

Sam McColl

Candidate for Mallee

RESPONSE TO "THE MALLEE HAS SPOKEN" REPORT

Wednesday 11th May 2022

-- START --

My name is Sam, and I'm your Greens candidate for Mallee at the upcoming federal election.

I want to firstly thank the Voices For Mallee group for conducting such a thorough and comprehensive report in the lead up to the 2022 Federal Election. The detail provided in the report is immense and incredibly well laid out. You should all be very proud.

I also want to thank those that engaged in the "Kitchen Table Conversations" that helped to form this document.

I have responded to each heading below with both Greens policy, and details of my personal experiences to help provide an insight into why I think you should vote Greens at the coming election.

PEOPLE, EQUALITY AND HOUSING

Okay, so this topic is huge! So many things to talk about under the one heading.

The main reason I joined the Greens initially, and the reason I decided to run as a candidate, is because of the party's track record on standing up for human rights. I am a queer man, I grew up in rural Victoria, I went to a catholic high school, and I came out in year 9. It's not a whole lot of fun being the only out gay kid at a high school in the country, however this experience has made me want to stand up for others, to be the voice of those who can not speak, and to be a visible representation of what the future can look like for young people in rural areas.

Some of the Greens policies in regards to this topic include:

- \$250m for a national Truth and Justice Commission, an independent body with the powers of a Royal Commission. The Commission would investigate and reveal historic and ongoing human rights abuses, wrongdoing, and provide recommendations on how to heal from them;
- \$371m to self-determined, community-led First Nations health services;
- Making gender-affirming healthcare free on Medicare to ensure trans and gender diverse Australians have access to free, holistic and affirming medical care, including access to surgical procedures, prescribed hormones, products and services to affirm their gender;
- \$12 billion to support the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children and a standalone National Plan for First Nations Women's Safety;
- Doubling funding for women's legal services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services;
- Fully resource the NDIS so it meets the needs of disabled people, their families and carers;
- Make disabled people's physical and digital worlds accessible, including by establishing a new \$3 billion Accessible Infrastructure Fund;
- Building one million new public homes to alleviate the housing crisis.

These are just a snapshot of some of our policies regarding this topic! Heaps more can be found on our website at <https://greens.org.au/platform/equality>

HEALTHCARE

I would say that this is probably the topic I have been asked about the most while running as a candidate in the Mallee for this upcoming election. I am quite privileged to live very close to a large primary healthcare facility, and have great access to healthcare. Also, as someone who regularly works in the healthcare industry, I have a bit more experience in using the system than most.

I recently had contact with someone who lives in Mildura and broke their finger. They had at least a 10 week wait until they could get surgery locally, however after 4 weeks they decided to travel to Melbourne to get an assessment, however the doctor said that surgery was no longer a viable option. This is only one story, and I am sure that people in the Mallee have even worse tales of the current state of our healthcare system.

The Greens are passionate about fixing the healthcare system. We will do this by:

- Reinvesting the billion paid in private health insurance rebates back into the public system, slashing out of pocket costs;
- Ensuring everyone can get the care they need when they need it by funding our hospitals and clearing public hospital surgery waiting lists with a one-off \$875 million;
- Making telehealth a permanent part of our Medicare system, increasing access to essential care for all;
- Invest an extra \$8 billion by legislating equal funding of hospitals between the Commonwealth and states, ensuring faster access and more services;
- Provide Medicare-funded free dental care to all, accessible through your Medicare card so everyone can visit the dentist when they need to;
- Invest \$4.8 billion to ensure mental healthcare is fully covered under Medicare by providing unlimited sessions with a psychologist or psychiatrist with no out of pocket fees so everyone can get the support they need, when they need it, at every stage of their mental health journey.

All of our policies regarding health can be found at <https://greens.org.au/platform/health>

EDUCATION

I am a current student myself. I am currently studying for a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. I have also previously studied an AdvDip in Live Production.

