



Michael Berkman MP
For Maiwar ▲

23 October 2020

Nigel Webb
Chairperson, Board of Directors, Queensland with Disability Network
Via email: chairperson@qdn.org.au

2020 Queensland state election - policy priorities

Dear Nigel,

Thank you for your email of 2 September 2020, in which you included the Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) 2020 State Election Policy Platform.

For your reference, the **Queensland Greens election platform for the 2020 State Election is online at:** <https://greens.org.au/qld/plan>. Our long-standing broader policy platform is here: <https://greens.org.au/qld/policies>.

The Queensland Greens support a significant investment into government services and infrastructure as part of Queensland's COVID-19 recovery. We have a fully costed plan to build 100,000 public homes over the next 4 years, and to [fully fund public health and education](#) for all Queenslanders. This investment would create 21,000 additional hospital beds, see the additional hiring of 6,500 more nurses and 3,000 more doctors, and establish 200 new Community Health Clinics with bulk billing GPs and allied health professionals. It would also fully fund State schools, with additional resources, more teachers, and smaller class sizes benefiting all children across Queensland.

We believe that all people have a right to independence, self-determination and choice in their lives. People who experience physical, intellectual, cognitive and/or psychiatric disability, and their families and carers, have the right to actively participate in all levels of policy, service planning and delivery and evaluation, including their own.

Here in Maiwar, I have worked hard to advocate for people with disability on local, state and federal issues, both at an individual and systemic level. I have assisted constituents in meeting access to the NDIS, Queensland Community Support Scheme, and the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. I have also assisted parents in their advocacy for an inclusive education for their children, and helped constituents complete their applications for assistance dogs.

I have and will continue to push for urgent accessibility upgrades to train stations in my electorate - most importantly Taringa Station - and across Queensland. I have and will continue to advocate for telehealth services to continue beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. I will continue to amplify the voices of people with disability wherever possible, such as publicly voicing concerns held by the disability community ahead of legislation to ban single-use plastics, including plastic straws.

Contact Us

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I have addressed the priorities raised in your State Election Policy Platform with corresponding headings below. All statements are complementary to statements by the Greens' spokespeople, including myself, and other policy documents that are on the public record.

My Voice Matters

The Queensland Greens would support the appointment of a dedicated Minister for Disability Services and Inclusion, including the establishment of clear mechanisms for reporting to the Minister for Disability Services and Inclusion.

We are committed to strengthening funding for independent individual and systemic disability advocacy services for people with disability. To that end, we strongly support increasing funding both under the NDIS and separately at a State level for advocacy organisations who do not qualify for funding via individual participant plans.

My Safety and Wellbeing Matters

The Greens would support government investment in initiatives that support people with disability to better prepare for emergency events, including (but not limited to) natural disaster preparedness and health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. We would also support initiatives targeted at local emergency management, such as local councils, community and emergency services, to ensure that people with disability can have their say on local, regional and emergency planning.

We would strongly support the appointment of an Expert Panel to investigate the mistreatment of people with disability in care, including the requirement to report their findings to the Queensland Parliament. We hold concerns that the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is not properly equipped to protect people with disability against violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and even death. As of September 2020, despite receiving over 8,000 complaints, the Commission had fined just one provider.

The Greens believe that both state and national leadership is required to address abuse, neglect and violence towards people with disability. My Australian Greens colleagues including Senator Jordon Steele-John were at the forefront of the campaign to establish the Royal Commission, and I fully support its important work. We will work to enact national standards to protect people with disability, where required, via monitoring, investigative powers and enforcement.

We support extending national legislative protection for people with disability, including giving the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) greater power in discrimination complaints and the retention of a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner position at the AHRC.

My Housing Matters

We believe that people with disability should have the opportunity to find an accessible home that meets their needs via online methods such as the Housing Hub or Disability Housing websites. We believe that people with disability should be supported to exercise their tenancy rights and obligations via an investment in training initiatives for Supported Accommodation residents.

The Greens understand that people with disability can often require access to public and community social housing, due to increasing housing costs and inadequate social welfare payments. There are currently 39,000 people on the waiting list for social houses in Queensland, and that number is predicted to increase by 7,000 people each year. With the Government currently only planning to build around 450 social homes per year, the number of people on the waiting list is set to increase significantly.

In order to address this, the [Queensland Greens recently announced our fully costed plan](#) to build 100,000 public homes over the next 4 years. We will allocate homes to those currently on Queensland's social

housing waiting list, then make them available to all Queenslanders. We would also remove ongoing eligibility checks, and give tenants a lifetime right to their home once allocated, in order to ensure that people feel secure in their home for the long term.

We would also legislate to introduce inclusionary zoning in South East Queensland to ensure 20% of any new multi-dwelling development would be delivered as public housing stock, further ensuring the supply of affordable housing.

We strongly support the *Making Renting Fair Alliance Queensland's* campaign reforms and I have been the strongest advocate for renters' rights in the Queensland Parliament, pushing for an even more [ambitious set of reforms](#) including universal rent caps and "right to remain" in your home.

My Digital Connection Matters

We would support an investment in programs to build the digital skills of people with disability, and to provide support to deliver devices and data to people with disability who are ineligible for support via the NDIS.

We also support ensuring that governments, business and service providers adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and provide accessible, user friendly web platforms in order to ensure that people with disability do not face barriers to information and communication, particularly those who use assistive and adaptive technology.

