



Social Justice Commission

Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba

123 Neil St Toowoomba Qld 4350
PO Box 1262 Toowoomba Qld 4350
Ph. (07) 4613 0895 Fax (07) 4638 9178
Email: justice@twb.catholic.org.au
www.tsjc.org ABN 62 252 732 810

Rationale for Survey

The Social Justice Commission is part of the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba which incorporates the Federal Electorates of Groom and Maranoa. It was established in 2002 by Bishop William Morris, as part of the Diocese's commitment to action for social justice. As a part of the Diocese, the Commission continues to enjoy the active support of Bishop Robert McGuckin.

Our current priorities are:

- Justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- Support for people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants and;
- Caring for the environment.

With these priorities in mind, responses were sought for three specific questions from all candidates standing for the seats of Maranoa and Groom in the 2016 Federal Election. Informing our questions is the statement by the Catholic Bishops of Australia on the election, "[A Vote for the Voiceless](#)".

The candidates were asked to keep their responses brief and an assurance was given that there would be no editing, commentary or analysis. We are very grateful to those candidates who took the time to respond. We are not suggesting that these responses should be the sole basis on which a voting decision is made but we offer them as a way of informing voters in the local area. As the Bishops' Statement highlights, there are many voiceless who will not be heard at this time of a Federal Election. We ask voters to be mindful of these voiceless as they approach the ballot box on July 2nd.

For more information contact Executive Officer Dr Mark Copland on justice@twb.catholic.org.au or phone 07 46130895.

Responses are listed by candidates in order of ballot paper

Bronwyn Herbertson – Australian Labor Party (Groom)

1. How do we, as a nation, hear the cry of Indigenous peoples for recognition and respond to the injustices many suffer at the hands of our justice system?

Please outline your policy on the appalling level of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia.

From my time working as senior solicitor with the Rural Women's Outreach Legal Service I spent many years working in rural communities with Aboriginal families. I saw firsthand the struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in regards to the levels of incarceration. I also worked with the Toowoomba Youth Service in attempting to reduce recidivism with Aboriginal youth in Toowoomba. The Murri Court operated well but needed to be properly funded. I also support youth justice funding for youth justice conferences. The Australian Labor Party has promised an increase in funding to the Toowoomba Advocacy and Support Centre of \$60,000 a year for three years should we form government. Also our funding for more apprenticeship places, support for TAFE and small business incentives to employ young people should also assist, along with the fully funded Gonski education reforms. I believe employment and education are key parts of any strategy to reduce incarceration rates.

2. How do we, as a nation, uphold the dignity of those seeking protection on our shores by recognising that they are human beings in need of our help, and not a problem to be solved?

Please outline your policy on our continued use of Nauru and Manus Island as offshore camps for people seeking our protection.

The Australian Labor Party never intended the refugees to be held in indefinite detention. We recognise that it is not illegal to seek refuge. We had negotiated a solution with Malaysia to rehouse the refugees, however this was blocked by the Greens and LNP who voted together. We have indicated that should we form government, we would investigate other solutions and also ensure that people's human rights are protected. We believe in transparency and will change the 'gag orders' currently enforced on medical staff and NGOs working on the detention centres. Labor is committed to ensuring that people smugglers are not encouraged to entice more people to lose their lives at sea. This issue will continue to be one that requires careful consideration and on going dialogue.

3. How do we, as a nation, see the environment as a gift to be received gratefully rather than as a resource to be plundered?

Please outline your policies on moving from a reliance on fossil fuels towards the use of renewable energies.

The Australian Labor Party has a full suite of policies in regards to the environment including: Great Barrier Reef plan, National Taskforce on contamination at Oakey and other defence sites, carbon capture on the land, banning animal testing for cosmetic ingredients, an Emissions Trading Scheme, net zero pollution by 2030, doubling the numbers of indigenous Rangers, 50% of the nation's renewable energy by 2030 and protecting animal welfare and boosting agricultural production.

It is difficult to outline 100 positive policies in a few words across so many different issues. Please visit alp.org.au to see our policies in full. As a concerned community member I will be a fierce advocate in Canberra for Groom on these and many other issues.

