



DR RICHARD DI NATALE
Leader of the Australian Greens
Senator for Victoria

Matthew Kronborg
Executive Director
United Nations Association of Australia

17 June 2015

Dear Matthew,

Thank you for your letter to the Australian Greens regarding your 2016 Federal Election survey. Please find our responses to your questions below.

1. What do you believe can be done to stimulate informed public debate on the need for more effective international cooperation on global issues?

The Greens are concerned that global issues, and the need to tackle these with a multilateral approach, are not subject to enough public debate in Australia.

Tackling this starts with ensuring that the Parliament itself considers these important issues, which are rarely given opportunity for debate. Though the Greens have regularly moved to consider and debate global issues, for example the conflict in Syria, these debates are shut down by the major parties.

In relation to Australia's involvement in conflict, the Greens long had a bill before the Parliament that would require the Parliament to approve deployment of Australian troops overseas.

Secondly, we believe that the positions the Australian Government take to the UN General Assembly and Security Council should be considered by the parliament, and the Foreign Minister required to report on Australia's activities and positions at the United Nations on a regular basis. Time should be set aside in the Parliament to consider these reports and allow time for debate.

By ensuring that debate on international cooperation on global issues is happening amongst representatives, this highlights these issues and opens space for them to be considered publically.

2 What are your three priorities for improving the UN system? How would you do so?

The Australian Greens believe reform of the UN Security Council is critically important. The issues that Australia struggles with today are often borderless - global warming, unprecedented displacement, and violent extremism - and require a collective response. The United Nations is uniquely placed to facilitate this, and help the world respond to these challenges.





The Australian Greens believe UN reform should be a matter of priority. This includes a focus on the need for UN Security Council reform, starting with the veto power. At a minimum, this should be ceded in instances of mass atrocity. This first step would then act as a gateway to much needed comprehensive reform of the UNSC, including expansion of the council to better reflect the world today, and ultimately a conversation around abolition of the veto power. The institution needs to be significantly rebalanced if it is to be effective in responding to global challenges into the future.

UNSC reform also needs to go hand in hand with an open and transparent process for selection of the position of Secretary General. Transparency, accountability and clearly defined action plans must be elevated in priority when it comes to UN Peacekeeping missions, to ensure the safety of both peacekeepers, and the people they seek to protect.

The Greens believe Australia can play a central role in achieving these goals, as an active, fearless and constructive country. This includes elevating UNSC reform as a matter of priority. We also believe that Australia's positions in UN debates and votes should be subject to far greater scrutiny and transparency through the Parliament.

3 What do you think are Australia's most significant current areas of weakness when compared to the goals and values of the United Nations, including international treaties and conventions to which our country is a signatory? What would you do to address these if your party were elected?

Australia's treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum, reflected in the policy platforms of both the Coalition and the Australian Labor Party, is in breach of our obligations under international law and contravenes the spirit of the United Nation's Refugee Convention to which Australia is a signatory. Both parties are committed to continuing offshore processing on Nauru and Manus Island and discriminating against people seeking protection based on their mode of arrival. In addition, both parties are committed to turning boats back at sea which risks breaching Australia's non-refoulement obligations and has been proven to endanger the lives on those on board, including pregnant women and children. Both parties are committed to the mandatory detention of all arrivals, including children.

The Australian Greens offer a unique proactive alternative for the fair and efficient assessment and resettlement of people seeking asylum which ensures they are treated with respect and dignity and integrated into our community. Importantly, the Australian Greens policy will ensure that people's safety is paramount. The Greens will increase the number of refugees we take each year to 50,000 people (including introducing a new 'skilled refugee visa' for 10,000 people per year), significantly increase the funding we provide the UNHCR and organisations in our region to speed up the processing time of people's claim and provide a 'dignity package' for refugees while they wait (including access to healthcare, education, English lessons and work rights), release all children from detention (including those held on Nauru), close off-shore camps in Manus Island and Nauru and abolish Temporary Protection Visas and reintroduce permanent protection for all applicants. For further detail, please see: <http://greens.org.au/refugees>.

The Government, supported by the Labor Party, have also introduced counterterrorism laws that unjustifiably impede the human rights of Australian citizens, including the control order regime and ASIO's extraordinary questioning and detention powers. The Australian Greens opposed these bills, and would repeal this legislation if elected.





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Although Australia signed up to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People in 2009, there has been very little work undertaken by the federal government to translate our commitment into a genuine legal framework that would ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able exercise self-determination in all aspects of their lives. The Greens have a comprehensive policy to deliver these outcomes, available at <http://greens.org.au/atsi>.

4 What do you think are Australia's most significant current areas of strength when compared to the goals and values of the United Nations, including international treaties and conventions to which our country is a signatory? What would you do to further these if your party were elected?

Australia has a proud track record of free and fair elections, and of assisting other nations in our region to transition to democratic systems through electoral support. The Greens would strengthen enfranchisement in Australia if elected by introducing voluntary voting for people aged 16 and 17. We would also work to address barriers to voting currently experienced by some communities, such as people in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and homeless people.

Australia has also been a strong advocate against the death penalty in our region, with all parties working collectively against its use. The Greens believe we have a responsibility to do all we can to oppose the death penalty and protect people from it, wherever it exists. Aside from a strong public and diplomatic campaign in the region, the Greens have called for Australia to cease collaborating with drug authorities of nations such as Indonesia until they cease executing drug smugglers of any nationality, and for a full independent investigation into the role of the AFP and ASIO in the information sharing with those countries in Asia that still use the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

Senator Richard Di Natale
Leader of the Australian Greens & Senator for Victoria



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