



Australian Citizens Party

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Return government to the people!

Take back national and economic sovereignty

The Australian Citizens Party strives to return Australia to Australian citizens, and to co-operate for peace and goodwill internationally. Our policies aspire to accomplish this goal by retaining the decision-making powers on national issues within Australia.

1. National sovereignty

Return to independent foreign policy; war powers to Parliament

1.1 Return to independent foreign policy

End Australia's foreign policy subservience to the USA and UK by asserting an independent foreign policy in Australia's national interest. A truly independent Australia would oppose disastrous regime-change wars and the dangerous Anglo-American strategic escalation against China and Russia, and independently oppose the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, including through an arms embargo on Israel, without waiting for US permission; withdraw from the Five Eyes spying and foreign interference network; and prioritise developing good relations and economic cooperation with the nations in our region. This would include joining our regional neighbours and most of the rest of the world in participating in the Belt and Road Initiative to raise global living standards through infrastructure investments (which Australia initially welcomed before bowing to pressure from the USA); embracing the multi-polar world order that is now a reality; collaborating with the expanding BRICS partnership; and working with like-minded countries to support the "two-state solution" and promote peace between Israel and Palestine and their neighbours.

1.2 No war with China

Going along with dangerous US provocations against our largest trading partner that risk war is contrary to Australia's national interest. Withdraw from the military arrangements and international partnerships locking Australia into the USA and UK's agenda to confront China, and prioritise diplomacy to resolve tensions respectfully, starting with reiterating Australia's One China Policy applied to the People's Republic of China since 1972.



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1.3 No AUKUS

A vast territory yet connected to no country by land, a small population yet concentrated in a few major cities, Australia's unique defence challenges require unique defence strategy and capabilities. Not only is AUKUS unfit for purpose, but it also makes Australia a small piece in America's military power to maintain the USA's hegemony which is waning after decades of wars all over the world. The colossal waste of money on AUKUS not only gives us obsolete submarines paid for by us, crewed by us, but commanded by the USA, it also makes sure our defence technologies remain inferior to that of America's for at least decades. The \$368 billion could instead be spent on improving our economy, living standards, as well as developing defence expertise and technologies that lead to building truly sovereign capabilities that meet our unique challenges.

1.4 War powers reform – only Parliament declares war

Australia must learn from the mistakes of following the United States and Britain into one failed war after another, which, except for WWII, were not our business and not in our national interest. Renounce any more involvement including supply of weapons, ammunition, parts and money for disastrous regime-change wars, and reform the war powers to replace the prime minister's prerogative to exercise the Governor-General's power to unilaterally declare war, with a vote by Parliament on any military action that commits Australian military assets to fight overseas. Deploying ADF assets overseas must require approval by a majority of parliamentarians through a joint sitting of the Parliament. Details of the parliamentary debate can be confidential for national security reasons, but the voting record must be made public.

1.5 An Australian republic

The ACP supports Australia becoming a republic, with executive government directly accountable to the people. With its current constitutional arrangements—established by an Act of Britain's Parliament—Australia has never truly been a sovereign country, and no Australians, including First Nations Australians, are truly sovereign. Becoming a republic through a considered, deliberative process in which *all* Australians of all heritages—First Nations, white Anglo-Saxon, and immigrant—have input would allow all Australians to share equal ownership of their nation.



2. Economic sovereignty

Return Australia's banking services to the people

2.1 Return to a government bank – Aussie Post Bank

Break the oligopoly of the Big Four banks, which are arrogantly (mindlessly) closing branches, debanking lawful businesses, restricting credit for productive purposes and reducing access to and availability of cash. We MUST establish a public Aussie Post Bank. Using post offices as branches (and thus ensuring the viability of the Australia Post network, including licensed post offices), the Aussie Post Bank will guarantee full, low-cost banking services (deposits and loans), 100% deposit security, and guarantee access to cash for all Australian individuals, businesses, and communities.