Josie Townsend – Nick Xenophon Team (Groom)

1. How do we, as a nation, hear the cry of Indigenous peoples for recognition and respond to the injustices many suffer at the hands of our justice system?

Please outline your policy on the appalling level of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - the first Australians - as the traditional owners of this continent and acknowledge and respect their ongoing relationship with the land.

Examples of what needs to be done:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations must be consulted and engaged with the process of developing Indigenous Affairs policy
- Constitutional recognition to reflect the unique role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have in Australia's past, present and future
- Provide ongoing funding for "Closing the Gap" between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-indigenous Australians
- In consultation with individual communities, develop micro policies and programs to better meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

2. How do we, as a nation, uphold the dignity of those seeking protection on our shores by recognising that they are human beings in need of our help, and not a problem to be solved?

Please outline your policy on our continued use of Nauru and Manus Island as offshore camps for people seeking our protection.

Genuine asylum seekers must be treated with dignity and compassion. The bipartisan support for off-shore processing, in order to discourage dangerous boat journeys to Australia, should be matched with an increase in the humanitarian intake to at least 27,000 places per year. However, priority should be given to timely (preferably within 12 months) resettlement to appropriate countries, working together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Above all, Australia must play a key role for an orderly regional solution to this crisis.

Examples of what needs to be done:

- Depending on the outcome of the assessment, individuals must either be returned to their country of origin where safe and practical to do so, or settled in another country with the co-operation of the UNHCR.
- Government must ensure the safety and security of refugees in offshore processing centres, including timely health and mental health care.
- International agencies such as the UNHCR, Red Cross and media organisations should have access to any detention centres.
- Whistleblowers must be protected for speaking out.

3. How do we, as a nation, see the environment as a gift to be received gratefully rather than as a resource to be plundered?

Please outline your policies on moving from a reliance on fossil fuels towards the use of renewable energies.

Climate Change & Energy

Action is required to reduce carbon emissions and our reliance on fossil fuels and inefficient forms of energy generation. Australia is uniquely placed to embrace renewable energy resources. Government at all levels must play an integral role in leading a best-practice approach. It is about being smart and efficient for the benefit of the planet.

We support a 50% renewable (electricity only) target by 2030.

Examples of what needs to be done:

- Have an efficient and effective emissions trading scheme (ETS) based on world's best practice
- Australia needs to quickly move toward a cleaner and more affordable energy future. This will involve reduced reliance on economically unsustainable technologies
- Government policies need to facilitate innovative and job creating energy industry opportunities through research, adoption, education and manufacturing of new technologies
- Australian energy resources should be available to Australians before being available for sale to the rest of the world. An allocation for domestic use prior to export would also help lower the cost of energy for consumers
- Australian tax payer funded research into renewable energy and climate change needs to be made more easily available to Australian industry to ensure our competitive advantage in these areas is fostered
- The importation of substandard and unsafe products related to renewable energy and or climate change must be curtailed

Environment

Clean air, clean water and preserving our iconic natural resources are fundamental to guiding what we do for our environment – not just for us, but for Australia's future generations.

Examples of what needs to be done:

- Call on state governments to identify and preserve our best agricultural land as an investment in our future
- Review the applicability of California's vehicle emissions standards to Australia
- Protect groundwater (aquifers, including the Great Artesian Basin) from any adverse impacts of mining and coal seam gas exploration
- Have an efficient emissions trading scheme based on the Frontier Economics scheme
- Have federal legislation to protect key environmental assets, rather than being dealt with on a state by state basis
- Maintain the right of environmental and community groups to pursue legal action under environmental legislation.

John McVeigh – Liberal National Party of Queensland (Groom)

1. How do we, as a nation, hear the cry of Indigenous peoples for recognition and respond to the injustices many suffer at the hands of our justice system?

Please outline your policy on the appalling level of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia.

I have great admiration for Toowoomba's Uncle Darby McCarthy, an indigenous elder with whom I discuss the levels of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from our part of the world on a regular basis. I have learnt from him, and through studying statistics, that indigenous peoples are over represented in our justice system and that the most culturally sensitive and relevant solutions must continue to be developed. Indigenous people are 13 times more likely than non-indigenous to be in prison and this problem is at its worst among young people.

