

HEARING BENAMBRA

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Hearing Benambra is a project undertaken by Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) which seeks to understand the experiences and priorities of local women and gender diverse community members, identifying the issues that they wish to be brought to you - our local candidates. We have taken our survey postcards to events across Benambra and spoken with residents over the past weeks, collating the information gathered in this document.

We ask that you, as a local candidate in the upcoming state election, take the time to respond and highlight what actions you intend to take to address these concerns.

We will be sharing your responses directly with the women who left their details with us, as well as across our social media.

How was the data collected?

Members of the WHGNE team were present at events across Benambra in order to instigate conversations, answer questions, and engage in conversations about the concerns and needs of the local residents. Postcards were created to facilitate the data collection process, allowing residents to respond with key demographic information alongside what matters to them in the upcoming election. The quantitative and qualitative data was then collated by a member of staff, and has been presented in this document.

Who responded?

We had responses via the postcard survey from 33 individuals, along with two more in depth conversations with local residents. While there were 3 respondents who do not live in the Benambra electorate, they work and/or study in the region and we felt that it was relevant to include their voices in this piece. 70% of the participants were from the Towong shire, with others representing the Wodonga and Indigo shires respectively. Responses were gathered from a broad range of ages, from under 18 to 85 years of age. All of the respondents in this survey identified as women. All of the respondents in this survey identified as women.

What now?

This document contains a summary of our findings, centered on six key areas: education, housing, gender equality, transport, environment, and integrity, alongside a space for the additional contributions made by local women.

We invite each candidate to respond using this document, considering how they intend to address each issue raised if elected as the representative for Benambra in the upcoming election.

Please send your response to whealth@whealth.com.au by November 16th

EDUCATION



Education was listed as a key concern for over 60% of the respondents, with ages ranging from under 18 to over 85 showing that this is a vital policy area for the residents of Benambra. One respondent spoke about the importance of 'educating young minds', while others spoke of the value of an informed community. Another respondent asked us to consider accessibility, with apprentice wages proving a barrier to further education.

Our election commitments include \$1.46 billion to bring public schools up to the full funding recommended by the Gonski review. This would increase funding for schools across Benambra, allowing them to hire more teachers and support staff with better pay and conditions, reduce class sizes and better support disadvantaged students. It would also mean that we would make public education genuinely free by getting rid of out-of-pocket expenses for things like "voluntary" fees, subject costs and digital devices.

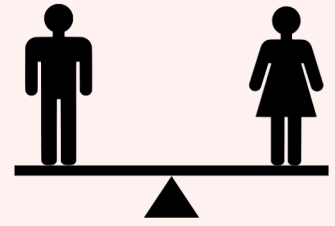
HOUSING



Housing was one of the most frequently expressed areas of concerns for the residents of Benambra, being a key area for almost 75% of the respondents. The lack of affordable rental properties across the electorate is intensified in outlying communities where housing support services provide limited outreach. We heard stories of aging parents being forced to camp in their children's front yard due to the lack of suitable housing. As one woman wrote, "housing is a basic right and must be addressed!"



GENDER EQUALITY



The issue of Gender Equality was considered a key policy area for over 45% of respondents, with particularly strong responses from women under 35 living in Benambra. We heard about the need for more Family Violence education and outreach in the community of Tallangatta, with community members unaware of resources to support their own safety. Another respondent spoke of the lack of gender equality in healthcare, and a need for the conversation about women's health to include menopause.

Our gender equality commitments include:

- \$15m for greater access to abortion, including in rural areas.
- Investing in additional clinical services for trans, gender-diverse and non-binary Victorians.
- More funding for the services that women need when they are leaving a family violence situation, including specialised community legal services (\$20m).
- A four day working week trial in the public and private sectors, which would reduce gender inequality in the workplace and at home.

TRANSPORT



The issue of Transport was chosen by 45% of respondents as mattering to them, because “keeping community connected in rural/isolated areas is important”. The lack of public transport in outlying areas of Benambra was a concern for residents of the Towong and Indigo shires, and the lack of reliability when travelling to Melbourne was cited as causing significant stress for respondents. The condition of roads was also mentioned by multiple residents, and is of particular concern following our recent weather events.

Our election commitments include developing a long-overdue integrated transport plan for Victoria, which would identify transport priorities. This is likely to include significant improvements to rural buses.

We recently announced a ‘Climate Ticket’ that would allow people to travel on public transport across Victoria for free or with significantly reduced fares to reduce carbon emissions and lower the cost-of-living. It would be just \$3 a day for full fare travel anywhere in Victoria, \$1 for concession, and free for under 21s.

We also believe that rural roads need to be maintained properly.

ENVIRONMENT



The Environment was chosen as a key area for over 70% of respondents, with a broad variety of input as to what that meant to them: support for solar energy, housing developments that encourage self-sufficiency, more playgrounds to encourage outdoor play with kids, and better and safer footpaths. The environment was an issue that drew responses from Benambra residents between 18 and 85, highlighting how vitally important this issue is across demographics.

Our election commitments include a \$1 billion per year Zero Extinction Fund. Among other things this would pay for a large-scale program to restore private and public land with weeding, invasive species management, fencing waterways, tree planting and restoring grasslands and wetlands, creating thousands of jobs along the way.

We're committed to increasing Victoria's Renewable Energy Target to 100% by 2030, and have committed \$10 billion to renewables, creating clean green energy and jobs.

INTEGRITY



Over 55% of respondents selected integrity as one of the core issues that mattered to them in the upcoming election, highlighting the importance of having a representative government with accountability. One woman from Towong felt so strongly about this issue she circled it repeatedly, and commented that “without integrity, the rest doesn’t matter”.

Our integrity commitments include:

- Increasing the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission's powers and funding.
- Creating an independent Parliamentary Integrity Commissioner to oversee MP behaviour.
- Implementing campaign spending caps and truth in political advertising laws, and ending dodgy preference deals.
- Publishing ministerial diaries, so we all know who powerful politicians are meeting with.
- Establishing real rules and penalties for MPs, Ministers and lobbyists who do the wrong thing.

AND MORE...

In gathering information from the residents from Benambra, we gave space for women to contribute further issues that mattered to them.

We heard about the importance of farming being a part of the political discourse, the significance of prioritising healthcare and funding mental health support, and the importance of Indigenous rights and voices in Victorian politics.

And perhaps most importantly - how are you assisting women, gender diverse, elderly & vulnerable people in our rural/remote area?

In addition to those outlined in response to the previous questions, other relevant Greens policies and proposals include:

- Tackling cost of living through cheaper energy bills from a publicly owned energy retailer, building more affordable housing and capping rent increases, making public schools genuinely free and increasing wages for public sector workers by lifting Labor's wages cap.
- Investing in additional clinical services for trans, gender diverse and non-binary Victorians
- No more privatisations, so our essential services meet the needs of people, not corporate profits.
- Amending the Equal Opportunity Act to give the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission the power to enforce the existing duty to take measures to eliminate sexual harassment and create a similar enforceable duty to eliminate sexual violence.

I encourage you to explore our policies and platforms at <https://greens.org.au/vic> and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out.