.
13. equality of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on all major indicators of health, education, training, housing, employment and living standards within a generation, within a framework which acknowledges the diverse aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
14. the establishment of appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies elected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
15. increased representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all levels of government and other decision making roles.

## AUSTRALIAN GREENS POLICY: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (cont'd)

[www.greens.org.au/about/policies](http://www.greens.org.au/about/policies)

16. all programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to employ qualified community members where possible, and to include training and capacity development.
17. culturally appropriate services and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people based on local language, cultural aspects and community priorities.
18. qualified local-language and cultural interpreters available in courts, hospitals, clinics, and government meetings when needed.
19. youth programs to be treated as an essential service in remote communities.
20. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be able to retain or reclaim language, heritage and cultural practices.
21. items of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage to be returned to their rightful owners and custodians.
22. full implementation of the recommendations of the following:
  - Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997);
  - The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991);
  - The NT Coroner's (1998, 2002), WA Coroner's (2004) and SA Coroner's (2002, 2005) reports on petrol sniffing related deaths;
  - The Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle (Little Children are Sacred) Report into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (2007)
  - The HREOC Social Justice Report (2005) into achieving equality of outcomes within a generation;
  - The Senate Community Affairs Committee petrol sniffing report (2006); and
  - Report on the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (1996 'The Evatt Review').

### Measures

#### *The Australian Greens will:*

23. increase resources in both community-controlled health services and mainstream services, through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Framework Agreements and Aboriginal Regional Health Plans.
24. fund a 10 year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing plan, with a focus on appropriate housing and infrastructure, and with a component providing training and resources for ongoing maintenance, to address unmet need.
25. make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's health a funding priority, with a focus on community-controlled health services and additional community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-care services.
26. support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community initiatives and networks to address family violence and abuse, resource Aboriginal Women's Legal Services, establish safe houses in communities, and support initiatives to reduce substance abuse.
27. ensure that there is effective policing in remote communities negotiated with community elders, including infrastructure to ensure a live-in police presence, and ongoing funding for successful community night-patrol programs.
28. conduct a comprehensive study of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and enterprise development in remote, rural and urban communities, and implement the recommendations.
29. assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to adapt to climate change impacts, including increased risk of mosquito borne viruses and heat stress, and degradation of their economic base

and cultural heritage associated with sea-level rise, altered seasonality, biodiversity loss and population displacement.

30. ensure continuity and security of funding for successful community programs.
31. resource youth programs as essential services in remote communities.
32. increase support for the development of language and cultural curricula in schools.
33. direct and resource the Australian Human Rights Commission's Social Justice Commissioner to report annually on progress against the recommendations of the reports listed in 4.21 above.
34. amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, and other applicable legislation, to:
  - respect customary law restrictions;
  - guarantee access to significant sites by people with cultural connections to the site;
  - establish independent cultural heritage bodies;
  - ensure minimum protection standards under Commonwealth, state and territory laws;
  - protect all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage including intellectual property; and
  - ensure that heritage decisions are made by the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
35. amend the Native Title Act 1993 to ensure consistency with international law and human rights undertakings.
36. restore the application of the Racial Discrimination Act and the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Act to Aboriginal communities affected by the Northern Territory Emergency Response.
37. revoke the quarantining of income support payments for Aboriginal people in communities proscribed by the Northern Territory Emergency Response.
38. lift policy requirements that make the provision of new housing in Aboriginal communities contingent on long-term leasing of the land to the Commonwealth and on handing management of housing from community organisations to State and Territory housing agencies.
39. enact the provisions of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australian law.
40. fairly compensate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where property has been taken from them or wages have been withheld.
41. repeal amendments to the Northern Territory Land Rights Act that disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
42. ensure the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to sustainably hunt, fish and gather native flora and fauna in line with traditional cultural practice.