

# JUST IN TIME

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## NSW STATE ELECTIONS 2015

### The Key Issues.

*We are now six months away from our next chance to decide who represents us in the state of NSW. The government that we elect will speak for us on critical issues of HEALTH, HOUSING, and JUSTICE, among other things, so it's important that we're informed about the choices we make on polling day. Start thinking about it with our handy guide.*

#### Housing

**THE ISSUES:**

- More than 267,000 households in NSW live in housing stress
- There are 70,000 applicants on a wait-list for social housing, and this number is ever-increasing. Our housing affordability needs are not being met.



**THE SOLUTIONS:**

**LIBERAL PARTY?** The current government has not shown affordable housing to be a priority, having sold off \$500 million worth of social housing in Millers Point. It has indicated that this revenue will be filtered back into housing, but no clear plans have been laid. The NSW Liberals website states that the government "is interested in opportunities to work with non-government organisations and the private sector" to "increase the size of the social housing portfolio".

**LABOR PARTY?** No clear policy outline, but the party has opposed Liberal cuts to social housing and foregrounds their general philosophy that "everyone deserves a decent home".

**GREENS?** Promise to lobby for an additional \$900 million over three years for social housing, and to introduce legislation guaranteeing affordability in new developments.

#### Prisons

**THE ISSUES:**

- Our politicians are stuck in a "tough on crime" phase due to the media furore around things like alcohol-fuelled violence. But harsher sentencing and increased police presence is usually not effective in reducing crime.
- The back-flip on NSW Bail Act reforms mean that bail is now being treated as a luxury, not a basic democratic right.



- Over-representation of Indigenous Australians in our justice system, and we need to examine laws that may discriminate against these populations.

**THE SOLUTIONS:**

**LIBERAL PARTY?** This year, Baird's government made changes to the Bail Act that undermine key democratic rights like the presumption of innocence. They also advocate mandatory sentencing and increased police presence.

**LABOR PARTY?** The Labor Party did not oppose changes to the Bail Act. They promise more police, but also emphasise prevention in their policies.

**GREENS?** Philosophy focused on prevention and early intervention, and promise to lobby for "draconian" changes to the Bail Act to be repealed. Explicitly oppose discrimination in the legal system.

## Health

### THE ISSUES:

- The primary issue is the cut to funding on a national level as part of the Federal Budget. While this is not a NSW-only problem, less federal funding means state governments must do more heavy lifting to keep hospitals afloat.
- Health professionals have claimed that the (federal) GP co-payment would “crush” NSW hospitals.

### THE SOLUTIONS:

**LIBERAL PARTY?** Premier Mike Baird promised to “take up the fight” with the federal government to avoid stress on the NSW health system, but has taken little action. In September, his government voted against a bill that would prevent patients from paying tax on emergency visits.

**LABOR PARTY?** Has been critical of Baird’s failure to stand up to Abbott’s government on this issue. They assert that “Labor will always defend a person’s right to access healthcare in a NSW hospital regardless of their financial position.”

**GREENS?** While the Greens have no detailed health platform with which to lead the state, they are advocates of preventative health care, affordability and access, and promise to lobby the incumbent government to achieve these aims.

## Micro-parties and Independents?

Small parties (like the Christian Democrats and Shooters and Fishers Party) and independent candidates may come to hold a balance of power as a result of the state election. While a diversity of parties and representatives is always a good thing, it’s important to be informed about the candidates you choose and where they direct their preferences. Stay informed about your candidates by following your local news and checking out <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/> closer to election day.

## REFLECTION

*“Never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity!”*

*Everybody, according to his or her particular opportunities and responsibilities, should be able to make a personal contribution to putting an end to so many social injustices.”*

- Pope Francis

*Just in Time* is an occasional publication of the Conference of Leaders in Religious Institutes in NSW.

## Infrastructure/Transport

### THE ISSUES:

- This is the platform about which Liberal and Labor are most vocal. The election could be won or lost on this issue.
- While infrastructure and transport are not traditionally issues of social justice, it’s vital that they are delivered equitably and affordably. Reliable access to basic needs like transport, electricity, and internet are necessary for people in all parts of NSW to make a living and participate in society.

### THE SOLUTIONS:

**LIBERAL PARTY?** Has increased public transport services to parts of NSW, and placed emphasis on building roads. However, Baird plans to privatise electricity in NSW, which could lead to massive regional job losses and rising electricity prices.

**LABOR PARTY?** Has vowed to oppose a power sell-off, and revitalise infrastructure in areas like the Hunter. Wants to speed up construction on roads.

**GREENS?** Policies foreground alternative energy sources; rail and buses over use of cars; more cycling paths; and full public ownership of all services like electricity and water.



## TO-DO LIST

- **Stay informed** about your local candidates and the issues in your electorate by reading your local news and attending community meetings if possible. Find your candidates on [www.vote.nsw.gov.au](http://www.vote.nsw.gov.au).

- **Join or volunteer with a group that works towards issues you care about.** Not only will you be doing something positive for your community, but you will find yourself more informed in general. Try [WelcomeToAustralia.org.au](http://WelcomeToAustralia.org.au), [AimeMentoring.com](http://AimeMentoring.com), [Care.org.au](http://Care.org.au).

- **Follow** the Social Justice Committee of CLRI (NSW) on Twitter for news and opportunities for action: [www.twitter.com/clrinsw](http://www.twitter.com/clrinsw)