

## The Parties' Housing Policies

*(Compiled by Shelter SA)  
(in reverse alphabetical order)*

**FACT:**

**2006 Census data showed that over half a million households – or one in three Australian households that rent – are now paying more than 30 per cent of their income in rent payments.**

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**Liberal** (from searching their website 5/10/07)

The June 2003 Party Platform does not mention housing.

The Policy Resolutions carried by Liberal Party National Convention in 2003 and the Federal Councils of 2005 and 2007 do not mention housing. A housing policy could not be found.

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**LABOR** (from Media Release 5/10/07)

Labor is committed to a variety of supply-side policies designed to stimulate construction, to correct the large and widening gap between the number of people who need homes and the number of new homes being built.

A Rudd Labor Government would:

- Invest in a National Rental Affordability Scheme to stimulate the construction of up to 50 000 new affordable rental properties across Australia, for rent to low-income families at 20 per cent below market rates;
  - Invest in a Housing Affordability Fund to tackle the dwindling construction rates for new residential housing related to the cost of infrastructure, saving new home buyers up to \$20 000;
  - Establish a National Housing Supply Research Council, to analyse the adequacy of land supply across the nation, as well as rates of construction;
  - Establish Infrastructure Australia – a statutory authority to oversee reform, planning, development and investment in priority infrastructure;
  - Appoint a Cabinet Minister responsible for federal policy on housing (there is no such minister in Mr Howard's government); and
  - Invest in Trades Training Centres in secondary schools to help combat the skills shortage, including the shortage in building trades.
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## **Family First** (from their website 5/10/07)

### ***Housing***

Family First recognises that housing should be affordable and accessible to all Australians and that housing stability and security are crucial to healthy and stable family life and ultimately for the optimal development and education of children. Family First also recognises that home ownership provides a fundamental plank in Australia's Social Security Safety Net and is an important aspect of sound retirement planning.

### ***Specifically***

1. Family First will support the ongoing and improved availability of public housing, particularly to those in the community who are physically, socially and economically disadvantaged.
  2. Family First will seek to identify and promote public policy that provides real incentive and opportunity for home ownership, particularly for first home buyers. The Party will seek to identify and support measures to redress the decline in housing affordability.
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## **Greens** (from their website 5/10/07)

### **Principles**

#### ***The Australian Greens believe that:***

1. Affordable housing is a human right.
2. The housing needs of low income Australians should be met through the provision of a mix of affordable options, including community housing, public housing, shared equity with social housing providers and private rental housing.
3. Governments need to provide sufficient public and community housing to meet current need and projected demand.
4. New urban developments should be environmentally sound, public-transport friendly and facilitate community interaction.
5. Public participation in the development of public and community housing, (including planning and in the assessment of development proposals) is a right, the exercise of which should be encouraged by planning authorities.
6. The housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be met as a matter of urgency.
7. Passive solar design must be encouraged as a building principle.

### **Goals**

#### ***The Australian Greens want:***

8. The elimination of housing-related poverty.
9. All Australians to have access to adequate, safe, secure and affordable housing.
10. Australians who are unable to provide their own housing to be given housing assistance by the government.
11. Minimal waiting times on public housing waiting lists.
12. Adequate investment in public and community housing throughout the community to ensure its social and economic viability.

13. Participation by tenants and homeless persons in decisions regarding their housing services.
14. A reduction in the environmental impact of housing, both during construction and throughout the life of the building.
15. Priority given in town planning to recreational, cultural and social amenities that promotes healthy communities.
16. Greater diversity in housing to meet the accessibility needs of disadvantaged groups.
17. Increased provision of emergency accommodation and transitional housing for people in need (including women and children affected by family violence, people experiencing homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, and people released from detention) with sufficient exit options to long term housing.
18. Improved legal security of tenure and reduced discrimination.
19. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have access to adequate, secure, well-maintained, safe and culturally appropriate long-term housing, wherever they live.

### **Measures**

#### ***The Australian Greens will:***

20. Develop a national housing plan, and significantly increase funding to public and community housing.
21. Provide increased financial assistance to people unable to provide for their own housing.
22. Urgently fund sufficient public and community housing, to minimise waiting lists.
23. Ensure public housing is accessible, affordable, secure, habitable and in locations that provide reasonable access to employment, health-care, schools and other social facilities.
24. Significantly increase funding to address the housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
25. Review existing subsidies and incentives for housing and property investment with a view to increasing the number of Australians who can afford to own their own home.
26. Ensure subsidies and concessions for the provision of private rental accommodation are targeted at affordable housing for low-income households.
27. Means test the first home owners grant
28. Require new buildings and retrofit of old buildings to meet high minimum standards of energy-efficiency, noise insulation and water conservation.
29. Develop national planning guidelines for new housing developments that require:
  - a social mix of public and private housing with a target of 20% low cost and public housing, and housing that caters for diverse social needs;
  - design for maximum energy efficiency;
  - privacy and noise controls;
  - permeable road networks allowing for bus access;
  - segregated bicycle paths and footpaths;

- landscaping, design and infrastructure for rainwater trapping and wastewater recycling; and
  - at least 15% to be allocated to public open space in addition to community facilities.
30. Develop national building standards that:
- take account of climatic variation across the continent;
  - strengthen disability access provisions;
  - set high standards for energy and water efficiency; and
  - specify minimum standards for non-toxic, low environmental impact construction materials.
31. Develop national urban planning standards that provide for:
- the location of high density housing and commercial buildings close to high capacity public transport; and
  - the clustering of medium-density housing, community facilities and small-scale businesses around neighbourhood shopping centres and other social facilities (including health care and schooling).

