

# TAMMY FRANKS.

## Member of Legislative Council

Joe Hooper  
Chief Executive  
Australian Medical Association (South Australia) Inc.  
PO Box 134  
North Adelaide SA 5000

Friday, 23 February 2018

Dear Mr Hooper

### **RE: Policy Platform for the March 2018 State Election**

Thank you for providing the Greens SA with a copy of the Australian Medical Association's Policy Platform for the March 2018 State Election and for the opportunity to communicate with your members the Greens' vision for a strong, public health system.

The Greens acknowledge the important work that the AMA does year round in the sector and the substantial effort which has been undertaken to develop this information for our consideration. We sincerely appreciate the time and effort your organisation puts into advocating for reform on these vital issues.

We believe that access to a comprehensive, high quality health care system is a fundamental human right, and that a strong public health system is the best way to deliver health services. Governments are responsible for ensuring that all people have access to the resources and opportunities essential for good health. Health service provision should be equitable, socially just and responsive to changing needs. Individual health outcomes are influenced by biological, social, economic and environmental factors and these must be addressed as part of a comprehensive health care system.

First and foremost I would direct you and your members to our state and national website where all of our policies can be found, and in particular our health policies:

<https://greens.org.au/policies/sa/health>

<https://greens.org.au/policies/health>

Access to quality health care is a basic human right. The cost of providing healthcare is rapidly increasing, and it will soon consume the state budget unless we find an alternative. We believe that spending on good health is as important as treating ill health, and we want to put a strong focus on prevention. Keeping people of all ages healthy, out of hospital and active in the community for as long as possible makes clear sense. We want to promote health improvement programs tailored to local needs, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities.

Below I have provided responses that broadly cover the key issues covered in your letter:

#### **1. Health and the Economy**

We recognise that health care costs are rising substantially in Australia, and believe that we have an obligation to keep our public health system accessible to all. We know that cost can deter people from seeking medical treatment. The Greens know that federally we need to invest in Medicare to maintain bulk billing rates and minimise the costs consumers pay, and to ensure that doctors are adequately compensated. The Greens strongly support the principle of universal access to health care no matter their means of situation. We agree with the AMA: healthy citizens support a healthy economy.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE, NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE SA 5000  
FRANKS.OFFICE@PARLIAMENT.SA.GOV.AU  
WWW.TAMMYFRANKS.ORG.AU  
8237 9296

**THE  
GREENS**

## **2. Nutrition and Health Literacy**

Agree - improving nutrition literacy is an important step in combating ill health and obesity. However, the Greens also recognise that such education needs to be supported by easy and affordable access to foods and services that support good health.

## **3. Vocational Education and Training**

The Greens believe that our education system should be inclusive and fair. From preschool to university and TAFE, the Greens will invest in quality education that is accessible to all and where funding will be directed to where it is needed most. As the AMA has stated in your letter, the VET sector has gone through major challenges over the past three years. The Greens opposed to corporatisation of TAFE under then Minister Kenyon. We raised strong concerns regarding the populist funding model of Skills for All, and are committed to reinstating much of the funding that was cut under the State Labor Government's then consequent knee jerk policy response to vocational education of the WorkReady program. We believe in a publicly owned and properly funded TAFE system that offers lifelong educational opportunities and skills. We need to ensure good planning to identify skills shortages and have a transparent mechanism for allocating priority skills training. We are staunchly committed to reversing the corporatisation of TAFE and to ensure full Ministerial accountability and expanded capacity to provide high-quality training and skills development for our workforce. We have also called for a VET Ombudsman for the very reasons you've outlined in your letter, and you can read more about our VET policy here: <https://greens.org.au/policies/sa/vocational-education> and our education policy here: <https://greens.org.au/sa/policies/education>

## **4. Medical Workforce for the Future**

The Greens want guaranteed internship positions for all local graduates, with increased numbers of postgraduate positions in line with increasing numbers of graduates, and have previously raised this in Parliament. We believe it is important to stocktake the number of training positions available across the health system to allow for better future workforce planning, and we strongly support training positions in country hospitals as well as in the private sector. The Greens also support the preservation and unhampered use of special purpose funds for research, while improving governance arrangements where appropriate.

