

CONSTITUTION OF THE CANTERBURY GREENS

15 May 2003

1 This is the Constitution of the Canterbury Greens, a Green political organisation active in the Sydney Metropolitan region.

2 Relationship to the Australian Greens

2.1 The Canterbury Greens endorse the Charter of the Australian Greens.

2.2 This constitution is subordinate to the constitution of The Greens NSW, of which the Canterbury Greens is a member-group, which is in turn subordinate to the constitution of the Australian Greens.

2.3 The Canterbury Greens shall promptly pay affiliation/membership fees as required by The Greens NSW.

3 Aims and philosophy

The Canterbury Greens' vision for the future is predicated on the four principles described below.

I Ecological sustainability

- To maintain biodiversity, to preserve wilderness areas, to end degradation of natural ecosystems and to protect plant and animal species from extinction.
- To abandon the addiction to a perpetual growth in resource consumption and to end the pollution and degradation of land, water and air.
- To transform the nature of work and consumption so that they are safe, socially useful and environmentally benign.

II. Social equality and economic justice

- To support every person's right to a life of purpose and dignity and to the satisfaction of such needs as housing, clothing, food, community support, and personal development.
- To replace the hierarchical, competitive and oppressive values of our existing society with caring and need oriented values.
- To abolish inequalities based on gender, sexual preference, race, creed or nationality.
- Self-determination and land rights for Australia's original inhabitants.
- Respect for and recognition of the value of Aboriginal and ethnic cultures, leading to a truly multicultural Australia.

III. Grassroots democracy

- To democratise society and the economy through the devolution of decision-making powers from private industrial interests and

parliamentary institutions to workplaces and local communities.

- To create a democratically structured public sector, and small business and cooperative sectors of the economy which own and control resources to an extent which does not compromise ecological sustainability and social equality.
- To recognise the right of people in communities to assert control over all matters that affect their lives through processes that maximise community participation.
- To support the diversity in culture and opinion that exists in our society and to promote a responsible and diverse media that informs and reflects this diversity.

IV Non-violence and disarmament

- To develop a culture of non-violence, to remove the threat of war and social violence.
- Implicit in a policy of non-violence is a program of universal disarmament, both nuclear and conventional.
- To work towards the peaceful resolution of conflict and the development of tolerance, co-operation and mutual respect.
- An independent foreign policy for Australia and a defence orientation that is non-offensive and self-reliant.

4 Means

In the activities and functioning of the Canterbury Greens, our democracy is founded on the equal and inalienable rights of each member, and there is no higher authority than the collective decisions of the members. Any representatives or delegates of The Greens remain subordinate to the Group. We seek to extend membership of The Greens to all in the community who are in accord with our fundamental objectives outlined above. We do not represent or reflect the broader community in all its aspects which include racism, sexism, rule of the dollar and short-term self interest, but instead seek to gather those with a concern for the planet and its future and who are prepared to work for change in a collective manner.

Our view of social change involves more than merely the substitution of one lot of decision-makers with another lot who will act more responsibly. We aim for changes that will empower all people and allow them to act in greater harmony with each other and with the rest of nature.

We stand candidates for election to all spheres of government in order to put forward the Green agenda and to utilise the advantages that come with public office to effect change and to further promote the Green agenda.

We will be involved in grassroots campaigns which are essential if destructive and undemocratic values in the community are going to be seriously challenged. These campaigns will include:

- (a) Resistance to oppressive and destructive practices through non-violent direct action.
- (b) Education of ourselves and the community which allows us and others to analyse more rigorously, act more effectively and envision the future with more compassion and understanding.
- (c) Cooperation with progressive social movements both in Australia and overseas so that the complimentary struggles for environmental protection and human emancipation are seen as a multi-faceted and global project.

5 Decision-making

- 5.1 All decisions of the Canterbury Greens will proceed according to principles of participatory democracy.
- 5.2 All members shall be made aware by the Secretary or Convenor of meeting times and venues, and of significant proposals to be discussed. Meetings of the Canterbury Greens shall be held at least six times in each period of twelve months.
- 5.3 Five financial members shall constitute a quorum for meetings of the Canterbury Greens. If, after 30 minutes from the time appointed for the meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting shall stand adjourned, although those present may determine the date, time and venue of a subsequent meeting.
- 5.3 All people in attendance at any meeting of the Group have the right to participate in discussion. However, the meeting can decide to censure or to expel or suspend from the meeting, participants responsible for disruptive or offensive language or behaviour.
- 5.4 Decisions of the Group shall, when possible, be made according to the consensus decision-making process. When consensus cannot be reached and the decision should not be deferred, a ratio of three or more votes in favour to one vote against shall be required for the motion and/or amendments to be carried. Abstentions may be recorded but shall not count as votes for or against. Proxy or absentee votes are not admissible.
- 5.5 Members must have attended at least two meetings within the previous 12 months in order to be able to vote in meetings. Observers and non-

voting members present at a meeting can participate in discussion but may not have a role in taking the decision-making process to the voting phase (i.e. to block consensus).

