

LIFTING TASMANIANS OUT OF POVERTY

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

BACKGROUND

Tasmanians shouldn't have to worry about how they are going to pay the rent, keep the power on or feed their family, but an estimated 120,000 Tasmanians who live below the poverty line do, every day.

While the COVID-19 emergency measures were in place, low income Tasmanians were lifted out of poverty by the JobSeeker supplement, and protected from rent increases and eviction by measures the Greens made sure were included in the COVID emergency legislation.

On 1 February this year, the Gutwein Government ended these tenancy protections. Landlords and real estate agents were quick to raise rents, which have been soaring ever since. Meanwhile, there are almost 4000 people on the housing waiting list and homelessness is on the rise.

The JobSeeker supplement was removed by the Morrison Government on 31 March. Overnight, according to the Australia Institute, 7000 Tasmanians were plunged in to poverty. Children are now going without.

The Australia Institute research indicates, 'The overall increase in poverty in Tasmania from March 2020 till March 2021 is 30 000 people.'

This is a social crisis that requires an urgent, tripartisan response to bring down the cost of living for Tasmanians in financial crisis.

The Tasmanian Greens are calling on all parties and candidates contesting this State Election to commit to a suite of urgent measures that tackle poverty as a first order priority of the new Parliament.

Rental Instability

Rental prices in the private rental market have increased in Hobart by 41% in Launceston by 42% and Burnie by 29%. With rents still rising, cuts to JobKeeper and JobSeeker could not come at a worse time.

We will introduce controls on unreasonable rent increases, remove provisions allowing tenants to be evicted solely on grounds of lease expiration, provide secure tenancy and wrap-around supports to homeless Tasmanians, invest in 8357 additional social and affordable homes by 2030, and regulate short-stay accommodation.

Crisis Accommodation

Workers in homelessness services describe a State, and a system, in crisis. People are increasingly being turned away from services, and nine to ten people in a property has become normal.

We will invest \$2 million per year, for two years, into the brokerage fund for emergency accommodation. This will provide for secure emergency accommodation while we invest in Housing First properties, to provide secure tenancy and wrap-around supports to homeless Tasmanians.

Tackling Addiction and Poor Mental Health

With an estimated 130 000 Tasmanians already living in poverty and the rate set to increase unless urgent measures are implemented, we call on both the major parties to revisit their support for this policy, in order to save lives and livelihoods.

We will end the Federal Monopoly Deed and wind back poker machines to casinos.

Household Energy Costs

With power prices rising, renewed investment in energy efficiency programs for low income households is urgently needed.

We will provide free household energy efficiency upgrades for low income Tasmanians, through a collaborative project between Housing Tasmania, community housing providers and the Climate Office. The roll out will be accelerated in collaboration with the not-for-profit and small business sectors.

We will provide \$6 million over four years to TasTAFE to expand vocational courses in household energy efficiency and small-scale renewables roll-out.

Concessions

As household costs keep rising, however, and the COVID supplements have come to an end, concessions relief needs to be expanded as an emergency poverty alleviation measure.

We will fund an extra \$10 million per annum for two years initially to expand eligibility for the full range of Tasmanian Government concessions to every person resident in Tasmania who currently lives below the recognized poverty line, on less than \$430 a week, and every household living on less than \$600 a week.

Children and Young People Living in Poverty

Children and young people often pay the highest price for household poverty. If parents and carers are unable to make ends meet, children will go without.

We will fund all school costs for children and young people from households in poverty, including levies, uniforms, stationery, excursions and text books.

We will fund private bus operators to provide free bus transport services and free Metro services.

Healthy, Affordable and Accessible Food

The Heart Foundation has identified 'food deserts' in Tasmania, where entire communities are denied access to fresh, healthy food. We must ensure every Tasmanian has access to fresh, quality and affordable food near where they live.

We will provide an extra \$2 million funding to be disbursed to Loaves and Fishes Tasmania and Foodbank and for collecting, repurposing and delivering food to food insecure Tasmanians. We will fund government programs, Loaves and Fishes Tasmania, and other partners to expand school breakfast programs to every public school in Tasmania.

We will provide funding for a staff member at all 34 of Tasmania's neighbourhood houses to coordinate food distribution in their communities.

We will also expand community gardens in educational facilities, Community Houses and Child and Family Centres.

Skills & Training to Lift People out of Poverty

The level of unemployment and underemployment remains high post COVID-19. There is a clear need to make it easier and more affordable for Tasmanians to access skills and training opportunities.

We will eliminate student fees and charges for TasTAFE students.

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