The Greens strongly support investing in medical research. Our federal plan to address dementia research would see an investment of \$120 million over three years. Delaying the onset of dementia by five years would reduce the number of people living with the condition in 2050 by one third and dramatically improve the quality of life for many thousands of people.

We share the concerns of the AMA in regards to a 'pipeline' for medical students and future professionals. We agree that junior doctors are the backbone in our public health system and their wellbeing and welfare, safe working hours and conditions need serious consideration. As such the Greens would support the call for a state-wide medical workforce planning initiative.

## **5. Community and other Services and Health are Interlinked**

We know that environmental, social, and economic factors are significant determinants of health. It is one of the reasons that a key platform we are taking to this election is restoring SA's commitment to 'Homes For All'.

The Greens also strongly support an independent Commissioner for Children and Young People and an appropriately resourced Office for Children and Young People and have called for this in the past to improve the coordination of all health, family and social services for children and adolescents. Tammy Franks, Greens MLC has raised this issue in Parliament before: [www.tammyfranks.org.au/2011/11/08/education-and-early-childhood-services-registration-and-standards-bill/](http://www.tammyfranks.org.au/2011/11/08/education-and-early-childhood-services-registration-and-standards-bill/) and we were the first to champion a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children by moving for one in the Parliament.

Drug abuse is a health issue. We believe that the individual use of illegal drugs should not fall within the current criminal framework. The legal framework for drugs and other substances used for non-medical purposes should be informed by evidence of the extent and nature of the harm likely to be caused, and we think that there should be greater funding for demand- and harm- reduction. You can read our full policy on drugs and substance abuse here: <https://greens.org.au/policies/drugs-substance-abuse-addiction>

A lifelong approach to active ageing should form the basis of policy for older South Australians, based on WHO Active Ageing principles that focus on wellness, age-friendly environments, availability and accessibility of effective health care, and active participation in all aspects of community life. More about our plan for older South Australians can be read here: <https://greens.org.au/sa/policies/older-south-australians>

Our initiative relating to the support of Community Legal Centres may also be of interest to you and your members, and it can be found here: <https://greens.org.au/sa/policies/community-legal-centres>

## **6. Health Plays a Role in Law and Justice**

Like the AMA(SA), the Greens also support effective court diversion programs, and the provision of adequate and humane health services to those who are incarcerated. Regardless of their inmate status (for example of sentenced or remand prisoner).

The Greens support working with all stakeholders to consult with consumers and carers to review the South Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy 2011-2016 to develop a whole-of-government response to alcohol and other drug use that would address the disproportionate harm from substance misuse within vulnerable population groups.

The Greens believe that the response to illicit drug use is best addressed within a health and social framework, and that a harm minimisation approach is the most appropriate way to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of drug use, for the individual user and the community.

The Greens stand firm that all Australians with a substance abuse problem should have access to a range of evidence-based and regularly evaluated treatment and recovery services. Information and education programs should be available to enable informed debate about the effects of all drugs, including prescription, non-prescription, legal and illicit drugs.

We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must control, to the greatest extent possible, the development and management of harm minimisation policies and treatment and recovery programs in their communities.

## **7. The Environment, Transport and Infrastructure All Play a Role in Health**

Individual and population health outcomes are strongly influenced by the social, economic and environmental conditions in which people live and work. Human health has a direct relationship with the quality of the environment, and a healthy natural environment underpins a healthy society.

The Greens SA have always had strong environmental policies that are not only consistent with world sustainability and action on climate change, but we are part of a global movement of Green Parties in parliaments around the world working to implement these policies through legislation. You can read our SA policy here: <https://greens.org.au/sa/policies/environment> and our national policy here: <https://greens.org.au/policies/ecological-sustainability>.

