

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

BUILDING BACK GREENER & FAIRER: A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR LUTRUWITA/TASMANIA

BACKGROUND

Tasmanians want to live in a safe community, and to have a justice system that is compassionate and effective at reducing the rate of crime.

They also want equal and fair access to the system of justice, so anyone, regardless of income or ability, can ensure they have quality and timely legal representation when they need it, or for a public interest matter.

The 'tough on crime' agenda, much loved by populist governments, has comprehensively failed to reduce crime and keep the community safe. It does not treat the underlying causes of offending, and provides offenders – especially young ones – no alternatives other than a life of crime.

In Tasmania, our corrections system is at breaking point. The imprisonment rate and the total number of prisoners have skyrocketed in the past seven years, and the rate of assaults within the prison has increased. The recidivism for adults has increased by 20 per cent, and for young people has doubled.

The current punitive response to crime has significant negative financial implications, and the real costs of corrective services has increased.

Our plan will help offenders turn their lives around and reduce re-offending rates. To do this, we will implement a restorative justice ethos, policies and activities focused on the rehabilitation of prisoners.

Investing in rehabilitation services and fair and equal access to justice, ultimately leads to safer and more compassionate communities. It provides the skills, training and support ex-offenders need to get a job, housing, and reconnect with family and community life.

Restorative Justice Policies and Programs Division

The tough-on-crime approach adopted by the government has virtually eliminated restorative justice efforts, with one audit noting *"activities directed at rehabilitation of prisoners were almost non-existent in all facilities."*

We will provide additional resources, and integrate existing resources, including the Programs Unit and Therapeutic Services, to establish a Restorative Justice Programs and Policies Division. This division will develop and deliver programs and policies, and monitor outcomes, with the objective of reducing reoffending and promoting successful reintegration into society.

A Bail Hostel

A lack of stable accommodation can contribute to a court declining to grant bail for an individual. This means a defendant without stable housing – who has not been convicted of a crime – would be imprisoned on remand.

We will fund a Bail Hostel in Hobart, and will monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

A Tasmanian Alcohol and Drug Court

In 2006 the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute undertook research into the desirability of establishing a pilot drug court in Tasmania. The assessment found that establishing a drug court could reduce recidivism, save costs, and have broader community benefits.

We will establish an alcohol and drug court. We will expand the Court Mandated Diversion program to include alcohol-related offending, and fund additional counselling and therapeutic staff for the purposes of removing the cap from the program.

Free Legal Advice

The Federal Government has issued successive cuts to Community Legal Centres. State funding, while increasing slightly, has failed to keep pace. Community legal centres provide critical, free legal advice, and can be particularly critical for people in vulnerable circumstances.

We fund all 7 CLCs for an additional \$400,000 per year, with an additional \$400,000 per year for the Women's Legal Service, who have a particularly critical workload. This grant funding will be indexed annually at 3% to ensure service levels can stay the same in real terms.

We will also increase base funding for legal aid by \$2 million per year, indexed at 3% per year.

The Tasmanian Greens acknowledge and pay respect to the palawa/pakana people as the original owners and ongoing custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania. We are committed to Truth, Treaty, Justice, and the return of lands.

GREEN NEW DEAL

