

ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

Australian Democrats

For details of our national anti-poverty strategy see http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/poverty_in_australia/

The following is extracted from this website:

The Democrats believe that the level of poverty in Australia is unacceptable. The wealth gap between the rich and poor in Australia has grown over the past decade. It is simply unacceptable that despite over 10 years of continual economic growth, this prosperity has left many in middle Australia standing still and many of the poorest worse off. In recent times, the Government has even pushed through legislation which is directly contributing to higher poverty by reducing the incomes of many sole parents and people with disabilities.

The Democrats were pleased at the March 2004 tabling of the Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry report *A hand up not a hand out: Renewing the fight against poverty, Report on poverty and financial hardship*, to see that many of the recommendations of the report mirror long held Democrat policies.

We are repeating our call on the Government to particularly focus on Recommendations 94 and 95 to ensure real solutions are found to this problem and to implement them as soon as possible.

Recommendation 94

That a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy be developed at the national level and that this involve:

- an initial summit of Commonwealth, State and local governments, the welfare sector, unions, the business sector, community groups, income support customers and relevant experts in the field to be held to highlight the importance of the issue and agree on a timetable for action
- a commitment to achieve a whole of government approach. That is, coordinated action across policy areas such as employment, health, education, income support, community services, housing and other relevant areas to reduce poverty and poverty of opportunity;
- not longer than a 12-month period of consultation.

Recommendation 95

That a statutory authority or unit reporting directly to the Prime Minister be established with responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring a national anti-poverty strategy and that this entity:

- establish benchmarks and targets to measure progress against a series of anti-poverty objectives;
- report regularly to the Parliament on progress against the strategy; and
- undertake or commission research into a range of poverty-reduction measures.

To date the Government has still as yet to implement any of the 95 recommendations set out in the report.

Christian Democrats

The government should develop a comprehensive strategy based on the creation of employment opportunities, education and training, teaching the value of work as a tool to gaining self-respect and fostering the desire to support the local community through one's individual gifts and talents.

Labor

The Labor Party did not provide a response for this forum. Policy information has been collated from the ALP website www.alp.org.au

Labor recognises that the causes of poverty in today's society are complex and the experience of living in poverty is multi-dimensional. Poverty means both economic and social hardship—people living in poverty are often marginalised and excluded from mainstream society. People experiencing extreme financial hardship also have reduced access to the health, education and other services that the rest of the community takes for granted.

Labor will build a welfare system designed to reduce inequality and improve the living standards of all Australians. This requires ensuring all Australians have a secure income and equal access to services and opportunities. Labor will work with the welfare and community sectors to provide assistance to people living in poverty and experiencing financial hardship and social exclusion.

Labor will develop robust, whole-of-government indicators to properly measure poverty. Labor will set bold, but achievable targets for the reduction and elimination of poverty and social exclusion, and will establish mechanisms to measure progress towards achieving these targets. Labor will be accountable for meeting the goals it sets.

Labor recognises the importance of breaking the cycle of inter-generational disadvantage. Accordingly, Labor's efforts to address poverty will include a major investment of effort in reducing child poverty and deprivation. Labor believes in giving all Australian children the best possible chance in life.

Labor will ensure that, through an ongoing dialogue with State and Territory governments, initiatives to tackle poverty and inequality are well coordinated and genuinely 'whole-of-government'. Labor will also work closely with the community and welfare sectors to ensure that efforts to address poverty and social exclusion are effective.

Coalition

The Coalition's anti-poverty strategy incorporates elements from across government, including many of the areas detailed in this survey — health, education, homelessness, job creation etc. As stated, a central plank of any anti-poverty strategy must be ensuring economic prosperity which creates job opportunities for individual Australians and provides the means by which government can invest in areas of social need. Only the Coalition has the experience and discipline to effectively maintain and grow Australia's vibrant economy.

Socialist Alliance

At least 2 million Australian's live below the poverty line. This disgrace can only be reversed by decisive government action on health, education and jobs. We need to greatly increase the portion of Government expenditure on welfare, currently only at 17.9% of GDP.

Socialist Equality

The SEP's program cannot be realized without deep inroads being made into the vast reserves of private wealth accumulated in the hands of a few.

As an initial measure, along with the social ownership of the major corporations in which profits are utilized to meet human need not to enrich the companies and major shareholders, we advocate a genuinely progressive tax system to significantly lower taxes on working and middle class families while increasing taxation of the ultra-wealthy and large corporations, including closing the various tax loopholes and accounting gimmicks that allow them to avoid paying any tax.

This would open up resources to provide decent well paying jobs for all and the raising of social security and welfare benefits for every person, including Aborigines, immigrants and refugees, the unemployed, disabled and the aged to a proper living wage not the below the poverty level incomes people now attempt to survive on.

Greens

The Greens support increased provision of emergency accommodation and transitional housing for people in need (including women and children affected by family violence, people experiencing homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, and people released from detention) with sufficient exit options to long term housing. There needs to be greater diversity in housing to meet the accessibility needs of disadvantaged groups and improved legal security of tenure and reduced discrimination.

The Greens have called for a National Anti-Poverty Strategy. We support developing and implementing a plan to eradicate poverty in Australia, and ensuring social welfare outcomes are evaluated against public policy initiatives.

We support:

- Increasing the aged pension by \$60 a fortnight
- Increasing disability support payments, services and assistance to family carers
- Simplifying pensions and allowances to provide a universal guaranteed adequate income scheme.