2.2 Aussie Post Bank to invest in Australia's infrastructure

The public Aussie Post Bank will allow local, state, and federal governments to borrow from Australians for infrastructure projects that build Australia and create jobs, ending Australia's reliance on foreign borrowing, "asset-recycling" privatisation, and expensive public-private partnerships (PPPs). The public bank will enable Australia to again embark on transformative, nation-building water, power, communications, and transportation infrastructure projects, in the spirit of the Snowy Mountains Scheme, which will develop and support industries and economic opportunities, and spark a population boom, in regional Australia. Priority projects include the Bradfield water diversion scheme in North Queensland, the Iron Boomerang railway between Queensland and Western Australia, and high-speed rail between the state capitals. Australians will be able to invest their superannuation and retirement savings in the capital of the national public bank, which investments will be fully guaranteed by the government.

2.3 Aussie Post Bank to support Australian manufacturing and family farms

The public Aussie Post Bank will provide long-term, low-interest credit on flexible terms for Australian manufacturing and agricultural industries. To revive manufacturing, the national bank will back local innovations that too often are lost offshore, so they are developed and manufactured domestically. For agriculture, it will support family farms through the ups and downs of seasons and markets and with their investment needs. The public bank will be a repository of financial, industrial, and trade expertise and advice for the government and industries. Expanding manufacturing and agricultural industries will require a concerted upgrade of skills training and technical education services.



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2.4 Protect homeowners and farmers from mass evictions

As of June 2024, more than 1.6 million Australians or 30.3% of property owners who hold a mortgage are facing mortgage stress, according to a report by Roy Morgan. As interest rates remain the highest since 2011, on record high levels of household debt, the danger of a housing crash, which risks a banking crash, requires protection for homeowners and farmers from mass evictions. The ACP would declare a foreclosure moratorium that keeps families in their homes while the government directs a reorganisation of failing banks, including write-downs of mortgage debt.

Through their policies that encouraged the banks to concentrate their lending on mortgages at the expense of the rest of the economy, the government, Reserve Bank, and bank regulator APRA inflated house prices into a speculative bubble, which they have continued to prop up, making housing unaffordable for young families; therefore, the government bears responsibility for ensuring households survive adverse events that result from these policies. In the event of a crash the foreclosure moratorium will enable the government to manage it in an orderly way to ensure nobody loses their family home or farm, and avert a banking meltdown.

2.5 Return to a secure banking system with safety for deposits—no 'bail-in'

Immediately amend the *Banking Act 1959* to remove the 2018 "conversion and write-off" provision applying to "any other instruments" that could be used to seize the savings deposits of Australians to prop up failing banks. While the Australian government denies this power could be used to bail in savings deposits, it is committed to implementing the bail-in policy of the Financial Stability Board (FSB) at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel, Switzerland, which explicitly does include deposits; the proposed amendment would remove all doubt.

Enact the ACP's Banking System Reform (Separation of Banks) Bill, introduced in 2018 and 2019 but not passed, to mandate a full separation of deposit-taking banks from speculative, and higher-risk, investment banking and all other financial services. Modelled on the USA's successful *Glass-Steagall Act 1933* — which protected Americans from banking crises for 66 years until its ill-fated repeal in 1999 led to the 2008 Wall Street crash — the ACP's bank separation law will give Australians confidence in the security of the banking system, and divert the banks away from financial speculation and back to serving the real economy. It will also make the bank regulator APRA (Australian Prudential Regulation Authority) accountable to Parliament rather than the Bank for International Settlements.

Moreover, deposits in the public Aussie Post Bank will be 100% guaranteed by the government.



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2.6 Keep Parliament sovereign over the Reserve Bank

Oppose the RBA Reforms Bill, so as to keep Section 11 of the *Reserve Bank Act 1959*, which enshrines the elected Parliament as the ultimate authority over the financial system, not the unelected RBA Board. Furthermore, retain Section 36 of the *Banking Act 1959* to keep the RBA's power to direct the lending policy of the private banks, which should be used as a second tool to fight inflation, and retain as an objective of the RBA's monetary policy decisions the promotion "of the wealth and prosperity of the people of Australia".

2.7 Return to proper banking service standards

Implement the recommendations of the Senate inquiry into regional bank closures: to designate banking and access to cash an essential service, which imposes a legal obligation on the banks and the government; and make the banking code of practice mandatory, not voluntary—end self-regulation.



3. Return integrity to public governance

3.1 Abolish and replace the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC)

Overhaul corporate regulation currently undertaken by ASIC by implementing the recommendations of the Bragg Senate inquiry to abolish ASIC and replace it with a companies regulator and a specialised financial conduct authority. Replace ASIC's hands-off philosophy of *caveat emptor* – “let the buyer beware”—which allowed financial misconduct to flourish, with an emphasis on “seller beware”, enforced by criminal prosecutions of financial predators instead of token fines paid by bank shareholders.

