

NCOSS Summary of SAAP Election Kit Candidate Feedback

6th March 2003

NCOSS has received 43 SAAP feedback forms from candidates. The breakdown in terms of political parties is as follows:

ALP	1
Liberal Party	1
Independents	3
The Greens	38
Total	43

(Two letters were received from Liberal National Party candidates advising that the kit had been referred to Shadow Ministers for a response. No responses were received)

ALP Response

None of the recommendations ticked. If elected I will

- Review all these recommendations
- Approach all relevant bodies such as DoCS, NCOSS and SAAP bodies for a full briefing on the major priorities and then apply my support appropriately.

Liberal Party response

None of the recommendations ticked. If elected I will

- I fully support the NSW Liberal stance with regard to the Homeless. I will do all I can when elected to support SAAP, within Liberal State Govt guidelines. Cabramatta has a long history of the problems you refer to and I want to do something positive to help. 8 years non-funding is obviously not on.
- Very concerned especially regarding the Mental Health Paper recently passed down in the Upper House.
- Homelessness is just not acceptable.

Independents Candidates responses

1. Albury

Supports all recommendations. If elected I will

- Encourage more exclusion orders so that mothers and children can stay at home (where safe)
- Press/lobby for Department of Housing to write off debts women are not responsible for
- More staff to support isolated rural women who need support
- Lobby for regional facility for high needs clients including drug users
- Support all govt/opposition initiatives which will reduce homelessness

2. Bligh

Supports all recommendations. If elected I will

- Continue to advocate strongly to help homeless people get back on their feet
- Work with residents, service providers and govt agencies to improve service system and increase resources

3. Manly

Supports all recommendations. If elected I will

- I fully support recommendations made in last years Upper House Inquiry into Mental Health
- I will continue to raise issues in Parliament and make representations to Ministers.

The Greens responses

The vast majority of the responses from Green candidates were as follows. This is the Greens position.

1. Which of the recommendations in this document do you support?

Recommendations for	Yes	No	Why?
1. Financial Viability	+		The Greens believe that emergency housing is a fundamental right. It is thus a primary responsibility of government to secure the financial viability of SAAP services. SAAP is a vital part of ensuring that those in immediate need receive assistance. Without immediate increases in funding there is a real risk that these programs simply will not be able to meet the demand for their services. The Greens view this as unacceptable and place a high priority on increasing funding to SAAP.
2. Increase in Social Housing	+		The Greens recognise the link between the availability of affordable housing and reducing homelessness and housing stress. We recognise the right of all people to adequate and affordable housing and are committed to the expansion of publicly owned housing. The current waiting list of over 100,000 is simply unacceptable. We are committed to increasing the stock of social housing as the most desirable means of increasing the supply of affordable housing.
3. High Complex Needs Clients: Specialist SAAP Units	+		The Greens believe all people are entitled to appropriate assistance in times of crisis. As increasing numbers of people with mental illness and drug and alcohol problems access SAAP there is a need to fund specialist services. We believe this is part of the government's responsibility to vulnerable members of the community and part of a long term strategy to assist people to live independent, fulfilling and productive lives.

<p>4. Domestic Violence Refugees Special Needs Groups</p> <p>a) Indigenous Women and Children in Rural Areas</p>	+		<p>The Greens recognise the increasing demand for emergency housing by Indigenous women and children, particularly in rural areas. Providing additional resources to these services is an immediate priority in dealing with the broader issues of domestic violence and poverty.</p>
<p>b) Non-English Speaking Background and Refugee Women</p>	+		<p>The Greens have been vocal in campaigning against federal government legislation restricting the rights of migrants and refugees. We will be lobbying the state government to provide people currently excluded from federal programs access to state government services and entitlements, such as language and education services and welfare payments. Funding specialist housing services is part of our commitment to ensuring that all people have the right to housing.</p>
<p>c) Children in SAAP Services</p>	+		<p>The Greens are committed to providing specialised child support positions in recognition of the particular needs of children and infants. The Greens believe that investing in effective programs to deal with trauma at an early age is the most effective way to ensure that young people are able to deal successfully with these experiences and contribute fully to society.</p>

2. If elected, what will you do to ensure that the issues that contribute to homelessness are effectively addressed within New South Wales?

The Greens believe that the causes of homelessness are complex and require a range of coordinated policy responses. Greens MP Ian Cohen developed and moved a private member's bill to protect tenants taking action in the Tribunal regarding excessive rent increases. The bill was designed to remove the fear of retribution. In the next parliament we commit to continue our efforts to ensure a comprehensive response, at both State and Federal levels, to the issue of homelessness.

We believe a comprehensive approach to the underlying causes of homelessness requires addressing the following issues:

- amending the affordable housing SEPP to make its application mandatory for all councils in NSW;
- legislating mandatory social housing components for all private property developers when constructing owner occupied estates;
- increasing funding to SAAP programs to deal with increased demand and an increasing number of clients with special needs;
- lobbying for land tax revenues and the proceeds from the sale of public housing to be allocated for social housing;
- legislating to strengthen the rights of tenants and ensuring the rights of borders, lodgers and those who share accommodation;
- campaigning for the Federal Government to
 - end the current punitive policy of breaching those on income support;
 - give refugees and migrants full access to benefits and services;
 - properly fund the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement;
 - introduce a guaranteed adequate income for all Australians,
- introducing strategies to deal with racism and homophobia in schools, helping to address the isolation and marginalisation experienced by many young people
- engaging in a process of genuine Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, recognising rights and ensuring self-determination;
- committing to a policy of full employment;
- ensuring adequate minimum wages and the rights of unions to collectively bargain;
- committing to properly fund mental health services.

3. If elected, what will you do to ensure that SAAP services are properly resourced to meet the needs of their many client groups including Indigenous people, children and people with mental health issues?

The Greens believe that access to adequate, safe and affordable housing is a fundamental human right, which must not be sacrificed to the pursuit of tax cutting or producing zero deficits. The Greens believe that there is sufficient wealth within our community to fund housing services. In an egalitarian society, sufficient taxation revenue should be collected to ensure that no person or family is involuntarily homeless.

The Greens are committed to meeting with the Minister for Housing after the State Election on March 22 2003, to lobby the government to support The Greens position in relation to SAAP services.

The Greens will work with community groups to ensure that homelessness remains a priority for the Government.

To ensure that SAAP services are properly resourced, our elected representatives in the Upper House will:

- put questions on notice;
- ask questions of the Government;
- continue to raise the profile of social housing and homelessness through events such as The Homelessness Summit, co-hosted by Greens MP Ian Cohen.

The Greens have a particular commitment to ensuring that the voiceless in our society such as Indigenous people, children and the mentally ill are empowered and cared for. Our elected representatives work tirelessly to achieve social and economic equality and will continue to do so after the State Election in March 2003.