The challenge of high indigenous incarceration rates lies mainly in the state and territory run criminal justice systems, but the Commonwealth does have a leadership role in addressing some of the underlying causes that increase the likelihood of a person coming into contact with those systems.

Therefore the Coalition Government will continue to complement the work of the states and territories by addressing the drivers of offending. The key to this is increasing educational, training and employment opportunities for First Australians while reducing the misuse of alcohol and other drugs. By way of example the Commonwealth Government has invested \$14 million per annum to support 35 Indigenous justice related programs including 10 prisoner through care services that support the re-entry of the Indigenous prisoners into the community when their sentences have finished, eight diversion activities, 15 prevention activities, and two community-based mediation activities.

In his Closing the Gap speech in February this year, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull brought a renewed focus to the issue of Indigenous incarceration with his announcement that the Commonwealth will lead the development of a "prison to work" blueprint to reduce recidivism and address one of the key drivers of contact with the criminal justice system – long-term unemployment.

2. How do we, as a nation, uphold the dignity of those seeking protection on our shores by recognising that they are human beings in need of our help, and not a problem to be solved? Please outline your policy on our continued use of Nauru and Manus Island as offshore camps for people seeking our protection.

Toowoomba and the Darling Downs should be rightly proud of our efforts in welcoming refugees into our city as part of official national and state led refugee intake and immigration programs. The integration of these families and individuals into our region adds to our richness and diversity as a community. It is equally important to continue to reduce the number of people entering our off shore detention centres via unofficial or illegal immigration activities. Ideally we would eliminate the need for such facilities all together.

The Coalition government's border protection policy depends on three pillars - boat turn-backs, offshore processing and Temporary Protection Visas.

It is disappointing to see that Labor has abandoned the concept of temporary protection visas. Under the former Labor government we saw 50,000 unauthorised arrivals on 800 boats, 1,200 deaths at sea of which we know, over 8,000 children put into detention, 17 detention centres opened and an \$11 billion border protection budget blowout. In contrast, the Coalition has restored security at the border and integrity to our immigration program such that we have now recorded 700 days without a successful people-smuggling venture to our country. Moreover the Coalition government has removed every child from detention in Australia.

Given that people smugglers look for any sign that an Australian Government will waver on its tough border protection policies, it's important to remember that these policies have stopped the drownings at sea and restored the integrity of and trust in our large but orderly immigration and refugee programs.

Public trust in the Government to determine who can come to Australia and how long they can stay is an essential foundation of our success as a multicultural society. It begins with respect for the world's oldest continuous culture, that of our First Australians and extends to a celebration of our rich diversity as a nation built by immigration.

3. How do we, as a nation, see the environment as a gift to be received gratefully rather than as a resource to be plundered?

Please outline your policies on moving from a reliance on fossil fuels towards the use of renewable energies.

It should be obvious to all that renewable energies are an important part of our energy future. In many respects our generation is witnessing the transition from gas guzzling motor cars to electric vehicles; the transition from expensive electricity to solar energy; from fossil fuel reserves to battery storage technology.

Alongside our urban populations, agriculture here on the Darling Downs is keen to focus on energy efficiency, a reduction in traditional high cost electricity usage, and where appropriate the transition to solar and battery power technology. In my view during this transition we will see continued use of fossil fuels (e.g. albeit diesel pumps instead of high cost electricity) but long term environmental objectives, cost and convenience are pushing agriculture down the path of renewables more quickly than many of our current commercial energy suppliers think. It often frustrates me that some of our current energy companies, including those that are government owned, do not seem to consider renewable energies as part of their portfolio.

From a National perspective the Coalition government supports the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the \$1 billion Clean Energy Innovation Fund to focus on emerging technologies and commercialising and deploying them in the energy efficiency, solar, renewables, smart grid, space. Energy storage in Australian homes and businesses will play an increasingly important role as we continue the transition to a low emissions future and the Coalition Government welcomes the release of new battery storage guidelines developed by the Clean Energy Council which will encourage and support this transition.

Antonia van Geuns The Greens (Groom)

1. How do we, as a nation, hear the cry of Indigenous peoples for recognition and respond to the injustices many suffer at the hands of our justice system?

Please outline your policy on the appalling level of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia.