## **Democrats** **Housing**

(from their website, 5/10/07)

### **AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN HOUSING**

The Democrats believe that affordable and accessible housing is a fundamental right of all Australians, but it receives far too little attention as a political issue. The cost, accessibility and adequacy of housing can impact on a person's health, employment and training, access to employment, environment and wealth.

#### **Affordability**

Australia has a housing affordability crisis. Despite our nation's prosperity, 1.2 million households are in "housing stress" paying over 30% of their income into housing costs and over 400,000 are in "extreme housing stress", paying over 50% of their income on housing. Figures derived from the 2001 census suggest approximately 100,000 people are homeless on any given night. Too many Australian households are stuck spending more than a third of their income on housing, putting their families under heavy financial and social pressure. First home buyers are struggling to enter the market, despite relatively low interest rates. Low cost rental properties are disappearing, as are boarding houses. Rising rental costs are an important factor in increasing levels of homelessness.

Private renters on low incomes are among the worst off, with more than half of all private tenants suffering housing stress.

House prices in Australia have doubled over the last decade. This is unsustainable and a significant contributor is the rapid rise in investor activity in the market. The Australian Democrats believe that current personal tax settings – including negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions – have played a significant role in driving this recent housing boom. The total extent and overall impacts of all tax and other financial subsidies affecting housing must be urgently reviewed in an effort to ensure these funds are targeted effectively and fairly.

## **Indigenous housing**

Indigenous communities, both urban and remote, bear the brunt of housing disadvantage with extremely low levels of home ownership, high levels of homelessness and excessive overcrowding. Despite comprising 2% of the population, Indigenous people constitute 16% of the homeless population. Almost 15% of Indigenous households across Australia live in over crowded housing, including almost 42% in Indigenous managed community housing and over 15% of those in State Government managed housing

*“Affordable and accessible housing is an essential component of any policy aiming to address employment, family, community or welfare issues, yet it gets little attention from political parties.”*

Senator Andrew Bartlett, Spokesperson on Housing

## **Environment and access**

Australia’s existing housing stock is placing unnecessary pressure on the environment. Much of it is sited too far from public transport. Inadequately insulated and poorly designed housing causes households to over-consume water and energy. This unnecessary consumption hurts the environment and also hurts the pockets of lower income earners. Energy use can be reduced by good design and urban planning.

## **A national housing strategy**

Affordable and accessible housing is an essential component of any policy aiming to address employment, family, community or welfare issues, yet it gets little attention from political parties. The Australian Democrats, in common with many community groups, unions and the housing industry have long called for housing issues to be put firmly on the national political agenda. We believe there must be a whole of Government approach to housing, with the Federal Government providing the impetus for national leadership and a consistent approach. It is imperative that Australia develops an integrated affordable housing strategy, which links housing, urban and regional development, social security and community services policies.

The Democrats propose that:

- A federal portfolio for housing be developed to provide a whole of government approach to housing to increase fairness, reduce poverty and financial disadvantage;
- A national affordable housing strategy be developed, involving all levels of government and parliaments, along with stakeholders at community level, to address the serious and ongoing crisis in housing affordability;
- Spending on the chronically under funded area of Indigenous housing needs to be significantly increased, and spent in the way which has most benefit for Indigenous people, rather than tailored to suit the ideological obsessions of political parties.

- A comprehensive National Indigenous Housing Strategy must be implemented to increase Indigenous home ownership, reduce overcrowding and provide increased rental housing in urban, regional and remote communities;
- Adopting wide-ranging initiatives to build more affordable housing, including a full review of how government spending, concessions and incentives are currently deployed. For example, there is now less than \$1 billion a year spent on public and community housing, while \$2 billion a year (and growing) is spent on private rent assistance, which in many cases is a subsidy for landlords, and there is a further \$2 billion expenditure a year (and growing) in negative gearing concessions for property investors.

### **Action on housing**

- The first home owners grant should be means tested and targeted at greater social and environmental outcomes, including accessibility.
- The Australian Democrats support continued reform and regulation of tenancy databases and the development of consumer protections against the misuse of information.
- We will continue to push for the modification of negative gearing and the phased reduction of capital gains tax concessions for investment properties, while promoting new incentives to invest in affordable housing.
- We will focus on national planning and design standards that balance the need for environmentally sustainable and affordable housing with simplified planning requirements.
- We will address the challenging task of devising a long-term strategy of investment of public monies, to both stimulate the supply of private rental housing affordable to people on low incomes, as well as to increase the stock of public and community housing.
- The Australian Democrats will continue to hold governments accountable for inaction on housing. We believe that government can no longer solely focus on the narrow economic issues and assume that low interest rates will solve housing problems. Housing is an integral part of the nation's economic infrastructure. If the present crisis is left unchecked, the lack of affordable housing will create a permanent wealth divide and bring disruptive social, economic and political consequences to Australia.