

A few weeks ago, we released an [Election Issues](#) paper outlining some policy areas of concern to UnitingCare NSW.ACT. Since then we have been gathering information on the policy positions of the major parties in those areas. We have limited this Update to the Australian Labor Party, Liberal/National Coalition and Greens as they are the only parties currently attracting over 5% support in opinion polls, and space precludes listing all the smaller parties such as the Christian Democratic Party, Families First or the Australian Democrats. We do not intend this document to imply endorsement of the 'major' parties over the others.

This document should be read alongside the [Election Issues](#) paper so you can compare the party platforms to the concerns and suggestions we have raised.

Ageing

Labor

- \$18m over 4 years for in-home healthcare services for the elderly

Coalition

- A \$300 Senior's Concession Allowance to support self-funded retirees with bills for which pensioners receive concessions (eg. utilities and council rates)
- Removal of pensioner booking fees for Countrylink services

Greens

- Support for a Mature Workers Program to reduce premature forced retirement improve employment conditions
- Government intervention to ensure insurance schemes are accessible and affordable to community services, including aged care services

Early Childhood Education

Labor

- No statements at the time of writing beyond previous government announcements

Coalition

- \$332m over 4 years for ongoing funding to increase accessibility and raise participation rates towards 95%
- \$30m over four years for capital works to improve preschool facilities

Greens

- Fund at least two days per week of free preschool for every child in NSW for two years

Education

Labor

- \$82m over 4 years for early identification of literacy and numeracy weaknesses in kindergarten children and provide recovery programs
- \$280m over 4 years in capital works for public schools

Coalition

- \$14m over 4 years for small rural schools to lower the cut-off point for single teachers schools from 25 to 20
- \$46m over 4 years to fund 200 additional ESL teachers

Greens

- Increase funding for equity programs in public education increasing both the number of schools serving disadvantaged communities receiving additional resources and the amount of money given to those schools
- Fund an additional 200 ESL teachers
- \$460m over 4 years for public school capital works

Environment

Labor

- \$100m over 4 years for rebates on installation of solar hot water systems and rainwater tanks
- \$100m over 4 years for water recycling for industrial and dual-plumbing home use
- Shift vast majority of government car fleet to more fuel efficient cars

Coalition

- \$262m over 4 years for rebates on installation of solar hot water systems and rainwater tanks
- \$1bn for water recycling and stormwater harvesting in place of \$2bn desalination plant
- \$450m over 4 years to secure regional and rural water supply
- Remove laws preventing land clearing on pastoral land

Greens

- Support an increased mandatory renewable energy target of 20% by 2012 and a 50% target by 2020
- Ban the opening of new coal mines and coal fired power stations as part of planning for a post-coal future
- A public financing package that will allow all homes to install solar water heaters and rainwater tanks by allowing the cost to be paid for as part of the utility bill

Dental health

Labor

- \$1m for 2 regional dental health clinics and new equipment in existing areas

Coalition

- \$208m over 4 years to bring public dental health spending up to national average

Greens

- A significant increase in funding to dental health, and continued campaigning for dental health to be brought under Medicare (at the federal level)

Housing and Homelessness

Labor

- No statements at the time of writing beyond previous government announcements

Coalition

- \$3000 top-up for first home buyers grant
- \$4000 stamp duty concession for investors who will provide lower-cost rental housing

Greens

- Inclusion of 10% affordable housing in all new multi-unit developments
- Support for a NSW Homelessness Strategy
- Support for church and other groups to expand community housing, with the proviso that access not be restricted on religious grounds

Indigenous Justice

Labor

- No statements at the time of writing beyond previous government announcements

Coalition

- No statements made relating to this issue at the time of writing

Greens

- \$65m compensation for stolen wages and property
- Increased Indigenous control over service delivery to ensure that provision is culturally appropriate and builds capacity
- Re-open negotiations with the Aboriginal Housing Company over the redevelopment of the Block

Law and Justice

Labor

- A range of 'tough on crime' policies such as young adult behaviour orders, increased police 'move on' powers, and increase minimum sentences
- Increased use of diversionary programs such as expanding youth conferencing to the whole state and piloting Aboriginal Youth Circle Sentencing
- 750 additional police

Coalition

- A range of 'tough on crime' policies that will increase police powers to search and arrest suspects, reduce judicial discretion in sentencing, reduce police discretion in giving warnings to juvenile offenders, and make the Director of Public Prosecutions and the judiciary accountable to community values
- 1700 additional police
- Reduce the age of criminal responsibility for most crimes from 14 to 12, and for minor offences, to 10 years of age

Greens

- Expand the range of restorative justice and properly supervised diversionary measures, such as circle sentencing and extending the operation of the Drug Court to more locations across NSW
- Increased funding for Legal Aid and community and Aboriginal legal centres
- Repeal the amendments to the bail laws and sentencing that weaken the presumption of innocence and the raft of other legislation that targets young people, people of 'middle eastern' backgrounds and disadvantaged groups

Other Comments

The policies listed below are not a complete list of policies for each party, even in the areas covered, does not include existing government commitments and only covers policies directly related to the issues raised in the earlier document. Space prevents a complete listing but all attempts have been made to provide the most pertinent information in a neutral manner. While attempts have been made to ensure accuracy, we cannot make any guarantees. For a complete list of all policies for each party, see their respective websites or contact your candidates.

Many of the key Labor Party commitments were in fact made in 2006 (eg. State Plan to give policy direction, major spending announcements on disability and mental health services). The Election Issues document highlighted some of our areas of concern about Labor's performance implicitly, by talking about emerging and ongoing problems under their watch.

Most of the Coalition spending commitments are based on their plan to reduce the public service staff by 20,000 over ten years. Many community service agencies and peaks have expressed concern about the ability of any government to adequately plan, implement and evaluate social policies with such a reduced number of staff.