3.2 National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)

Clearly define NACC's responsibilities within the cohort of federal agencies so it cannot shirk its duty to improve integrity in governance. The decision by the NACC to not launch a fresh investigation into the robodebt scandal brought nearly 900 complaints, many of which allege corrupt conduct or maladministration by the NACC itself. NACC's decision was because there already had been an investigation by a royal commission, and five of the six public officials referred to it by the royal commission were also subject to an inquiry by the Australian Public Service Commission. This inter-agency responsibility mismatch and overlap seriously undermines the public's trust in the NACC and must be fixed.

3.3 Ban corporate donations – only voters donate

Ban political donations by any corporate entity. Corporations cannot donate shareholders' funds, and unions cannot donate members' funds. If individual union members want to donate to a political party, they can donate directly. Anyone who wishes to contribute is free to do so in their own name provided they are citizens of Australia. It is solely the citizens' responsibility to choose our own government, and such responsibility must be carried out without interference from those that have no right to vote in Australian elections.

3.4 Put 'service' back into public service

Instead of hiring public servants who are genuine about serving the people, the government departments outsource too much work to expensive consultants whose priorities are more billable hours, securing more contracts, and as seen in the PwC scandal giving unfair advantages to their corporate clients. Utilisation of external expertise is necessary from time to time to enable the government to provide better services. But recruiting and retaining genuine public servants must take precedence over outsourcing.



3.5 Encourage investment in the real economy, discourage financialisation and speculation

The fundamental function of the financial system is to facilitate, serve and improve the real economy which produces real goods and services. Financialisation, on the other hand, is the process of the financial system serving itself, disconnected from any purpose in the real economy. As shown by the global financial crisis 2008 caused by America's failure to rein in speculation on financial products, financialisation can cause major disruption and destruction of the global economy. Australia must safeguard its economy by implementing prudent financial regulations, as well as co-operate with our key trading partners to boost real and productive economy. The ACP advocates replacing the GST, which is a tax on the real economy, with a 0.1% tax on turnover of foreign exchange speculation (excluding businesses with legitimate reasons), and OTC derivatives speculation, which would raise more than the GST.

3.6 Return justice to financial victims

Consistent with the human rights principle "Equality of Arms", establish an independent bank-funded specialist legal aid cell to represent bank victims when they are subject to legal action by a bank. Compel the banks and other financial institutions to fully compensate all their financial victims, including the tens of thousands of cases from the decades before the 2018 banking royal commission. These victims deserve justice, not to have their cases swept under the carpet. Given that many victims have languished in ruin for years, or like the elderly victims of Sterling First are extremely vulnerable, the government should expedite justice by paying the compensation in advance and recouping the funds from the financial institutions through levies.

3.7 Protect whistleblowers

Transparency is critical to the health of democracy. Whistleblowers help maintain transparency by exposing wrongdoings within the system that are not always visible to the public. The prosecution of Julian Assange, war crime whistleblower David McBride, Timor-Leste bugging scandal whistleblower Witness K and his lawyer Bernard Collaery, and ATO whistleblower Richard Boyle shows gross inadequacy in our whistleblower protection law and practice.

In addition to strengthening the *Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Act* which currently gives very limited options for whistleblowers exposing misconduct in areas related to intelligence and national security, Australia must establish an independent whistleblower commission to provide guidance to would-be whistleblowers to maximise their chance to be protected by the *PID Act*.



3.8 A humane, visionary immigration policy

We are a country of immigrants who helped to build Australia into a great nation. Politicising Australia's immigration policies does nothing to advance Australia's interests. We must end the institutional mistreatment of asylum seekers and refugees, but the sustainable way forward is to help the Global South achieve real economic development through international cooperation.

For the sake of Australia's future, we must return to a visionary immigration policy that welcomes people of all faiths and races, through long-term intake planning not just to ensure our infrastructure is capable of supporting the increased population, but also to encourage immigrants to settle all across regional and rural Australia, which is crying out for population growth, and not just in two or three major capital cities. With this approach, Australia could maintain a high immigration rate, but spread out across Australia the population growth would be almost imperceptible.



