

Australian Greens beg for power-sharing arrangement with right-wing Labor government

Oscar Grenfell, Socialist Equality Party Senate candidate for New South Wales
18 May 2022

At their campaign launch on Monday night, the Greens again emphasised that their overriding ambition is to establish a power-sharing arrangement with a Labor government after the federal election on Saturday.

The event summed up the Greens abandonment of any pretense of opposition to the major parties. Their entire pitch, to big business and the political establishment, is that the Greens are a “responsible” party, committed to shoring-up the tottering parliamentary order under conditions of mass popular disaffection and fears within the ruling elite that the election will result in a hung parliament or a weak minority government.

Even the timing of the event was notable. Like the Liberal-Nationals, the Greens waited until less than a week before polling day to launch their campaign.

That is because under Australian electoral laws, the campaigns of parties with parliamentary representation receive substantial public funding prior to their official launch. Like the conservatives, the Greens were making use of anti-democratic laws aimed at ensuring the dominance of the establishment parties.

The day of the launch, the Greens listed seven policies that they would present to Labor as the basis for a coalition government. Nowhere are the policies described as non-negotiable demands. In the Greens statement, they are instead referred to as “asks.” The media widely characterised them as a “wish list.”

There is no “red line.” Everything is on the table for backroom horse-trading. As the Greens statement declared, the seven points were the basis for “negotiations in the likely event of a minority Parliament.” The party would merely “suggest” them to Labor and “push” for their implementation.

The seven points underscore the politically cynical and rotten character of the Greens’ attempts to pick up support from disaffected workers and young people. Among youth in particular there is widespread anger over the refusal of Labor and the Coalition to implement any policies addressing climate change, or soaring inequality and a mounting social crisis.

In their formal program, the Greens call for a transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2035 at the latest, a substantial

increase in taxation on billionaires and major corporations, major funding for free public education and healthcare, the halving of the defence budget, and a host of other “progressive” policies.

But the seven-points demonstrate that this program is window-dressing, aimed at winning votes. It bears no relationship to the backroom manoeuvres of Greens MPs or any other aspect of the party’s activities.

This was more or less admitted in the Greens statement calling for a coalition with Labor. The party would “still campaign on its comprehensive plan,” but “the fully-funded shortlist represented a starting point for discussions in a minority Parliament and also signalled the party’s priorities when exercising Senate balance of power in either a minority or majority parliament.”

An incredibly meagre shortlist it is. The only reference to climate change, the Greens stated *raison d’être*, is a call for “no new coal and gas mines.” Even if adopted, this policy would do nothing to reduce existing Australian emissions which, per capita, are among the highest in the world.

Amid a breakdown of the healthcare system, expressed most sharply in the crisis of public hospitals, all the Greens would advocate is the expansion of publicly-subsidised Medicare to dental and mental health treatments.

There is a soaring cost of living, with inflation pushing millions of workers to the brink of financial ruin. But all the Greens propose is the construction of a million new “affordable” homes, not even an expansion of public housing, the introduction of rent controls or any measures to address skyrocketing mortgage repayments under conditions of interest rate rises.

The Greens also call for free childcare, a proposal put forward by sections of business to ensure that parents are pushed into low-paid jobs, and the “wiping” of student debt, but not the abolition of fees or the introduction of free education. The Greens policies include an increase of unemployment and other sub-poverty welfare payments, but say nothing about the need to increase the minimum wage, or the pay of any other section of the working class.

To drive home their “fiscal responsibility,” the Greens boast that their seven-point plan would result in almost ten million dollars of “net savings to the budget.”

Even the seven-point platform is fanciful and the Greens are well aware there is no prospect of its implementation by a Labor government.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese has given a guarantee that he will allow the opening of new coal mines and he has rejected any increase to unemployment payments. Labor is seeking to outflank the Coalition from the right, pitching itself to big business as the best vehicle to implement sweeping cuts to social spending and stepped-up pro-business restructuring.

Despite all of this, Greens leader Adam Bandt proclaimed: “The Greens will kick the Liberals out and keep Labor on track.”

The duplicitous and pathetic character of these claims was summed up by the Greens’ costing declaration. “The party has also suggested revenue proposals to pay for its measures which it believes Labor could adopt, with all measures focused on making big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share of tax and none on lifting revenue on everyday people,” it stated.

The Greens will “suggest” to Albanese that he increase taxes on the corporations and the billionaires. He will decline the suggestion and the Labor-Greens coalition will continue.

This is not a hypothetical question. The Greens statement boasts that “Adam Bandt and the Greens were central to the Gillard minority government...” Elected in 2010, it was kept in office through a formal agreement with the Greens for almost three years.

The Greens highlight the Gillard government’s limited expansion of dental care coverage for children. They leave out the broader record of their last de facto coalition with Labor. The Gillard government kicked 100,000 single parents off their benefits, introduced sweeping cuts to healthcare and education and deepened the persecution of refugees.

It supported the US-led witchhunt against Julian Assange, an Australian journalist, for his exposure of American war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, as it deepened Australian involvement in those predatory, neo-colonial wars. The Greens-backed government committed to a troop surge and “counter-insurgency” operations in Afghanistan, resulting in further war crimes.

It aligned Australia with the US “pivot to Asia,” a vast US-military build-up in preparation for war with China. When Barack Obama announced these plans for a confrontation and conflict with China from the floor of the Australian parliament, Bandt and former Greens leader Bob Brown were among the first to shake his hand and fawn over the then US president.

Notably, the Greens seven-point program says nothing about war or foreign policy and nor was it mentioned at the campaign launch. This, under conditions where Labor and the Coalition are committed to more than \$600 billion in military spending over the decade, and Albanese is pitching Labor as the party

best placed to deepen Australia’s frontline role in the US drive to war with China.

The silence is a clear sign that the Greens have adopted Labor’s bellicose and militarist policies as their own. The Greens have previously promoted the anti-China campaign, and have backed the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, including the Australian provision of weapons to Washington’s puppet government in Kiev and its associated fascist paramilitaries.

The Greens have similarly dropped any mention of the coronavirus pandemic, as the bipartisan “let it rip” policies claim more than 40 lives every day and result in 50,000 or more daily cases. Like Labor, they are committed to “keeping the economy open,” to ensure corporate profits, whatever the consequences in illness and death for working people.

The Greens are a right-wing capitalist party, rooted in sections of the affluent upper middle-class. Workers and young people who want to fight war, inequality, COVID and the onslaught on social conditions should reject the Greens’ phony campaign pitch with the contempt it deserves, along with the fraud that a Labor-Greens government would represent any alternative to the Coalition.

Instead, they should turn to the socialist and internationalist perspective advanced by the Socialist Equality Party, which rejects the entire framework of parliamentary horse-trading and fights for the independent interests of the working class.

Contact the SEP:

Phone: (02) 8218 3222

Email: sep@sep.org.au

Facebook: [SocialistEqualityPartyAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/SocialistEqualityPartyAustralia)

Twitter: [@SEP_Australia](https://twitter.com/SEP_Australia)

Instagram: [socialistequalityparty_au](https://www.instagram.com/socialistequalityparty_au)

TikTok: [@SEP_Australia](https://www.tiktok.com/@SEP_Australia)

Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Suite 906, 185 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)