

## Occupational Therapy Australia

### Mental health and wellbeing

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that consumers continue to have access to 20 annual Better Access services, as recommended by the Productivity Commission? How will you ensure ongoing access to mental health services for older people in residential care?

The Greens will ensure everyone gets the mental health care they want and need. We will increase the Medicare rebate for psychology and psychiatry services, as well as increasing the number of Medicare rebated sessions. This will allow more providers to offer gap-free mental health services. The Greens want to ensure everyone who needs help, can access the treatment, care and support that they need to recover and live well. We should all be able to receive the same healthcare for our physical health, as our mental health.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to address the lack of affordability of Better Access services and the limited availability of private mental health services outside metropolitan centres?

The Australian Greens are committed to ensuring that mental health services are available to everyone under Medicare, so that no one is left to rely on the private system to support their mental health needs. We will invest \$4.8 billion over the decade to ensure mental healthcare is fully covered under Medicare. We will make mental health care free by providing unlimited sessions with a psychologist or psychiatrist with no out of pocket fees.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to improve the timeliness and appropriateness of services accessed by workers with a primary or secondary mental injury?

The Australian Greens recognise the importance of timely, appropriate, and accessible services to all, regardless of their postcode or injury. We are committed to measures which support people's individualised needs, including within the workplace.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to implement workforce initiatives that will address the major workforce demands on occupational therapists across all areas of practice and which are leaving public and private mental health providers across Australia unable to recruit the workforces they need?

The Australian Greens recognise that our mental health workforce continues to bear the brunt of increased demand for services. We recognise that a holistic, person-centred response to mental health care is essential, and the role of peer workers in this response. The Greens are committed to significantly increasing the peer workforce. We will invest \$714 million to increase the number of peer workers by 1,000 workers, including First Nations peer workers, on an ongoing basis. This will provide invaluable support for people throughout their recovery.

The Greens are also committed to wiping student debt and university fees, so that all those who want to go to university and TAFE can do so, and in doing so, improve numbers in the workforce.

## AGEING IN PLACE

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that community aged care funding guidelines are developed to ensure money is spent where it can most effectively support the health, wellbeing and independence of older Australians rather than on lower value services that don't address key risk factors or health needs?

Our aged care system has been underpinned by a lack of transparency and accountability and a culture of secrecy. We don't know how much aged care providers spend on food or care, but we do know that private companies are making billions from the provision of aged care. We need a system that holds providers to account. The Greens will fight to improve governance, transparency and accountability in the aged care sector, starting with mandatory public reporting on how providers are spending Government funds. We will ensure the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner acts as an independent, strong regulator that resolves complaints in a timely manner.

When the Senate passed the *Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response No. 2) Bill 2021*, the Greens supported amendments to ensure greater transparency and reporting about how aged care funding is being spent, and will continue to do so in the next Parliament.

Further details on our aged care policy are set out here  
<https://greens.org.au/platform/health#aged-care>

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that all recipients of community aged care funding can access appropriate assessment, prescription and provision of assistive technology and home modifications to support independence and reduce risk of falls and other injuries?

Many people want to receive care at home and don't want to be forced into residential aged care prematurely. Too many people continue to experience unacceptable wait times for home care at their approved level.

The Greens will invest \$260 million over the forward estimates to ensure no one waits more than 30 days to receive their approved home care packages.

Further details on our aged care policy are set out here  
<https://greens.org.au/platform/health#aged-care>

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to address the need for dedicated funding and care delivery models for allied health services in aged care homes, including both employment and in-reach based models?

The Australian Greens have consistently advocated for the funding certainty that allied health service providers need. In March 2022 Senator Rice, Australian Greens spokesperson for Aged Care, [tabled a petition highlighting the need for greater funding certainty for allied health care providers in aged care](#). That week the Senate also [supported a Greens motion](#) that highlighted the that "the government has failed to ensure that allied health services receive the funding they deserve to support aged care residents", and called for an urgent response by Government.

Only the Greens will provide older people with the level of care they need. Our platform would include \$6 billion a year in extra funding to address the funding gap identified by the Royal Commission, including ensuring older Australians receive the care and support they deserve and expect.

Further details on our aged care policy are set out here

<https://greens.org.au/platform/health#aged-care>

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that all aged care residents receive consistent, high-quality care, including access to occupational therapy and other allied health services focused on reablement, rehabilitation and restorative care, regardless of which residential home they live in?

For too long, aged care services have been rationed in this country resulting in the neglect and abuse of older people. The decisions of successive governments have cut more than \$9.8 billion per year from the aged care budget.

