

GREENS ELECTION POLICY

The Greens' aged care policies recognise the need for immediate action to address current pressures and the need for reform to improve consumer choice and put more emphasis on community care (with a preventative health/independence emphasis) to avoid inappropriate stays in hospitals.

In terms of immediate action, the Greens would:

- restore the CAP 1.75% increment (as would the Coalition), but also increase funding for aged care packages by 20% to undo the erosion of care through inadequate indexation in the past.
- increase the number of community care packages by 10% to reduce waiting times
- provide an additional \$100m per year to close the gap in pay for aged care workers
- provide \$30m to improve access by informal carers to training, advice and information
- support the Commonwealth takeover of full policy and funding responsibility for all aged care
- provide an additional \$20m for dementia research
- create a Ministry for Older Australians.

Regarding longer term reform, the Greens have committed to:

- independent benchmarking of the real cost of care and the development of a system of aged care "based on individual entitlement of care funding which can be used across care options which is not limited by service availability";
- prioritizing ageing in place by focusing on preventative health care and building community care services to maintain independence and quality of life for older people; and
- the establishment of a national network of teaching nursing homes.

The Greens' policy responses to both the immediate pressures and the need for reform align closely with the policy directions of The Grand Plan and with the NACA vision. The only disappointment is the lack of explicit reference to the need to address capital funding pressures in residential aged care, though capital funding pressures are recognized in the introductory paragraphs of the policy document. It is possible that their commitment to "independent benchmarking of the real cost of care" includes capital costs.

The Greens indicate that \$800m per year 'wasted on inappropriately keeping elderly people in hospital' will be used to offset the \$677m per year cost of their proposals. Reducing inappropriate stays in expensive hospital environments would certainly reduce costs, but no detail is provided as to the precise source of the savings in which programs would have their budgets reduced.

The ALP's aged care election policy has not been released as of today, but the PM has indicated that "if re-elected, further aged care reform will be a second term priority....that is why we have asked the Productivity Commission to conduct the most comprehensive inquiry into aged care in decades" (speech to NSW Nurses' Association on 21 July).

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