The Greens have a '[Walkable Cities](#)' initiative, that aims to make our cities and suburbs pedestrian friendly. We know that if planners get the infrastructure right, people will find it easier and more enjoyable to walk to local destinations, resulting in healthier, cleaner lifestyles. The Greens want to develop a Pedestrian Strategy for Adelaide and major regional centres, as well as to look at areas where many people already walk, to see if they can be enhanced by planting trees, reducing speed limits, or closing side streets to through traffic. We want to make walking in our cities and suburbs safer, and so aim to increase the use of timed crossings that show the length of time remaining before traffic signals change, and to make sure pedestrian crossing lights give sufficient time for pedestrians to cross with reduced waiting time between cycles.

Our [cycling policy](#) emphasises low-impact transport and personal fitness. The Greens aim to make cycling more appealing by creating a safer environment for cyclists of all ages, creating a healthier, more active population. We want to design and develop a cycling strategy for SA to replace the one that expired in 2010, in collaboration with local councils, community groups and other stakeholders. The

Greens want to ensure new roads and road upgrades provide both on-road and off-road facilities for cyclists of varying abilities.

We also have a [transport initiative](#) that prioritises making existing roads safer for all road users in both metropolitan and regional areas, with a focus on creating effective connections between different modes of transport.

The Greens have been a strong voice in the parliament for a long time for the rights and welfare of injured workers.

## **8. Culture, Governance, Transparency and Health**

Recent health reforms have done little to end the bitter conflict between state and federal governments over hospital funding. At the federal level, the Greens want to transparently and fairly invest \$1.5 billion in the public hospital system, with 30% going to rural and regional hospitals.

Successive governments have sought to make savings by trimming health budgets and blaming the shortfall on the federal government, but the Greens are committed to transparent Commonwealth funding of hospitals – with no tricks or cuts.

The Greens are always advocates of transparency and accountability, and our full state policy on that can be [found here](#). <[greens.org.au/sa/transparentgovernment](http://greens.org.au/sa/transparentgovernment)>

## **9. Health Overview**

The Greens are strongly committed to a healthier state; recognising that prevention is better (and cheaper) than cure.

Accordingly, we will take action to ensure we consider the health implications of all government policies, prior to implementation. We will improve programmes and facilities for both children and adults that promote physical activity and investigate innovative ways to improve mental health issues. With almost 50% of South Australians experiencing a mental health issue at some stage in their lives, it is imperative that we provide the appropriate support and assistance needed.

The Greens will develop a five-year plan to address mental health issues in SA.

Improving our air quality by strengthening laws around industrial pollution will deliver significant benefits to residents impacted by emissions in both metropolitan areas and regional centres such as Whyalla and Port Pirie.

To further improve South Australia's health system, the Greens support the development of suburban and rural health clusters to effectively address the needs of their local communities.

We will continue to advocate and support the rollout of high speed internet connectivity to facilitate 'tele-medicine' and enable medical staff to access expertise from anywhere in the world.

The Greens recognise that many people are caring for a family member or loved one. This valuable role often enables people to live at home rather than an institution – which is great benefit to that person, as well as reducing the load on public services. The Greens will significantly increase respite options for carers to help them cope with their responsibilities. We will provide extra help for young carers in particular and improve programs and boost concessions and subsidies to help carers fulfil their roles and meet the extra costs of providing care. This will include the retro-fitting of homes to make them disability accessible and help with utility bills.

We will also develop cross-departmental programs to support young carers with their education and maintain their health and social relationships.

The Greens support clear outpatient clinic waiting times to be published online in the interests of accountability and transparency. We also support decentralisation and more local-decision making, and clinician input and leadership in our hospitals and health system.

We believe that comprehensive, practically focussed implementation and support for the new Advance Care Directives legislation is very important and we strongly support the development and implementation of an integrated end-of-life decision-making and care system to ensure that terminal



patients receive the best palliative care possible, including both local hospice and home based options. We recognise that despite huge advances in medical science, palliative care and modern pain relief however, some people still endure inexorable suffering in their final days, months or even years.