Legal reform

- customary law for discipline in Indigenous communities
- community education of customary law
- Murri Court for Aboriginal defendants
- cultural interpreters in court
- Mulrunji Doomadgee Royal Commission

Support

- mandatory public servants cultural sensitivity training
- Indigenous police officers, senior command and liaison officers
- healing based policies and strategies to deal with alcoholism
- diversionary centres instead of police incarceration
- community corrections programs based on intensive work skills training and apprenticeships

Community repair

- Self-determination - including alcohol management, child safety
- Fair government funding for essential services
- Treaty negotiation, constitutional reform and native title
- Stolen Wages compensation

2. How do we, as a nation, uphold the dignity of those seeking protection on our shores by recognising that they are human beings in need of our help, and not a problem to be solved?

Please outline your policy on our continued use of Nauru and Manus Island as offshore camps for people seeking our protection.

Every person should be treated with dignity and respect. People have the right to seek asylum in any country.

The Greens:

- will shut down the detention camps on Manus Island and Nauru and abolish offshore detention.
- want to abolish temporary protection visas and provide permanent protection to people seeking safety.
- will introduce a 30 day time limit for people held in on-shore immigration detention
- give access to health services, education and work rights while they wait.
- will establish a royal commission into damage and devastation caused by of holding children and their families in detention.

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Please outline your policies on moving from a reliance on fossil fuels towards the use of renewable energies.

- a critical step for environmental justice
- 15 year transition plan
- 90% renewable energy by 2030
- Queensland : \$53 billion; creating 3000 – 5,500 design and construction jobs annually; operation and maintenance jobs - additional
- government authority and revue to ensure success
- supported transition of workforce from fossil fuel industry into renewables
- shut down coal mines
- stop foreign investors mining fossil fuels in Australia
- fully support CSIRO climate scientists
- establish National Environmental Protection Agency
- support community solar projects
- Queensland battery storage for 1.2 million homes in 5 years
- supporting light-footprint life choices
- educate community

Katherine Hompes – The Greens (Maranoa)

1. How do we, as a nation, hear the cry of Indigenous peoples for recognition and respond to the injustices many suffer at the hands of our justice system?

Please outline your policy on the appalling level of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia.

The Australian Greens believe that the Australian Constitution must recognise the prior and ongoing occupation and sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their right to land, water and resources. We also believe the Australian Government should adopt a treaty or treaties with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The soaring incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is an indictment on the way that Australia treats its Indigenous peoples. These incarceration rates come with an enormous cost, both economic and social. The Greens Justice Reinvestment policy provides a move away from spending purely on prisons, and into spending in communities. Investing in these communities will give the best results in reducing crime, and providing actual justice to indigenous peoples.

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Instead of spending billions of dollars on inhumane detention centres in Nauru and PNG, Australia could give hope to asylum seekers in Indonesia and, by further increasing our humanitarian program, give them a reason not to embark on dangerous, risky boat journeys.

Australia must support better and safer refugee assessments in Indonesia to clear the backlog and stop people being forced by dire circumstances onto dangerous boats.

As the wealthiest country in our region, we should urgently invest into places where refugee adults and children are currently waiting in unliveable and poverty stricken conditions — not after, but before anyone gets on a boat in desperation.

Providing safety in the form of assessment centres, run by the UNHCR, international welfare organisations and local services, will give refugees hope and a reason to stay on shore.

3. How do we, as a nation, see the environment as a gift to be received gratefully rather than as a resource to be plundered?

Please outline your policies on moving from a reliance on fossil fuels towards the use of renewable energies.

Australians, as global citizens, have a duty of care to manage our unique natural environment and its resources, to ensure their ongoing sustainability for future generations, and to help protect the ecological integrity of our planet.

We are currently heading towards a climate catastrophe. Our planet is warming, sea levels are rising, we are living through hotter summers and more extreme weather events. It makes economic sense to act now. The coal industry is in structural decline. Coal exports are declining and the world is shifting towards clean energy. As one of the sunniest and windiest countries in the world, Australia can lead the transition to a clean energy powered future.

The Greens' plan for a clean energy powered economy will secure all the benefits of lower prices, better technologies, more jobs and significant export opportunities for innovative technologies and services developed and produced in Australia.