

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Ensuring safe and affordable reproductive healthcare for all

The Greens will continue to support giving people choices over their bodies by ensuring access to safe and affordable sexual and reproductive healthcare, gaining a clearer picture of people's experience of maternal healthcare, promoting Birthing on Country initiatives, and supporting families experiencing stillbirth and miscarriage.

The Greens will also fund schools across Australia to provide period products for all students from 2022 to improve students' health and wellbeing, reduce period stigma, and ensure that no student has to skip school during their period.

** The Greens recognise that trans, gender-diverse and people with variations of sex characteristics experience further discrimination in relation to reproductive healthcare. Our women's health policies apply equally to gender diverse patients. See also LGBTQIA+ Equality policy*

THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Make access to abortion safe, accessible, legal, and affordable across Australia
- ▲ Fund a national data collection regarding experiences of maternity care
- ▲ Invest \$130 million to support Birthing on Country projects to improve health outcomes for parents and babies
- ▲ Invest \$69M to provide free pads and tampons in all public schools
- ▲ Explore options for reproductive health leave

PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share of tax and winding back handouts to big polluters, we can build a better life for all of us.

1 in 3 big corporations pays no tax and many big corporations and billionaires send their profits offshore tax free.

The Greens will tax billionaires with a new 'billionaires tax', require big corporations making excessive profits to pay a 'corporate super-profits tax' and axe billions of dollars in handouts to the coal, oil and gas giants that are driving the climate crisis.

These measures have all been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

When big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share, everyone can have the services they need for a better life.

MAKE ABORTION SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, LEGAL AND FREE

Access to affordable sexual and reproductive healthcare, including abortion and contraception, is part of everyone's right to control their own body.

Despite decriminalisation, abortion can be expensive and difficult to access, particularly for people in rural and regional areas.

The Greens will continue to work at federal and state levels to ensure abortion is safe, accessible, free and legal in all Australian states. We will advocate for universal adoption of safe-zones, so that people accessing abortion are not subjected to harassment for undergoing medical procedures.

Everyone should have access to reproductive health and abortion services, including access

to abortions in public hospitals within a reasonable distance of their homes. The Greens will fully fund public hospitals to ensure they have capacity to provide the health services people need.¹ We will also make telehealth services for reproductive healthcare a permanent feature of our Medicare system.

In some Australian states people are still forced to undergo counselling before they can terminate a pregnancy. While the Greens support informed consent for all medical procedures, each person is the best, most knowledgeable expert about their own life -- including the decision on whether they need additional counselling. Counselling should be made available to all who want it, but should never be mandatory and must always be unbiased and transparent.

¹ See Fully Fund Hospitals and Blitz Waiting Lists policy

The Greens will introduce a bill to parliament to mandate transparency in advertising for counselling services, and ensure that federal funding is strictly spent on unbiased counselling.

UNDERSTANDING MATERNITY HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES

Health organisations estimate that one third of Australian birthing parents experienced trauma during pregnancy and childbirth. Gaining a better understanding of these experiences is critical to improving healthcare for all parents and babies.

The Greens will invest \$1.8 million in a national survey to better understand experiences of maternity care (antenatal, birth, and post-natal care), based on the International Consortium of Health Outcome Measures - Birth Satisfaction Survey. The results of the survey will inform the development, implementation, and funding of measures to support feeding and those unable to breastfeed, counselling, pain management, continuity of care and access to midwives.

Data on hospital and clinician outcomes will be published to inform patient choices and decisions about maternity care.

ADDRESSING PERIOD POVERTY

Period products are a health essential.

Going through puberty can be a tough time. No-one should face the indignity of being unable to access period products when they need them. Yet for many students and their

families, paying for pads and tampons is a financial strain.²

The Greens will invest \$69 million to provide free pads and tampons in all public schools for ten years from 2022. This will improve students' health and wellbeing, reduce period stigma, and ensure that no student has to skip school during their period because they cannot afford period products.

Pads and tampons are not the most sustainable period products, but can be the easiest and most hygienic option for young people. Providing free access to these products in schools should be supported by education about more sustainable options, such as period underwear and moon cups.

BIRTHING ON COUNTRY

Pregnant First Nations people living on Country across Australia are often forced to pack their bags and head to hospital to wait for the birth of their babies, far away from family, culture, community, and connection. For those living in cities, culturally appropriate maternal healthcare can still be difficult to access, leading to poor health outcomes for parents and babies.

Birthing on Country and Birthing in our Community (BiOC) initiatives recognise the benefits of allowing First Nations parents to receive culturally appropriate birth care,

² Knight, R. 2020. "Reducing Period Poverty in Australia". The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.
<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/201306/>

especially by remaining on Country where possible.

BiOC initiatives have demonstrated significant success in improving health outcomes.³ The Brisbane-based trial program halved pre-term births among parents attending the service over five years, increased breastfeeding rates, and improved access to antenatal care.

Implementing measures to support continuity of maternity care will improve physical and mental health outcomes for women and children, key measures for achieving Closing the Gap targets.

The Greens will invest \$130 million to support the establishment, scaling up, and ongoing operation of permanent BiOC hubs in:

- ▲ Brisbane (Mater hospital)
- ▲ Illawarra (Waminda Health Service)
- ▲ Alice Springs and Tennant Creek (Congress Alukura)
- ▲ East Arnhem Land (Galiwin'ku)

This initiative is additional to the Greens plan to provide \$371M to community-led health organisations to boost their capacity to care for First Nations people and their communities.⁴

When First Nations people are free to choose their own path, their physical and mental health improves.

³ Kildea, S. et al. 2021. "Effect of a Birthing on Country service redesign on maternal and neonatal health outcomes for First Nations Australians: a prospective, non-randomised, interventional trial". *The Lancet*, 17 March 2021.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00061-9/](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00061-9/)

⁴ See First Nations Health policy

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AFFECTED BY STILLBIRTH

Despite increasing evidence that many stillbirths can be prevented, there has been little change in stillbirth rates in Australia in the past two decades.

The Greens support the roll-out of the National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan and will expedite efforts to adapt the Safer Baby Bundle and education programs to suit the needs of groups at high-risk of stillbirth, including First Nations and CALD families.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH LEAVE

Many workers, disproportionately women, experience serious pain or debilitation associated with periods, endometriosis, menopause, or fertility procedures and are forced to exhaust their sick leave, take leave without pay, or work while in pain.

Some private sector employers are already providing leave for these conditions.⁵

Reproductive health leave could remove the stigma of such conditions or procedures, and improve productivity by avoiding staff having to work while in pain.

The Greens will task the Fair Work Commission with assessing and recommending options for fair reproductive health leave and the ability to

⁵ Future Super offers paid menstrual and menopause leave (<https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/superannuation-introduces-creates-paid-menstrual-and-menopause-leave/>) and the ACTU recently backed a claim for five days reproductive health leave (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/australia-s-first-claim-for-reproductive-leave-gets-actu-backing-20200910-p55u1q.html>)

request reasonable changes to working arrangements to assist with pain management.

HOW THE GREENS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR YOU

In the last parliament, it was the Greens who:

- ▲ Pushed the government to address inequities in support to families who experienced stillbirth
- ▲ Regularly questioned officials regarding breastfeeding policies and continuity of care models
- ▲ Called on the government to ensure abortion services and telehealth reproductive health services continued during Covid and beyond
- ▲ Successfully advocated for reforms to ensure Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations could access insurance to employ midwives
- ▲ Called out the potential for the Religious Discrimination Bill to make it harder for women to access reproductive healthcare

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