



**DR RICHARD DI NATALE**

**Leader of the Australian Greens**

Senator for Victoria

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Professor Spencer Beasley FRACS  
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**via email:** [college.vicepresident@surgeons.org](mailto:college.vicepresident@surgeons.org)

15 June 2015

Dear Prof Beasley

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) 2916 Federal Election Position Statement.

Please see The Australian Greens' responses below.

### **Maintaining high quality and timely access to healthcare**

The Australian Greens have announced our policy to recommit to Commonwealth funding of 50% of efficient growth of delivering care in hospitals in line with the 2011 National Health Reform Agreement. We have also committed to legislating this formula to protect it from cuts such as we saw in 2013, to reduce cost shifting between governments, and to provide certainty to the states and territories regarding long term funding.

The Greens have also announced our intention to reinstate indexation on MBS payments. This policy, initially introduced by the ALP and extended by the Liberal Party, has been opposed by the Greens since its inception. We recognise the significant pressures this freeze has placed on doctors and patients around the country. It is a co-payment by stealth and the Greens will continue to oppose it.

### **Private healthcare providers**

The Australian Greens support measures to provide policy holders with clear and accessible information about the cover available, so that they can make informed choices about private health insurance products. We have significant concerns about so called 'junk policies' which provide very little cover and are largely just developed to avoid the Medicare Levy Surcharge.

The Greens have announced our policy to remove the Private Health Insurance (PHI) rebate as an inefficient use of limited health resources. We would reinvest the money into public hospitals and other health priorities.



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### **Preventative healthcare measures**

The rise of chronic diseases in Australia like Type II diabetes is mirrored across developed economies. The Greens are deeply disappointed that consecutive governments have failed to adequately respond to this rise with effective preventive health approaches coupled with reforms to the primary care sector.

The Greens have announced our \$4.3 billion dollar commitment over 4 years to introduce blended payments to GPs to better manage chronic disease. Our plan provides for annual payments to GP practices of \$1000 per voluntarily enrolled patient with a chronic disease requiring active management, which will reward the GP for their role in developing a treatment plan, including referral to other health providers and encouraging lifestyle changes. Our announcement also includes \$2.8 billion over four years to provide access to allied health professionals to enrolled patients, given that we know that practitioners like dietitians and podiatrists can be crucial in ensuring those living with diabetes live a long and healthy life.

We would couple this reform with preventive health measures including:

- Our community sport initiative which provides \$20 million dollars to improve access to sport for families including \$10 million in direct financial support for families for costs associated with child participation in sport.
- Our longstanding commitment to clear and accessible food labelling to provide Australians with the information they need about the food they consume.
- We have also announced our \$250 million annual Active Transport Fund for bikes and walking infrastructure, to cut pollution, reduce traffic congestion and encourage physical activity.

The Greens will have more to say about further preventive health policies during the campaign.

### **Recognition of the burden of trauma on the healthcare system**

Every death on Australia's roads is a tragedy. The Greens committed to \$300 million in additional funding for the Black Spot road safety program. We want to see this additional funding flow to urgent and effective road safety fixes, with a particular focus on rural roads and on dangerous black spots that are endangering cyclists and motorcyclists on our roads.

### **National leadership to reduce alcohol-related harm**

It has long been the policy of the Australian Greens for a universal volumetric taxation system for alcohol. The current system is complex and the Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) creates perverse incentives to produce cheap, high volume wine which we know is consumed at high volumes by those who drink at risky levels and young people.





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The Greens have significant concerns relating to the advertising of alcohol during peak times when children are viewing, as long as sports or sporting related programs are televised. We will have more to say about this later in the campaign.

The Greens would support the collection of alcohol-related ED presentations nationwide.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples continue to experience poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians. In order to make progress where it is needed the Greens have committed to invest in key health programs, and work to make sure the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (NATSHIP) succeeds.

The goals of the NATSIHP and Implementation Plan provide a sound blueprint for progress towards closing the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. But the government has failed to demonstrate how the NATSIHP will be realised. The Greens are calling for the development of a Resource Plan, to establish the specific needs across workforce, infrastructure and information management as well identify and commit the funding required. The Resource Plan will also include:

- Establishment and resourcing of an independent oversight committee responsible for monitoring progress against the strategies of the Implementation Plan; and
- Development of a strategic plan for capacity building of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

We have also committed to investing \$179.4 million over four years, which includes \$42.3m to work to limit preventable blindness; \$99.8m to close the gap in hearing health; \$10m to address the challenges of chronic kidney disease, and \$27.3m to improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.

The Greens congratulate RACS and other medical colleges on your work in ATSI health including encouraging greater enrolment of Indigenous trainees. The Greens are strong supporters of the Specialist Training Program (STP) in encouraging greater uptake of specialist training places, including in community settings. We are supportive of encouraging greater uptake by Indigenous Australians of STP places and of the eligibility of ACCHS for STP rotations.

### **Surgical training and academic pathways**

The Greens welcome the recent expansion of the STP program and would maintain the program at the current levels.

The Greens agree that there is a need to support, consolidate and strengthen clinical academic pathways to ensure the sustainability of academic medicine. This should include providing medical students access to research while at medical school as well as clear and well-articulated pathways for trainees, senior doctors and clinical academics to





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pursue a clinical academic career. We would welcome the opportunity to work with medical colleges on the best approach to achieving this.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to RACS Election Statement. I look forward to engaging with you in the 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

Yours Sincerely,

Senator Richard Di Natale  
**Leader of the Australian Greens**