The Greens strongly support dying with dignity as a basic human right. The Greens' vision is for a society that respects and values an individuals' right to choose and despite the narrow defeats of voluntary euthanasia legislation on several occasions, we are committed to re-introduce a dying with dignity bill to allow voluntary euthanasia for those suffering from incurable conditions. Our bill would protect the right of medical professionals and other medical staff to not be involved in the practice unless they chose to.

We also support a 'Health in all Policies' approach, and it is recognised in our health policies that we need to take a more holistic and broad-minded approach to healthcare.

## **10. Transforming Health and Real Reform**

The Greens are also deeply concerned at the lack of consultation and evidence base behind Transforming Health, and have repeatedly raised this issue both in the Parliament and in the media. Greens MLC, Tammy Franks, was also an active member of the select committee of inquiry that gave support to, and reflection of, non-Government voices with regards to Transforming health.

## **11. The Importance of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

The Greens believe that spending on good health is as important as treating ill health. The key is to focus on prevention. Keeping people of all ages healthy, out of hospital and active in the community for as long as possible makes clear sense. Preventative approaches, measure to alleviate social disadvantage, and universal access to an effective health care system are necessary to address inequities in health outcomes. an effective health system must be based on primary health care and preventative health care measures - such as health promotion, disease prevention, risk reduction and early intervention - in order to manage chronic disease, reduce ill-health and avoidable hospital admissions.

The Greens are committed to improving facilities and programmes for both children and adults that promote physical activity. We also want to promote health improvement programs tailored to local needs, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities. The Greens SA contend that there needs to be renewed and stronger emphasis on preventative health, and better investment from government in this area. We stood against the cuts and think they were ill-considered.

The Greens SA believe there needs to be solid investment from Government in providing greater access to timely care in an appropriate environment for community and primary health care services. We need to prioritise community, preventative and lifestyle programs. Including and tailored to a diversity of population groups.

## **12. The new RAH and EPAS**

We agree that there are serious unaddressed questions plaguing the new RAH. We think that saying the EPAS system is "problematic" is putting it kindly - we need to address the serious hardware and content issues within the EPAS system. This needs to happen through consultation with those that actually use the system, and by improving training, implementation, and support. We believe that there should absolutely be a clinical data analysis unit in our state.

## **13. Rural and Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should have health outcomes and life expectancy equal to other Australians. There should be accessible, culturally-appropriate and community-controlled health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that will raise their health status to a level comparable to other Australians.

The Greens are committed to restoring funding to regional areas to help close the health gap between rural and urban communities, and between indigenous and non-indigenous people and we want to promote health improvement programs tailored to local needs, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities.

Federally the Greens have secured free dental care for 3.4 million children through our Denticare initiative and have a \$368.2 million plan to support the 1 in 6 Australians who suffer from some degree of hearing loss, which includes extending the eligibility for the Australian Government Hearing Services program to all Australians. This will help 133,000 people on low incomes with free access to hearing services. We also have a vision for the future, where we can eliminate avoidable blindness and reduce the impact of vision loss in Australia by prioritising prevention and early detection of eye disease.

#### **14. Child and Youth Health and Wellbeing**

The Greens recognise and acknowledge that our children and young people are the future.

We want to ensure schools provide a healthy environment for learning, including nutritious canteen food and encouraging walking and cycling to school. We will boost investment in community sport, including sports equipment libraries for low-income Australians, recognising participation in community sport is one of the simplest ways to start addressing obesity.

We continue to advocate for a ban on junk-food advertising to children and for clearer labelling for food. The Greens believe that to help all Australian children stay healthy, we must teach them how to grow, buy and cook good food, and nothing beats hands-on learning at school. The Greens want to help implement and fund school kitchen gardens, prioritising funding for low-income areas to help foster a culture of knowledge and pleasure in growing, choosing and cooking healthy food among our children.

The growing nexus between sport and gambling has gone too far. Research already shows that most kids are able to identify several sports betting companies, just from watching the televised sport saturated with gambling ads. The Greens would ban them in children's viewing time, along with live odds, betting company sponsorship, and cash-for-comment. Normalising gambling behaviour and associating it with sport, increases the chances our children may develop problem gambling issues later in life.