- 5.6 Election of office-bearers and candidates shall be achieved by an optional-preferential secret ballot.
- 5.7 The Secretary will ensure that meeting minutes are recorded and presented to the subsequent meeting for acceptance as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

6 Membership

- 6.1 Membership of the Canterbury Greens is open to any person who:
 - 6.1.1 Agrees to abide by this Constitution, including the Charter of the Australian Greens;
 - 6.1.2 Pays an annual membership fee, the amount determined annually by the Group;
 - 6.1.3 Is not a member of a proscribed organisation. A list of proscribed organisations shall be maintained by the Secretary and shall include all those organisations proscribed by The Greens NSW, plus others added by a decision of the Canterbury Greens.
- 6.2 Membership fees shall fall due on the 1st of March each year. New members who join after 1 September can pay half the annual fee.
- 6.3 The Treasurer shall maintain the list of members, including all details legally required. The details of the membership list shall not be used for any purpose other than the business of the organisation, except where clear consent of the member concerned is given.
- 6.4 Interested members of the public can contribute an annual donation in order to be on the Canterbury Greens mailing list, which shall be maintained by the Treasurer.
- 6.5 The membership of any member shall cease in either of the following circumstances:
 - 6.5.1 Failure to pay the membership fee within two months of the due date;
 - 6.5.2 The member contests an election, without the approval of the Group, against the Group's endorsed candidate(s);
 - 6.5.3 The Group decides by the usual decision-making processes that the member has placed herself or himself outside of the Group by one or more of the following:
 - 6.5.3.1 Activities contrary to the membership criteria of the Group;
 - 6.5.3.2 Repeated disruptive behaviour within the Group or behaviour which brings the Group into disrepute.
- 6.6 Action to terminate membership under clause 6.5.3 above shall not proceed until:

- 6.6.1 Notice of motion to terminate the membership, moved by three members, is forwarded to the Convenor.
- 6.6.2 The notice of motion is circulated to all members prior to the meeting which will decide the motion.
- 6.6.3 The member has been informed of the text of the motion to terminate her or his membership, and of the date, time and venue of the meeting at which the motion is to be presented, and of their right to participate in the discussion and voting of the meeting and to address the meeting in writing. A member shall be deemed to have been properly informed if, at least ten days prior to the meeting, the Convenor shall have posted written notice to the member at the address which she or he last provided to the Group as her or his mailing address.

7 Organisation

- 7.1 In all the activities and appointments of the Canterbury Greens, attempts shall be made to ensure that there is at least 50 percent representation by women and representation by minority and disadvantaged groups.
- 7.2 The Group shall elect, at the first meeting after September 1 each year, members to the positions of:
 - 7.2.1 Convenor - responsible for organising the meeting venues, ensuring members are aware of the meeting time and place, ensuring meetings are well facilitated, and liaison with other organisations and Greens groups. The Convenor will act as public spokesperson for the group.
 - 7.2.2 Secretary - responsible for meeting minutes (recording the names of members present, recording votes, decisions made and the person(s) to carry each decision out) and their archiving, and ensuring that correspondence is appropriately responded to and brought to the meeting. When the Group is separately registered with the Australian Electoral Commission, the Secretary performs the duties of the "Registered Officer".
 - 7.2.3 Treasurer - responsible for the membership list, payment and receipt of monies for the Group and maintenance of the Group's financial books. When the Group is separately registered with the Australian Electoral Commission, the Treasurer performs the duties of the "Party Agent".
 - 7.2.4 Other positions of an ongoing nature, such as spokesperson(s) and convenors of local council working groups.
- 7.3 Meeting facilitators shall be decided at each meeting.

- 7.4 From time-to-time, the Group may choose to delegate an individual, or individuals, or to delegate an individual to convene a working group to undertake certain activities. Such individuals or working groups are subordinate to the Canterbury Greens and their duties, authority and procedures shall be determined by Canterbury Greens meetings.
- 7.5 The Group may elect convenors to lead local council working groups which shall be a focus for activities around council issues. Members shall be encouraged to participate in their relevant council working group.
- 7.6 Office-bearers and other delegated individuals shall present reports to the Group on their activities as required by the Group.
- 7.7 Any appointment made by the Group can be revoked and the position be declared vacant should a motion of "no confidence" gain the support of at least 50 percent of members present at a meeting. Any motion of "no confidence" shall be put to a meeting following circulation of notice of the motion consistent with clause 6.6 above.

8 Accountability

- 8.1 Members shall be accountable to the organisation for any actions they take on behalf of the Group.
- 8.2 Any elected representative of the Group shall attend regular meetings with the Group to discuss issues pertaining to their responsibilities.
- 8.3 The Group has a responsibility to its representatives to provide both moral and material support, and to consider the representative's responsibilities to their electorate.
- 8.4 Elected representatives of the Group shall sign a written statement that says that they will resign from their position if directed to do so by the Group. Notice of any motion to direct a representative to resign shall be put to a meeting following circulation of notice of the motion consistent with clause 6.6 above.

9 Constitutional changes

Notice of motions to amend this Constitution must be circulated to all members at least ten days before the meeting at which the motion is to be decided upon. The usual decision-making process shall be followed.