One of the Greens policies that I am most proud of is our plan to wipe student debt & ensure everyone can access a free, world-class education from early childhood, through school, TAFE and Uni. And, we need to ensure that teachers, trainers, support staff, academics and early childhood educators are paid properly.

The Greens plan is for genuinely free education, for everyone.

The Green's full plan includes:

- Invest \$19bn over the next four years to ensure early childhood education and care is free and accessible for everyone;
- Extend universal access to early childhood education for all 3 and 4 year olds to 24 hours a week;
- Strengthen early learning for First Nations children through support for First Nations community-controlled services;
- \$49 billion to fully fund public schools, making school genuinely free for all students with the resources every student needs to learn;

- Ensure there's no expenses for parents for out-of-school-hours activities such as sport and music, which should be considered essential parts of the public curriculum;
- Reverse the Liberals' cuts and boost university funding by 10% to enable quality teaching, learning and research;
- Increase job security and slash casualisation at TAFE and uni;
- Invest in world class research.

Our education platform is extensive, and also addresses other factors that prevent people from accessing the education system. You can find all our policies at

<https://greens.org.au/platform/education>

POLICY

I read the conversation points for this section, and I almost had tears in my eyes. I resonate so much with what people thought regarding how politics is just not working for the people. Sometimes the political sphere, or what is called 'the Canberra bubble' means that politicians get so caught up in their own world that the whole reason they have their job gets put to the back of their mind.

I am a member of The Greens because all of our policies are people-centred. We are a party that makes decisions based on consensus. We are also incredibly intersectional, we have people from many different lived experiences as members, candidates, and elected representatives.

One of our policy sections on our website is actually titled "Politics for People" which I feel sums up all of our policies!

I don't think I will go into too much depth here because I hope that I address most peoples' concerns within the responses to the other sections.

INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

A never-ending torrent of scandals, rorts, pork barrelling and dodgy deals have pushed trust in politics to an all-time low. Liberal and Labor are only looking after themselves and their donors, rather than the rest of us.

In the last three years, Australia's coal, oil and gas corporations have donated at least \$2 million to the Liberal National Party and \$1 million to the Labor Party.

I believe that we have to clean up parliament, and support a diverse local media that reports the truth, so that politicians are accountable to the people, not the big donors.

The Greens will deliver a strong, Independent National Integrity Commission. We will lift parliamentary standards, establish donation caps, and shut the revolving doors between government and corporate boards.

Strengthening our democracy benefits everyone. We will stamp out corruption and cap the influence of big corporations and billionaires to ensure politics works for everyone, not just the rich and powerful.

INDUSTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Manufacturing industry has gone offshore. Wage growth has flatlined. The Liberals and Labor have sold off important public services and infrastructure. We need a bold build to kick-start the transition to a strong, clean economy.

We will invest in industries that make Australia more self-reliant and sustainable, create hundreds of thousands of secure well paid jobs, and solve the challenges we face.

Last time the Greens were in balance of power we created the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and Australian Renewable Energy Agency, kickstarting a boom in our renewable energy industry.

The Greens plan includes:

- Using low cost, green energy to rebuild our manufacturing industry, support new green export industries and bring back jobs that have gone overseas;
- Establish the Manufacturing Australia Fund to help local manufacturers recover from the pandemic, move off coal and gas and expand into new sectors;
- Buy Local, Buy Green - make sure the government is buying products made by local workers produced with clean, green materials and power;
- Create 45,000 new ongoing direct jobs in construction and an additional 90,000 indirect jobs in the broader economy through building a million new, affordable, accessible and sustainable new homes
- Provide \$1bn for a nationwide compostable processing scheme supporting local councils to build industrial compostable facilities, which will make best use of our recycled goods, will create thousands of jobs, and help us live more sustainably

AGRICULTURE AND WATER

I will break this into the two issues and speak on each separately.

