

## **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY CORE POLICY**

### **Preamble**

The Greens (WA) seek to radically expand the democratic processes and institutions of our society. We believe that people have a fundamental right and responsibility to be directly involved in the economic and political decisions that both affect their lives and which impact on the environment. In order to achieve our vision of democracy, it is vital to decentralise our decision-making processes. This includes recognising groups that currently do not have the power to take decisions.

Over the last century there has been a dramatic expansion of democratic rights. However, today's institutions of representative democracy offer only limited community participation in decision making. These institutions reflect the inequalities within society, for example the inadequate representation of women and minority groups. The increasingly centralised power of the state, corporations and other institutions such as the media undermines the expansion of democracy. International organisations need to be more democratic and accountable.

In working towards participatory democracy, The Greens (WA) will seek to progressively expand the powers of local and regional decision making bodies. We will pursue strategies and support policies, which facilitate community participation in the processes of government at all levels. The direct participation of the community in making laws and policy must underpin all action of government, from local communities to workplaces and schools. Central to our strategy for social change is increased Greens (WA) representation in parliaments and local government as well as active support for environmental, peace and other like minded movements and people.

### **Principles**

- The role of government is to facilitate peace, justice, ecological sustainability and economic well being, with a global consciousness and long-term perspective.
- People have the need, responsibility and right to be directly involved in the economic and political decisions that affect their lives, and the recognition of this is fundamental to all decision-making processes and actions of government, economic and other social institutions.
- Government should be separated into three independent pillars of legislative, executive and judicial power.
- Nonviolent direct action is a legitimate and creative form of political campaigning and we recognise our responsibility to build a green movement which is broad-based, inclusive, nonviolent and democratic, and which demonstrates the grassroots participatory democracy we advocate for the whole of society.
- Affirmative action should be taken to improve the representation and involvement of women and minority groups in all levels of decision-making.
- We believe that power should reside in the most localised sphere of government that is able to deal with the issue and that all individuals and community groups need to participate in decisions which affect them.

## The Greens (WA) policy

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However, it is important to ensure that the devolution of power to the local level does not unduly diminish the power of other communities over their own decisions or that of society as a whole.

- Decisions should be based on consensus decision making rather than adversarial processes such as a majority vote.
- Participation in government and civic affairs requires access to information and transparency in government and related bodies. This requires legislation whereby the right of people to know takes precedence over the need for secrecy in government.
- Active participation in parliamentary democracy is only one aspect of the broader democracy we seek.
- Within the present system of parliamentary democracy, proportional representation more readily reflects the community.
- The Greens (WA) will work towards the ideal of one vote one value.
- The community should be involved in all constitutional reform and the development of a constitution for Western Australia. Constitutions should ensure the right of local governments to responsibly express the will of their electorates.
- The Greens (WA) support Australia becoming a republic with a constitution which includes a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for people, corporations and governments.
- Democratic reform is needed to make transnational organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation, more accountable and committed to economic and ecologically sustainable development. This reform needs to guarantee the social, spiritual, environmental and economic well-being of the world.
- The needs of future generations should be recognised in all decision making.