



Climate Change, Land & Water

Australia must take a leading role in tackling global warming. We want greater use of renewables and a substantial reduction in our energy consumption.

We can't wait another 15 or 20 years to start making deep cuts in our greenhouse emissions. We call for tough, immediate action, including reducing our emissions by 60 to 90 percent by 2050.

The Government should ratify Kyoto, introduce a small carbon levy and move to emissions and energy efficiency trading. We shouldn't head down the dirty nuclear path, and we should cease uranium mining.

We are also committed to better water management. We need more rainwater tanks, less water waste, and greater recycling of effluent and grey water.



The Senate & Accountability

We aim to clean up politics, rebuild democracy and restore people's faith in the parliamentary process. The Senate should act as a brake on the excesses of the government of the day.

Governance in Australia is now less democratic and less accountable than it was a decade ago. We need greater transparency and accountability to help keep the bastards honest.

We promote fixed parliamentary terms, greater protection of whistleblowers, and more stringent limitations on taxpayer-funded advertising and political donations.

We support citizen-initiated referenda, a lowering of the voting age to 16 and improved freedom of information laws.



Equality for Women

The Democrats have a proud history of advancing equal rights and equal pay for women as well as electing our women to leadership positions.

We want to see violence prevention programs, a strengthened Sex Discrimination Act and increased funding of women's organisations.

We promote good family planning and women's health, and we say women have a right to safe, affordable and legal abortion.

We initiated the successful campaign to remove the ministerial veto over RU486 — the abortion pill — and led the campaign for unbiased pregnancy counselling and transparency in advertising of these services.



Work, Family & Children

Australian society is failing in its duty to ensure the welfare of our children. The Democrats want the Commonwealth, states and territories to become allies rather than contestants in child protection. We also need a multi-layered public health model to prevent abuse.

We recognise the growing pressure felt by Australians with family responsibilities, so we promote family-friendly workplaces, paid maternity leave, flexible working hours and high-quality, affordable child care.

We want improved security and conditions for part-time and casual workers and greater assistance to families with young children or elderly parents who require care.



Culture & Diversity

Australia is a rich amalgam of cultures and people from across the globe. We should support and learn from the diversity of ideas, cultures and beliefs that constitute our community.

The Democrats immigration policy is non-discriminatory and gives priority to refugees and family reunion. We oppose the citizenship test and consider it a waste of public money and an attempt to impose a narrow nationalist agenda onto our diverse and tolerant society.

We recognise the importance of Indigenous art and culture, and acknowledge creativity and innovation as critical to our nation's future. And we will continue to promote sporting activity at the individual and community level.



Servicing the Common Good

We believe in economically, socially and environmentally responsible Government investment — the triple bottom line.

The old ways of planning and funding transport must change dramatically to deal with the triple whammy of growing greenhouse emissions, rising fuel costs and traffic congestion. We need increased infrastructure expenditure and better public transport.

We are committed to promoting to the rights of people with disabilities and removing all barriers to their full participation in society. We value older Australians and acknowledge their immense contribution to the wellbeing of society. We want safe and high-quality services in residential aged care, regardless of ability to pay.

Policy Snapshot



A U S T R A L I A N TM
DEMOCRATS

For full details on our policies please visit:
www.democrats.org.au/policies

The Democrats are the only party with fairness and justice as their foundation principles.

We are not locked into left or right wing ideology. We are not shackled to business, union or religious interest groups.

In all our policies, we will fight for solutions which improve the lives of all Australians — not a chosen few.

We are the only party that simply fights for what is right.

Senator Lyn Allison
Leader, Australian Democrats
Senator for Victoria



Our Health System

Australia's healthcare system is riddled with inefficiencies, duplication, cost shifting and buck passing between governments. Radical reform is needed.

We want a system with greater emphasis on prevention and primary care. We want Indigenous people, low-income earners and people in rural areas to get their fair share of the health dollar. And we want improved access to dental, midwifery and mental health services.

We are committed to a health system that is universal and high-quality. And we believe the fairest and most efficient way to deliver this is with Medicare.

We support stem cell research, improved sex education, voluntary euthanasia and tighter controls on tobacco advertising.

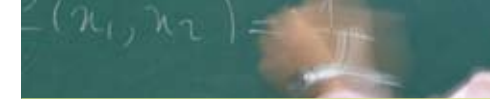


A Modern Economy

Australia can have a strong economy without the Government eroding the rights of workers or defiling the environment.

We have always knocked the harsh edges off the industrial relations agendas of both major parties. With the Coalition beholden to big business and Labor to the unions, we take the middle ground — sympathetic to the legitimate needs of workers yet sensitive to business requirements.

We strongly oppose WorkChoices and support a national unitary industrial relations system. For three decades, we have promoted corporate social responsibility, ethical investment, fair laws for non-profit organisations, tax reform for low-income earners, and greater investment in research & development.



Our Education System

Education is an investment, not a cost. It's a life-long process that fosters initiative, creativity, flexibility and community participation and is central to economic competitiveness and national wellbeing.

We want federal education funding to be at least 5 percent of gross national income, with priority given to public schools.

We support free voluntary preschool and a greater focus on students with learning problems. We recognise the importance of vocational training and oppose the Government's assault on student unions and higher education generally.

We want Government to be the primary sponsor of higher education and would reduce fees and boost university funding.



Human Rights & Justice

We are at the forefront in defending human rights and promoting social justice.

We oppose mandatory detention and say refugees should be treated in accordance with both common decency and international law. We promote reform to our Migration Act to include natural justice and remove discrimination and political interference.

We have resisted anti-terror laws that infringe fundamental freedoms and believe a national access card to be an unacceptable invasion of privacy.

We have long campaigned for a global end to the death penalty and lead the charge for equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Australians. Above all, we say Australia needs a Bill of Rights.



Indigenous Australians

We want the Government to support Indigenous Australians in their efforts to deal with the challenges they face. We support initiatives to overcome barriers to equality but oppose paternalistic responses like the Northern Territory intervention.

We have a strong record advocating for fairer government policy and more informed public attitudes. We acknowledge the important contribution that Indigenous Australians continue to make in shaping our national identity and character.

We want to develop an economic, social, cultural and legal framework that respects Indigenous Australians, acknowledges past injustices and enables them to determine their own futures. Self-determination is essential for a united and just Australia.



International Relations

Australia should be at the forefront in strengthening international institutions like the United Nations, building respect for human rights and promoting the rule of law. We should lead the world in the charge for nuclear disarmament, a ban on cluster munitions and greater controls on small arms trade.

We want a peace and nonviolence commission in Australia to act as a counter-weight to our defence forces, which are increasingly geared towards a war-fighting capability. And we believe the Parliament, not the Prime Minister, should decide if Australian troops are to go to war.

We support fair trade and debt cancellation for heavily indebted poor countries. And our overseas aid contribution should be at least 0.7 percent of our gross national income.