The Greens strongly opposed the cuts to preventative health services recommended by the McCann Review and have been vocal both inside and outside of Parliament in defence of community programs such as the Salisbury 'Shopfront' providing youth health services and the 'Inside Out' and 'Evolve' programs assisting same-sex attracted youth.

We also support a comprehensive state-wide service delivery plan for health services for children and young people in South Australia.

#### **15. Mental Health is Vital, and is a Part of Health**

The Greens support adequately funded mental health services, including adequately resourced services for the reduction and early detection of mental illness and suicide, and hospital and community-based assessment and support services.

Almost 50% of all South Australians will experience mental health problems at some stage in their lives, yet for decades the issue has been neglected and under-funded. The Greens believe a caring society should look after all of its members, but must especially take care to protect the most vulnerable. The Greens are committed to developing a five year plan for addressing mental health issues in South Australia and will engage and liaise further with stakeholders, including consumer representative such as the Mental Health Council of SA, to improve SA's mental health system.

At a federal level the Greens have launched a plan for a fully costed \$574.4 million mental health package. Key features of this package include:

- Investing \$150 million, over 3 years, to establish a National Institute for Mental Illness Research.
- Increasing funding for the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program by \$70 million per year, on top of current budget commitments.
- Reinstating the option of six extra sessions of psychological treatment in exceptional circumstances under the Better Access initiative, costing \$141.6 million over 3 years.
- Providing grants of up to \$50,000 to mental health NGOs through re-establishing the NGO Capacity Grants Program, worth \$7.5 million.
- Establishing a National Suicide Prevention Campaign and improving the collection of data relating to suicide with an investment of \$38.3 million over 3 years.

At a state level the Greens will work towards realising this package and support delivering increased investment in mental health.

Our concern isn't just about electioneering or political rhetoric. In 2012 and 2013, the Australian Greens' federal Spokesperson for Mental Health, Senator Penny Wright, undertook a rural mental health consultation tour of regional Australia. She met with over 185 people, including consumers, carers, service providers and other stakeholders in order to unearth the strengths and weaknesses of the rural mental health system.

At a state level, our spokesperson for Health and Mental Health Tammy Franks MLC previously worked for the Mental Health Coalition of SA and has first-hand knowledge of the sector and the issues facing it. Her Mental Health (Repeal of Harboursing Offence) Amendment Bill 2010 bill in Parliament repealed draconian proposed measures which would have punished carers and families.

We have also been vocal advocating for anti-stigma campaigns about mental illness, similar to those run in every other English-speaking OECD country like 'Like Minds, Like Mine' in New Zealand or 'see me' in Scotland and were pleased to see the former Health Minister support this. We will champion the return of similar campaigns.

The Greens opposed the closure of the Flinders Medical Centre's Ward 4G and are strong advocates for a dedicated eating disorders service that addresses disordered eating from both a clinical and a cultural perspective. We raised string concerns about the amalgamation of incongruous community advocacy and support groups within the sector. It has been to the detriment of their ability to address specific and discrete needs.

#### **16. Step-down Care, Rehabilitation and Disability Services**

We support the AMA's statement that greater investment is needed in step-down care and rehabilitation services. We also agree that there should be Disability Impact Statements in health, and in particular a state-wide disability services policy that covers acute, chronic and support care that is well funded. You can read more about our federal approach to disability services here:

<https://greens.org.au/policies/disability>

I hope this letter provides you and your members with some more information as to where The Greens (SA) stand on health issues. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your correspondence and to share some of our policies with you and your members. If you or your members have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact my office at [franks.office@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:franks.office@parliament.sa.gov.au) or on 8237 9296. You can also find much more information on our policies and plans on both our state ([www.greens.org.au/sa](http://www.greens.org.au/sa)) and national ([www.greens.org.au](http://www.greens.org.au)) websites.

Kind regards,



**Tammy Franks MLC**

Greens Member of the SA Legislative Council  
Lead Greens Candidate at the SA Election

