



# Australian Conservatives

*...a better way for South Australia*

7 March 2018

Ross Womersley  
CEO SACOSS  
47 King William Road  
UNLEY SA 5061

Dear Ross,

I write in response to your letter to the Australian Conservatives seeking our party's response to the SACOSS SA State Election summary list of policies.

## **Cost of Living**

Australian Conservatives are deeply concerned by the rising cost of living across South Australia. Our costed policies include abolishing Land Tax, Stamp Duty, ESL and improving the reliability and cost of our electricity supply by reducing energy subsidies and improving baseload supply to the grid.

We believe that implementing these policy changes will improve the cost of living for all South Australians.

We support modernising the energy concession so that it is paid as a percentage of the bill on the condition that the payments are accurately monitored and the program can be shown over time to have the requisite functionality and success. We would support a greater proportion of low income earners receiving subsidised energy audits.

## **Water**

Australian Conservatives support an inquiry into the cost of water including supply charges, alleged over-inflation of SA Water assets and a revision of hardship provisions including when restriction of water supply can occur.

## **Telecommunication**

Digital disadvantage is suffered by several subgroups in South Australia. Australian Conservatives support measures to increase digital inclusion such as providing older people with support to access online resources, increasing public Wi-Fi and providing appropriate access to government websites. We would support an audit of digital technology usage and literacy.

## **Children, Young People and Family Wellbeing**

Australian Conservatives are mindful that the *Children and Young Persons (Safety) Act 2017* has recently been enacted and that limitations within the Act will become more evident as each phase of implementation is completed. We support a greater focus on early intervention and considering the best interest of the child. We have advocated strongly for better protections for children particularly those who have drug addicted parents. We would support appropriate measures being added to this legislation. We support better funding for prevention and early intervention to address safety concerns before matters escalate.

The Children's Commissioner was first recommended by the Hon. Robyn Layton QC in her 2003 Review of Child Protection Report and was affirmed by the Hon. Margaret Nyland AM Commissioner in the 2016 Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report.

An Aboriginal Children's Commissioner, who is culturally appraised, may be required. At this stage, it is unclear how effective the Children's Commissioner is in representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children. Australian Conservatives believe in effective Government and part of that requires effective use of resources. We actively campaign against red-tape and creating unnecessary roles within the public sector. Accordingly, we supported implementing the Children's Commissioner and we would support an additional ATSI Children's Commissioner if it can be shown that the role is necessary and doesn't duplicate the work of the existing Commissioner.

## **Support for Social Service Sector**

Australian Conservatives support the inclusion of not for profit organisations under the *Late Payment of Government Debt (Interest) Act 2013*.

## **Gambling Harm**

Australian Conservatives believe that the real focus of dealing with harm as a result of problem gambling should centre on all forms of gambling including online gambling platforms which are experiencing enormous growth. Clear evidence shows

that online gambling is most harmful due to insufficient regulated protections and restrictions. Poker machines are experiencing a decline in market share but continue to be a significant revenue raiser for the government and present a negative social cost to society. All measures to deal with the serious issue of problem gambling should be supported.

## **Health**

Australian Conservatives concur with SA Health that a state of prevention is critical in health care. We offer in theory support to a Chief Public Health Officer role to further the goal of prevention where it can be shown that this won't be an unnecessary duplication of the work of the Chief Medical Officer.

Australian Conservatives would support the trialling of comprehensive primary health care centres. We recognise the benefit to the community to be able to access quality health care, at an affordable cost, that is close to home and limits or prevents the need for hospital stays.

## **Mental Health**

Australian Conservatives support appropriate resourcing of mental health support services and support the intention of the Mental Health Strategic Plan.

Australian Conservatives have publically called for a committee to be formed to inquire into regional mental health issues. This inquiry would examine funding for mental health, lack of support services, availability of qualified staff and facilities. The committee would also take evidence from those with lived experience. The Mental Health committee would be required to report their findings and recommendations to the Rural, Regional and Agriculture Standing Committee and to parliament.

We have also committed to fund qualified psychiatric nurses on a 24/7 on-call roster in each major regional hospital emergency department. Australian Conservatives would support a South Australian wide review of mental health if this is necessary.

## **Housing**

Australian Conservatives support the Playford Model for the supply and reform of the public housing sector. The model proposes increasing the number of affordable houses, addressing the maintenance backlog of Housing SA and ensuring Housing SA properties meet the needs of existing and future tenants.

## **Justice**

Australian Conservatives continue to be highly critical of the cost of traffic fines. We would support an inquiry into the best approach to create an effective system which doesn't cause unnecessary adverse detriment whilst still upholding principles of law and justice.

## **Tax and Expenditure**

Australian Conservatives do not agree with cutting vital health and community services and will not support any move to do so.

We trust that this has clarified our support for the SACOSS 2018 SA State Election summary list of policies. We certainly look forward to continuing our working relationship with SACOSS and welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues more thoroughly as we seek to act in the best interests of your community.

I trust the above is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dennis Hood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke extending across the name.

**Hon Dennis Hood MLC**  
State Parliamentary Leader  
Australian Conservatives (SA)