



ABORIGINAL HEALTH AND HEALING

THE GREENS' PLAN TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND PROVIDE SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES TO HEAL

Eleven years on from the Closing the Gap launch, Aboriginal Victorians still suffer alarming rates of ill-health. Government plans to address this look nice on paper, but are completely underfunded. We need an independent Commissioner to hold the government to account and ensure necessary investment in the services, programs and facilities that will make a real difference. We need places for Aboriginal people to come together and heal.

Aboriginal Victorians continue to suffer poorer health than non-Aboriginal people. Life expectancy is 10.6 years less for males and 9.5 years less for females. This reflects a community that continues to suffer the impacts of colonisation, and where disadvantage and living on a low income leads to poor social determinants of health.

Thirty six per cent of Aboriginal Victorians are Stolen Generations or decedents of these people, and many suffer intergenerational trauma. Inadequate housing, racism, ongoing intervention by child protection, and over-representation in jail all add to the ongoing poor health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities.

But it doesn't have to be this way. By addressing historical and present-day wrongs, funding Aboriginal controlled health care services, and ensuring our health system provides culturally sensitive care, we can make a difference.

OUR PLAN

To improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing, we will:

- **Provide \$20 million over four years for an Aboriginal Health Commissioner.**
- **Begin a consultation process with the vision of establishing 38 Healing Places across the state, led by the 38 Nations.**
- **Ensure the treaty process provides real self-determination, empowerment, cultural respect, compensation and funding channelled into services, programs and facilities that will improve the lives of grassroots communities. [Read more about our treaty commitment here.](#)**
- **Ensure no Aboriginal person is homeless in Victoria by investing in 80,000 new and refurbished public housing, community and affordable housing homes over the next 12 years. [Read more about our housing commitment here.](#)**



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- **Provide \$200,000 in compensation to each survivor of the stolen generation, plus funding for keeping places, memorials and care, valued at \$110 million in total. [Read more about our Stolen Generation commitment here.](#)**

The Greens will also continue to support Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Care services to provide culturally safe, local care outside the mainstream system. We will continue to support self-determination and proper funding for these services, including for their planning and infrastructure needs, and for more case-management.

ABORIGINAL HEALTH

Since the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) committed to *Closing the Gap* in 2007, there has been limited progress made in improving the health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. This is despite some investment and policy commitments. It is because these strategies failed to address the fundamental problems, including Aboriginal disempowerment, systemic injustices in child protection and the justice system, racism within the system and community, and lack of self-determination. In short, without a just and meaningful treaty process, progress will remain slow.

The impacts of colonisation and racist White Australia policies continue to have devastating impacts on Aboriginal communities. The Stolen Generation is one critical example of this. In Victoria, 11-13 per cent of all Aboriginal people born before 1972 were taken from their loving families and put into orphanages and white homes where they often suffered abuse, discrimination and great loneliness. As a result of their trauma, Stolen Generations suffer alarming rates of chronic health issues, disability, and economic and social disadvantage.

Research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released this year revealed for the first time the extent of damage on Aboriginal people's lives:

- 67% live with a disability or restrictive long-term condition
- 39% over the age of 50 report poor mental health
- 70% rely on government payments as their main source of income
- 66% of Stolen Generations live in households within the three lowest income percentages
- 40% have experienced homelessness in the past 10 years
- 91% never completed Year 12
- 62% of working age are not employed.

Today 36 per cent of Aboriginal people in Victoria are descended from the Stolen Generation, and research shows these people also suffer the impacts of intergenerational trauma and disadvantage at very high levels. Yet the Victorian and Federation Governments have failed to provide any compensation scheme for these people, making their apologies hollow.

Racism against Aboriginal people is also not something of the past. Research by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) found 97 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians have experienced racism in the past year and almost one-third experienced racism in a health setting. Not only is this unacceptable, it may place people at further risk because they are reticent to go to hospital because of the ill-treatment they receive.

The Andrews Government's response to the ongoing Aboriginal health crisis was to release *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*, the Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027. They called it an ambitious new plan to revolutionise how Victoria's health and human services work with Aboriginal communities, but then only provided \$7.1 million in new funding. This plan looks nice on paper, but without meaningful investment and systemic change, it will not make a real difference.