There was a story in the Sunraysia Daily recently, written by Pathi Raj who interviewed Tyler Rotche, an Environment Victoria Healthy Rivers campaigner. Tyler talked about how “climate change was decreasing rainfall and water runoff into rivers and exacerbated the impact on floodplain ecosystems where it was already difficult for water to reach.”

Corporate greed and climate change are killing our nation’s largest river system. Too much water is being taken for mega-irrigation by big corporations, leaving little for downstream communities and even less for the environment. The climate crisis makes things even worse.

The Greens will not sit by as Australia’s food bowl turns to dust. We will:

- Put science - not corporate greed - at the centre of River management and water recovery targets;
- Get the Basin Plan back on track by reinstating water buybacks to recover water and deliver the plan in full and on-time;
- Purchase water to deliver the outstanding 450GL;
- Suspend all federal government payments for programs that don’t return water to the environment and have no scientific basis;
- A Federal Royal Commission to clean up corruption and mismanagement, save the river system, and reinstate confidence that science is at the centre of decisions;
- Complete a full audit of water licences and storage throughout the Basin including both domestic and internationally held licences;
- Work with state governments to ensure the 44 recommendations of the South Australian Royal Commission are implemented in full.

Broken and inadequate incentives from the federal government have pushed farmers to the brink, accelerated unsustainable practises, and caused a three-fold crisis for our climate, our biodiversity and our soil health. Organic, biodynamic and regenerative agriculture can improve farming land’s health and resilience against extreme weather events, while keeping farms economically viable and environmentally sustainable. But we need investment that is targeted, accessible and ongoing.

A small handful of corporations control the world’s food industry, dictating what farmers can grow and how, leaving consumers with almost no choice

The Greens plan includes:

- Restore the Carbon Farming Futures grants
- Create a sustainable agriculture research centre, to develop and deploy green alternatives for farmers, to accelerate the green transition
- Reform organic labelling and support organic certification, protecting producers and ensuring consumers are properly informed
- Build a local hemp, cannabis and seaweed farming industry, creating thousands of sustainable agriculture jobs

We have some huge plans for farming and agriculture, including creating new revenue streams by selling abatement secured into the land.

Our detailed plan can be found within [our Powering Past Coal and Gas document](#) (from page 47) - <https://greens.org.au/beyond-coal-gas>

CLIMATE AND ENERGY

This is the major thing that sets us apart from the other parties - we are not afraid to say that we are in a climate emergency and we need to act now. The climate crisis threatens the safety of people, our health, water, ability to grow food, and the air we breathe. The stakes could not be higher.

If we continue to mine and burn coal, oil and gas, we'll experience further economic losses, food, insurance and health costs will go up, and we'll pay much higher energy bills. Over a million jobs in industries including tourism and farming are at risk.

The climate crisis is caused by mining and burning coal & gas.

It's simple, if you don't have a plan to phase out coal & gas, you don't have a plan for the climate crisis.

We'll make big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share of tax to clean up the mess they're making, fund the transition to 100% renewables and kick off a full-scale renewable export industry.

The Greens science backed climate targets are for a 75% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 and for net-zero emissions by 2035. We then go further and aim to be a net-negative emissions economy with over 100 million tonnes of carbon drawdown every year by 2050.

The Greens plan includes:

- Immediately ban the construction of new coal, oil and gas infrastructure, ensuring we can transition our economy to zero carbon energy while maintaining a safe climate
- Help out mining workers and communities by creating long term, sustainable industries to assist in the move beyond fossil fuels and to ensure people do not lose work
- Phase out the mining, burning and export of thermal coal by 2030 to ensure we do our bit, so the world does not go over the 1.5 degree climate cliff

Our fully-costed plans will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, bring down the cost of living, and create a better future for all.

<https://greens.org.au/beyond-coal-gas>

-- ENDS --

Contact

Sam McColl

Phone: 0498 284 726

Email: sam.mccoll@vic.greens.org.au