

Newcastle Greens Policy on
A Caring and Inclusive Community
Celebrate diversity and provide opportunity



Social and economic justice is a core principle of The Greens. Newcastle Greens have been at the forefront of making our city a caring, inclusive community. Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people it serves, and so Newcastle City Council is well placed to actively engage with its community to meet their needs and expectations, to monitor emerging community issues and ensure effective community participation and consultation.

Newcastle Greens believe that:

- A caring and inclusive community celebrates diversity and provides opportunity for each person to participate in meaningful and fulfilling activities in their city;
- Creating such a community requires decision-making, policies and programs informed by genuine, ongoing community engagement with sufficient information to allow real participation; and,
- The liveability and cohesion of a community depends on residents' participation in community social, planning and political activities using a full range of informative, consultative, participatory and deliberative community engagement processes.

A thorough analysis of community services, identifying strengths and weaknesses, needs to be carried out if Council is to achieve these goals. A comprehensive Community Development Program should include Council's oversight and coordination of community services and collaboration with individuals, agencies and other service providers.

Newcastle Greens will work to:

Develop appropriate structures and processes within Council that will:

- Conduct a full analysis of community needs including a genuine and comprehensive community consultation process.
- Establish Council committees with community representatives from all sectors to take part in decision-making and planning.
- Promote an actively engaged, community-oriented Council that goes beyond an information-giving service.
- Promote the active engagement of community organisations and individuals in the development and evaluation of policy, and community projects, programs and activities.
- Provide a hub for community services, and assistance for community groups to gain support for the development of grant applications for funding community-based projects, program and activities.

Ensure that Council's rating structure is as socially equitable as possible, and that the social equity impact of Council's fees and charges is fully and properly considered.

Ensure Council maintains and improves its services for:

- Early childhood including child development programs and childcare.
- Children, young people and youth.
- Older people.
- People with a disability, and people with special access needs, maximising access for the whole community.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Migrant, international students and refugees.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.
- People experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

Ensure that Council includes all citizens in its wide range of services by:

- Coordinating and facilitating Council and community-run events and activities that target and include all social and cultural groups.
- Maintaining current community-based and run multi-functional community centres and exploring the viability of establishing new ones.
- Developing a city-wide cultural program that nurtures and celebrates the diversity of our citizens, and provides opportunities for people of all walks of life to learn from one another.

Support newly arrived and short-term residents, including domestic and international students, refugees, and immigrants to participate meaningfully in civic life by engaging them in active consultation and providing relevant services and appropriate advice, advocacy and information.

Ensure that Council recognises the needs of children, young people and youth valuing their input as citizens by:

- Establishing an accessible consultation process whereby parents, childcare workers and professionals, community representatives, and Council discuss children's issues as they arise.
- Promoting and supporting community-based, not-for-profit childcare centres.
- Meeting the developmental, health and social needs of young children through the appropriate provision of Council support and facilities.
- Coordinating services, events and activities that are aimed at engaging young people and youth in meaningful participation.
- Revitalising the Youth Council, and giving it the status of a Council committee.
- Supporting venues for young people and youth (including The Loft) that provide space and opportunity to develop their talents.

Continue and enhance artistic and cultural programs by:

- Maintaining and - where possible - improving Newcastle's public galleries, museums and libraries – preventing library closures, putting a stop to the current practice of book-pulping and re-establishing the annual sale of surplus library stock.
- Commissioning public and community artworks, local cultural and historical studies, including a comprehensive social history of Newcastle.
- Supporting, and re-establishing Council oversight of, Livesites as an innovative CBD and city-wide program.

Foster a culture of mutual respect and reconciliation between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens by:

- Promoting cultural programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that support Indigenous cultural needs and self-determination.
- Engaging in ongoing and full consultation with the ATSI community through the GURAKI committee, an Aboriginal facilitator/liaison officer and other appropriate mechanisms.
- Ensuring Aboriginal people's needs are addressed, including family support services, health, housing and employment opportunities.

Strengthen Council's support for the City's senior citizens, and people with limited mobility through consultation, committee representation, and timely provision of relevant services.

Support initiatives that enhance lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) understanding, culture, activities by:

- Assisting community social events and cultural activities run by the LGBTI community.
- Encouraging and hosting community forums and educational seminars about LGBTI issues.
- Seeking to reduce discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity.

Create and maintain public spaces and activities that foster an inclusive community.