

## Responses from GREENS SENATE CANDIDATE – Penelope ANN

### To questions for Federal Candidates in the 2010 Election - A commitment to a National Women's Health Policy

**The Greens** support a gendered approach to policy development across government departments. 51% of our population are women. They have many gender specific problems which require specific support. We recognise that women's health and wellbeing, important in its own right, is vital to a healthy society because women remain the primary carers of children and young people, people with a disability, their partners and their parents.

You may be aware that our **Denison candidate Dr Geoff Couser**, is a staff specialist in emergency medicine at the Royal and indeed wrote much of the medical course at UTAS - he is more aware than most regarding health issues and will work hard to get the best outcomes for all patients and the health workforce alike.

#### **The need for a national health plan-**

**The Greens will support a coordinated national approach to health care.** The fairest and most efficient way to achieve this is through a well-resourced public health system.

**Bulk billing - The Greens** will protect and extend Medicare

**Hospital waiting lists- The Greens** will redirect the \$3.8 billion private health insurance rebate to public health and hospitals.

**GP shortages-** Extra GPs will be trained with funding from above.

**Dental/Oral Health- The Greens' Denticare scheme** and the creation of dental Medicare will provide basic dental care to all Australians. Decades of neglect of the public dental system has more than 500,000 people on waiting lists, resulting in enormous social, financial and health costs. The Greens will invest \$4.3 billion pa in Denticare to ensure Australians have universal access to primary dental care, including preventative check-ups every two years and a properly resourced, trained and located dental workforce.

#### **The dilemma of competing demands of investment in health promotion and prevention and the immediate needs of primary health service delivery-**

**The Greens** have a focus on health reform with a particular **focus on primary care**, mental health and dental care. Real health reform will ease the pressure on the Royal better than any number of unsustainable funding promises.

**The Greens** will ensure that women can access safe, affordable reproductive health services, including the termination of pregnancy, with unbiased counselling.

Hobart Women's Health Centre in its role in health promotion and prevention in Tasmania would continue to be resourced to provide these essential services.

## **Mental Health-**

**The Greens** are calling for a **new Minister for Mental Health** and additional funding of at least **\$350 million** pa for mental health over the next four years to fund:

- **\$100m pa** incentives at the **primary care** level to target those in need, the vulnerable and long-term clientele working within the community and NGO sector;
- **\$150m pa for early intervention** mental health programs including Headspace and early psychosis prevention services;
- **\$100m pa for alternatives** to emergency department treatment such as multi-disciplinary, community-based, sub-acute services that support “stepped” (two-staged) prevention and recovery care.
- Additional training for GPs and nurses to triage mental health appropriately.

## **Increasing transitional support programs for people moving from hospital care to independent community living-**

**The Greens** plan for mental health care reform locates mental health programs within primary health organisations. Dedicated teams of mental health workers would perform specialist functions of care, including liaising with hospitals to ensure that patients discharged into the community are guaranteed a comprehensive care plan that includes consultation with a family member or friend, an assessment of housing needs and other ongoing support needs.

## **Body image/ weight problems-**

**The Greens** will ban junk food advertising on childrens’ television.

**The Greens’** focus is on primary health care and **health promotion** rather than concentrating on weight and obesity. We will instead promote a healthy lifestyle.

## **Housing**

**The Greens** believe that everyone should have access to stable, secure, affordable housing. Australia has a housing crisis, with a severe shortage of affordable rental properties and many people excluded from the housing market. Low-income households struggle to pay for essentials as rental prices skyrocket. More than 100,000 Australians will use homeless crisis centres this year.

**The Greens** will rebuild the public housing sector and increase the amount of community housing. We will implement progressive planning guidelines that require a social mix of housing so at least **20% of new developments include low-cost** and public housing, and we will review the barriers to housing affordability, including tax concessions.

## **Violence against women**

Women have the right to freedom from violence.

**The Greens** will - legislate to remove sources of discrimination against women.  
- address the negative effects - physical, emotional and economic - of violence against women, through adequately funded, appropriate health and education programs.

- further develop and support national anti-violence public education campaigns and programs, including family violence.

## **Employment**

**The Greens'** support **removed "Work choices"** so that workers are no longer required to sign away their rights nor sacrifice precious family time.

**The Greens'** support secured \$400 million for local jobs in the economic stimulus plan.

**The Greens** secured an extra \$32 per week for Australia's 1.2 million aged pensioners.

**The Greens** support the introduction of 26 weeks of government funded paid parental leave paid at the minimum wage and including **superannuation**.

**The Greens** will recognize and give due weight to the work of those involved in homemaking, child raising, caring for the elderly or disabled and working for community organizations by including those activities in the calculation of national economic measures.

**The Greens** will introduce an equitable retirement income system that effectively and adequately provides women with financial independence when they retire.

**The Greens** will- increase **childcare payments** to low and middle income families reform the childcare rebate to link government funding to quality assurance. Prioritise funding of community based not for profit **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)** centres.

- provide incentives for workplaces to offer onsite not for profit ECEC
- increase support and assistance to family carers.

## **Maternal Health/Midwifery**

Women have the right to make informed, supported choices about all aspects of their lives, including sexual identity, health, reproductive health processes, birthing and child-bearing, and how they balance participation in paid work with caring responsibilities.

## **Status of Women**

**The Greens** have a proud history of support for equal rights. We are committed to quality public education, public health, legal representation, gay rights and equal opportunity for every individual irrespective of gender, disability, race, religion or income.

**The Greens** believe in gender equality in the workplace and in the marketplace. Women should be involved in leadership and decision making in the Australian economy. 63% of all university graduates are women and women constitute 58.7% of the total workforce in Australia yet they remain under-represented in leadership and decision-making positions in corporate Australia...only 8.3% compared with 14.3 in South Africa and 13% in Canada.

**The Greens** will legislate to ensure that corporations with an annual market capitalisation over \$15million (ASX200 companies) have a minimum of 40% female directors by 2015.

For Greens Policy details go to [www.greens.org.au/about/policy](http://www.greens.org.au/about/policy)