



JUST IN TIME

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The NSW State election will be held on March 28th and it is important to know who will best represent you, your community and the issues that you are passionate about. The coming weeks are critical not only for candidates and MPs campaigning but also for voters who will need to make an informed decision about who will earn their vote.

In this edition of *Just in Time* we'll take a closer look at what the Labor Party, Greens, and Liberal National Party (LNP) in NSW are promising to do on the issues affecting Aboriginal people, housing affordability and energy costs.

While for many people NSW is a great state to live in, more and more people are falling between the cracks as they struggle to make ends meet.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Recently research by *Domain* showed that the average rental house price rose to \$540 a week in Sydney and for an apartment, rent was \$500 per week. This is simply not affordable for low income earners and is forcing people who are already struggling to pay their rent to make difficult choices on other household and life essentials.

According to Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot 2014 out of 11,397 rental properties available in Greater Sydney on the snapshot weekend, only 21 properties were identified as affordable for people on income support. Only 213 properties were affordable for families that had two minimum wage earners.

There is a great need across NSW for more affordable and easily accessible housing for low-income earners. Many organisations are calling on the NSW Government to increase the investment in social housing. According to the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) the current supply of social housing around NSW is only meeting 44% of the real need. This means there are thousands of families struggling to pay their rent as well as being able to remain connected with their community.

WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

LABOR: The Labor Party has not specifically outlined a social housing policy however has stated that they oppose the sell off by the Baird government of social housing estates at Millers Point. The Labor Party has not identified any strategies to make housing more affordable.

LNP: Family and Community Services Minister Gabrielle Upton in November 2014 released a discussion paper calling for public input about how to make the social housing system in NSW fairer and more accessible. In 2014 the Baird government also began selling off social housing estates in and around Millers Point and investing millions of dollars of profits into social housing elsewhere.

GREENS: The Greens support an increase in the number of social housing properties available and have also supported the call for more action to be taken on making rental properties more affordable.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

NSW has the greatest population of Aboriginal people in Australia with the majority of Aboriginal people residing in Western Sydney. Statistically Aboriginal people experience higher infant mortality rates, higher incarceration rates, lower life expectancy, lower health rates and a lower income than non-Aboriginal people.

Reconciliation is the ultimate goal. Neither the Labor Party nor LNP has identified any policies specifically for Aboriginal people although they have made different commitments to address issues affecting Aboriginal people.

What are they going to do about it?

LABOR: On January 25 Labor Party leader Luke Foley announced that if elected the NSW Labor party would return Me-Mel (Goat Island) in Sydney Harbour, the traditional lands of the Wangal people to the Aboriginal people of NSW.

LNP: In December 2014 NSW Liberal Leader Mike Baird became the first Australian Premier to publicly support a referendum calling for recognition of Aboriginal people in the Australian constitution.

GREENS: The NSW Greens openly support policies and funding dedicated to furthering educational, social, economic, and development opportunities for Aboriginal people.

ENERGY AFFORDABILITY

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

In 2014 the NSW Government announced they would seek a mandate at the 2015 election for the long-term partial lease of 49% of the state's electricity network. This lease is expected to bring in a \$20billion boost to the NSW economy and will be used to fund infrastructure projects around the state.

If this is to go ahead, advocacy groups including the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre have called on the government to include safeguards in the sale to ensure that consumers won't end up paying extra down the line. Extra costs would hit low-income households particularly hard. According to the NSW Government, electricity prices in NSW have increased more than 122% in the past 16 years.

According to NCOSS, in the last year 33,000 homes have been disconnected from their energy sources due to inability to make payments. This is an increase of 32%.

What are they going to do about it?

LABOR: In June 2014 former NSW Labor party leader John Robertson vowed that the Labor party would not support any attempts to privatize poles and wires in NSW because the economic benefit of the lease is not a long term solution and privatization will lead to higher prices for consumers as has been seen in South Australia.

LNP: If elected the LNP will seek to go ahead with the sale. In a scoping study the NSW government confirmed that they will ensure that the costs associated with the transaction will not be borne by electricity consumers. The government also expects to see a drop in electricity prices. According to a government spokesperson in Victoria prices fell 18% under private ownership.

GREENS: The NSW Greens state on their website that they oppose any further privatization of electricity networks "because of the unacceptable impacts on emissions' reduction, employment, the state's finances, and household energy bills" and advocate instead for NSW to move towards a 100% renewable energy system.

GET INVOLVED!

What can you do now?

- Stay connected and informed before you vote.
- Follow blogs on sites such as <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/> or www.smh.com.au/nsw/nsw-state-election-2015 to get up to date information.
- Educate others around you so that they can make informed decisions
- Try and connect with your local candidates to share your views and concerns with them and to hear their thoughts and goals.

What can you do in the future?

- Write a letter to your local MP to begin building a relationship.
- Try to organize a time to meet with your local MPs to speak with them about the issues you're passionate about affecting your community and the people you represent.
- Stay involved and up to date through organisations such as Getup! CCJP. and ANTAR
- Follow @CLRINSW on twitter

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