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COMMISSIONER FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH

While we have the plans and the positive lip-service, we must ensure that we also have the teeth to ensure the Government is making progress on addressing the disparity in health between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people.

The Government must be held to account on delivery of commitments outlined *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*. The Government must also ensure hospital and other mainstream health services address racist attitudes and ensure proper health care is provided without prejudice.

The Greens will establish an independent Commissioner for Aboriginal Health. This Commissioner will have the mandate to not only investigate and ensure our health services are providing culturally-safe care, they will also be able to investigate, report and provide recommendations on addressing other social determinants of health affecting Aboriginal people.

HEALING PLACES

When one third of the population is suffering trauma from just one historical government policy, not to mention the numerous other injustices, it becomes evident that not only is systemic change required, but that we need community-wide healing.

The Greens support community calls to establish Healing Places for Aboriginal communities across the state. Aboriginal people need community spaces to go to feel safe and supported, where they can connect with their culture, with each other and heal.

We know social isolation is a huge issue for many diverse minority groups in Australia, having culturally-supportive social clubs can make a real difference in people's lives. This rings true for our Aboriginal

community, but with the legacy of trauma across the community, these spaces are all the more important.

The vision we are hearing from Community is the establishment of 38 Healing Places, one led by each language group (Nation) to be located on traditional lands across the state. While they would be led by one Nation, these would be healing spaces for everyone. They would be positive community spaces to re-connect with culture and with each other. They could provide trauma-informed care for those who need it, but could also be a hub for learning traditional languages and dance, youth programs, arts and music programs, education, referral to services and much more. There are Aboriginal controlled services, but few, if any spaces just for culture and connecting.

The Greens will begin a consultation process with Aboriginal communities, Clans and Nations regarding establishing Healing Places across the state. We commit to funding the outcome of these consultations.

TREATY

For nearly two hundred years, the injustice of stolen land and the devastation of the invasion and colonisation have marred Victoria without any fundamental attempt to set it right. Australia is the only Commonwealth country without a treaty agreement with its First Peoples.

The Victorian Government has now initiated a treaty process in Victoria, which we strongly welcome, but they have failed to properly respect Aboriginal culture and support true self-determination in the process.

Under the leadership of Gunnai-Gunditjmara woman Lidia Thorpe MP, the Greens have been leading calls for true self-determination, human rights and cultural respect in the treaty process. We will continue to work with Elders and grassroots communities to ensure their voices are amplified, and people on the ground benefit



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from the treaty process through delivery of services, programs and facilities that will make a real difference in people's lives.

We believe Aboriginal empowerment - the ability of Aboriginal people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural development - is essential to Aboriginal health and wellbeing and Aboriginal disadvantage.

Aboriginal health means not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life - National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 1989

housing is the only option available for secure, affordable housing. Yet many are forced to wait for years on the public housing waiting list at great detriment to their health and life. Aboriginal Housing Victoria's housing stock has been full for years and efforts to fast track people through the system are impossible when many of thousands of people are on the priority list for housing.

The Greens have a plan to make the biggest investment in public housing in decades. Eighty thousand new and refurbished public housing, community and affordable housing homes is enough to provide for the current waiting list and to meet future demand over the coming 12 years. This will make a real difference, enabling people get on with healing and living their lives.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING

Housing is not a commodity, it is a right, and it is essential for a dignified life. The availability of appropriate housing underpins good physical and mental health and participation in our society. We need a home to raise a family, and to access local schools, childcare and health services. We need a place to live to be able to hold down a job or access education. We need a home to be part of a local community, and to participate in local events, sports and activities.

There was no homelessness before colonisation. Yet today Aboriginal Victorians are four times more likely to be homeless than non-Aboriginal Victorians. Aboriginal women are 15 times more likely to seek assistance from crisis homelessness services than non-Aboriginal women in Victoria.

It is our duty to ensure no Aboriginal person is homeless. For many Aboriginal Victorians, public