The Greens will guarantee a human rights based approach to aged care, underpinned by a new Aged Care Act that enshrines the rights of older people who are receiving aged care. Under a rights-based approach, older people will be guaranteed universal access to the level of care and support they are assessed as needing.

Further details on our aged care policy are set out here

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## **A STRONG PRIMARY CARE SYSTEM**

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that Australians with chronic illnesses, regardless of their income or geographic location, can access high quality occupational therapy and allied health services focused on supporting recovery, reablement and wellbeing and minimising the impact of their conditions?

Prevention is always better than cure. With increasing rates of chronic disease, we need to find ways to keep people healthier throughout their lives.

We support a whole-of-team approach to the management of chronic disease which is person-centred and are committed to ensuring that chronic disease prevention and management is a priority.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that people experiencing chronic and complex conditions or disability are supported to safely and effectively connect to informal community supports and services?

The Australian Greens want strong action to address the social and environmental determinants of health as the first step to improving the health of everyone. We recognise the role of community in prevention and treatment of health conditions- an approach which places the person at the centre and ensures that their treatment addresses all determinants, rather than just medical definitions of healthcare. This includes systematic health planning across all levels of government to address increasing demands from environmental pressures and social inequality, including the climate crisis, increased risk of pandemics and poverty.

We are calling for greater integration, cooperation and coordination between health services including mental health services with the informed consent of each individual, in order to streamline care pathways for service users and carers. Further, the Greens aim to ensure greater access to primary care and prevention services delivered in locally-run community health centres or appropriate community-based settings.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that a contemporary Australian health system provides access to occupational therapy and other allied health services, focused on meeting a wide range of community needs?

The Australian Greens believe that Australians should have greater access to primary care and prevention services delivered in locally-run community health centres or appropriate community-based settings. We want appropriately accredited evidence-based allied health services to be available for the prevention and treatment of injury and illness through the public health system.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that children with autism, pervasive development disorder and disability are able to access an appropriate volume of Medicare-funded assessments and treatment, particularly where they are unable to access NDIS-funded supports?

The Australian Greens will ensure that there is a needs-based system of federal funding that ensures the delivery of prevention, treatment and support services can be sustained in communities for the long-term, including with comprehensive mental health services funded by Medicare. We support a universal Medicare which ensures everyone can access the treatment they require.

## **A RESPONSIVE DISABILITY SECTOR**

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that people with disability, particularly underrepresented cohorts such as those with psychosocial disability, are able to access the assessments and supports needed to apply for access to the NDIS?

The Australian Greens will fully resource the NDIS so it meets the needs of disabled people, their families and carers. This includes:

- Remove the staffing cap and ensure that staff receive high-quality, ongoing training and support;
- Ensure the IT systems and interfaces for participants and service providers are fit for purpose and fully accessible;
- Ensure the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is properly resourced to undertake its compliance and investigative capacity through an immediate investment of \$300 million;
- Push to remove the age limit that prevents people over 65 from being accepted in the NDIS;
- Boost NDIS funding and reinvest into the NDIS the \$160 million the Morrison Government committed to corporations as part of their failed attempt to roll out Independent Assessments.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to ensure that NDIS participants are supported to fully utilise plan funding aimed at increasing capacity and independence, noting that plan design and review, access to high quality support coordination, and support to find and access appropriate supports are key drivers of higher plan utilisation?

Senator Steele-John and the Australian Greens worked alongside the community to defeat the Morrison government's plans to implement Independent Assessments in to the NDIS. The NDIS is supposed to be about, more than anything else, enabling disabled people to have individualised plans that meet individual needs and help achieve individual goals.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to reduce the administrative burden associated with seeking payment under the NDIS, and the rates of plan-managed participants receiving services that exceed their budgets and leave providers out of pocket?

The NDIS must be fully funded to ensure that disabled people can access the supports and services they need to live a good life; this is not something that can be capped or predicted because the NDIS is a needs-based system. It has to be flexible enough to be able respond to the needs of its participants, including the possibility for growth if necessary.

If elected to parliament, what will you/your party do to work with the association to ensure that all people with disability can access timely, high quality occupational therapy services, including prescription of assistive technology, regardless of where they live?

The Australian Greens are committed to the removal of all social, financial and physical barriers to accessing healthcare, including mental healthcare, for disabled people. This includes access to occupational therapy and other services being fully funded and accessible to everyone, regardless of their postcode.

This includes ensuring that that all spaces, including digital spaces, are accessible and inclusive for disabled people. We will make disabled people's physical and digital worlds accessible, including by establishing a new \$3 billion Accessible Infrastructure Fund.