My Health Matters

The Greens strongly support the continuation of tele-health services post COVID-19. Greens Senators Jordon Steele-John and Rachel Siewert have been publicly advocating for this continuation, with the support of my Greens colleagues around the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important telehealth appointments are in ensuring accessible health services for people with disability, as well as those who live in rural and regional areas, and we will continue to push for them to remain available.

We would support the development and implementation of a statewide Disability Health Plan, including a Queensland Clinical Network for Disability. We believe that the statewide Disability Health Plan should be developed in conjunction with people with disability.

The Greens believe that ongoing training on the health needs of people with disability should be provided for medical students and professionals, including training and support to improve governance, reporting, communication and integrated care, in order to enhance healthcare for people with a disability.

We support ongoing funding of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Program.

My Education and Employment Matters

The Greens strongly support improved delivery and implementation of the Education Department's Inclusive Education policy in Queensland schools, including further training and resources for teaching staff.

We seek to properly resource pathways that support people with disability to transition from school into meaningful employment, education, vocational programs (primarily delivered through the public TAFE system), or other community-based activities. We are committed to removing the structural barriers of access to education, training and employment, and believe that education should be free, including university and TAFE. We believe that funding diverse adult community education and training programs is integral to foster a culture of lifelong learning.

We support providing access to specialised employment support services for people with disability who wish to find employment or volunteer opportunities, and believe that the development of a dedicated Queensland Disability Employment Strategy would be an effective method to ensure adequate support is being provided. We would prioritise increased employment of people with disability in the public service, and our plans to fully fund health and education would expand the size of the public service and therefore the number of job opportunities.

My Justice Matters

The Greens would support the development, in conjunction with people with disability, of a state response to the recommendations made by the Royal Commission, consistent with our track record as the longest-standing advocates for that Royal Commission in the Australian Parliament.

We believe that a just and effective criminal justice system protects the community, addresses the causes of crime, reduces the social impacts of crime, protects human rights, and offers a range of interventions in addition to loss of liberty. We believe that the government must deliver a full range of services to address the over-representation in the criminal justice system of people with intellectual disabilities, mental illnesses, and addiction.

We are supportive of measures to identify people with disability who are interacting with the judicial system, both for victims and defendants/offenders, and to develop effective support systems within courts, corrective services and prisons for people with disability. We seek to increase funding for Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres to increase their capacity for advice, representation, community legal education and law reform.

We believe that ongoing preventative and educative programs aimed at the public, police and the judiciary are required to help combat domestic violence, including specific training and development in the area of disability awareness and inclusion. We support a reporting framework for service use and outcomes for women and children with disability who experience domestic and family violence.

I was proud to strongly support the *Human Rights Act* inside and outside Parliament, and the Greens strongly support all government departments and agencies in embedding the *Human Rights Act* in all of their practices.

We would support an amendment to the Criminal Code to ensure that people with intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, or neurological impairments who have the relevant capacity to decide to engage in a consensual sexual relationship are not criminalized under the law.

The Greens strongly support raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 and I will continue to advocate for this important change to be made. I am very proud to have been the sole MP in this current Parliament to publicly support this proposal, and I will continue working to encourage the MPs from other parties who also support it to achieve reform.

My Transport Matters

We strongly support continuing to fund the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS), and seek to make the scheme more accessible for those who are unable to use public or private transport. I was glad to have been part of the broad community effort to ensure that the Queensland government extended the TSS when it was due to expire during this term of Parliament. I believe the TSS should remain as a permanent option for those who do not qualify for the NDIS.

We are also committed to investing in urgent accessibility upgrades to existing transport infrastructure, including making all Queensland train stations independently accessible in compliance with the 2022 deadline specified in the Federal Disability Discrimination Act. I have been particularly focussed on Taringa Station in my electorate which is only accessible by stairs, and have worked extensively to draw the Transport Minister's attention to that station and advocate for a commitment to upgrade this station.

The Greens believe that people with disability should be included in the development of strategies that could potentially have an impact on their lives, such as major infrastructure projects, disability parking reform, and the development of a regional and rural accessible transport strategy.

My NDIS Matters

The Greens believe that a fully funded NDIS is vital to ensure that people with a disability are able to have their needs met, and that people with disability should have meaningful and ongoing input into the planning of their care, services and supports. We believe that the Queensland Government has a role to play in governance, oversight, and stewardship of both the NDIS and the ILC policy framework.

As a member of the Parliamentary Health, Communities, Disability Services, and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, I have been particularly focussed on ensuring that Queenslanders with a disability do not fall through the cracks during the NDIS rollout. I have unfortunately seen many examples of that happening in my electorate, so I know we must do better.

My Cost of Living Matters

The Greens believe that people with disability have been left behind by the Australian Government during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to ensuring that people with disability are given the support they need to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic, including accessible financial counselling, and education about and access to the No Interest Loans Scheme. We strongly support the continuation of existing energy concessions for people with disability, including the development of strategies to ensure that people with disability are aware of all available concessions.

The Greens have been working to ensure that people on welfare payments, such as the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and JobSeeker, see their payments increase and remain above the poverty line. My Australian Greens colleagues advocated strongly for the Coronavirus Supplement to be extended to DSP recipients and carers, and I support that position.

Thank you again for sharing the QDN's priorities with us. I hope that this information is of assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 07 3737 4100 if you would like to discuss any of these issues in more detail.

Kind regards,



Michael Berkman MP