4. Return to affordable housing

4.1 Aussie Post Bank to fund a National Housing Authority to coordinate with the states

Establish a National Housing Authority to recommend necessary assistance to housing authorities in each state, including assistance on finance, building materials and labour. The public Aussie Post Bank will provide loans to state housing authorities, at the recommendation of the National Housing Authority, to develop rental properties that charge only economic rents rather than market rates.

4.2 Negative gearing

Abolish negative gearing for properties sold under a certain price (the threshold), with new built exempted. For existing assets, negative gearing still applies until the property is sold. The goal is to free up and encourage more supply of affordable housing and put downward pressure on the lower end of the housing market. Given that property price varies vastly between different regions, the exact threshold will be determined for each region after consultation with local authorities and reviewed on a regular basis.

4.3 Capital gains tax

Halve the capital gains tax discount from 50% to 25% for assets sold under a certain price (the threshold). This will result in a decrease in tax concession for investors in "cheap" properties, and therefore reduce speculative behaviour in the lower end of the housing market. The exact threshold will be determined for each region after consultation with local authorities and reviewed on a regular basis.



5. Revitalise our healthcare system

5.1 Expand healthcare resources

The government's own report estimates that Australia is short about 2,460 full-time equivalent GPs, and the shortage will rise to 5,560 by 2033. Due to decades of ideologically driven under-resourcing, profiteering, and outsourcing to management consultants, Australia's public healthcare system was overwhelmed even before the COVID-19 pandemic, but instead of recognising the pandemic as a wake-up call to permanently expand healthcare resources, to both meet the public health challenge and establish a much higher standard of healthcare delivery for all Australians into the future, both Federal and State governments have overseen woefully inadequate responses.

Australia must fund more medical school and nursing school places to train more doctors and nurses. Mobilise a dramatic increase in clinical staff (paramedics, nurses and doctors), equipment and technology, and beds and hospitals, to address the crisis besetting every aspect of the public healthcare system — ambulance services, public hospitals, regional health care, mental health, disability services, and aged care.

5.2 Royal Commission into COVID-19 response

Without prejudice to the outcome, the ACP supports a Royal Commission into all aspects of the COVID-19 response, to learn lessons from the experience that can be applied to any future events. The Royal Commission should have multiple commissioners, be open-ended timewise, hold all hearings in public, and not limit its enquiries in any area related to the public health and political response to COVID-19. Only if there is full transparency around consequential events such as COVID-19 will the public trust their governing officials.



6. Return to energy security

6.1 Return to state ownership of electricity.

Australia had a reliable, world-leading electricity system when it was entirely government-owned, but since privatisation it has become chaotic and unreliable. The Commonwealth government should lead the states back to public ownership. While scientists around the world have been making great advances in all forms of energy generation, storage and distribution, including nuclear energy, Australia's major parties are only interested in ideological battles. Energy policy, vital to a country's economy, must not be politicised by politicians appealing to competing interests of private investors, whether in fossil fuels or renewables; with public ownership private interests do not get to participate in, and distort, the technology debate.

6.2 Repeal the prohibition on nuclear power.

Australia's prohibition on nuclear energy makes us the only country in the world that denies itself the possibility of further developing not only one of the major energy technologies, but one which the EU has classified as "green energy". In recent decades, while the renewable energy sector has advanced remarkably owing to the scientists' tremendous work, great progress has also been achieved in making nuclear reactors exceedingly safe, and in reprocessing nuclear waste.

Renewables were labelled "too expensive" and "unreliable" not long ago, while other countries worked tirelessly to make it more affordable and efficient. Now the other side of the political spectrum is labelling nuclear energy "too costly". As our politicians indulge themselves in political debates, others are working on developing new technologies. Nuclear energy, particularly nuclear fusion, could be future-defining.

The ACP believes that the same open-mindedness that was afforded to renewable energy must be given to nuclear energy, so that Australia at least has a chance to catch up and hopefully lead the world.



7. Invest in national food security and fuel security

7.1 Fuel security

The Australian Citizens Party will always fight for Australia's independence to avoid being involved in meaningless wars. But even wars elsewhere may impact our national food and fuel security. The world is becoming more volatile, so the need is urgent. Now, fuel importers are only required to hold baseline stocks for 27 days for petrol, 32 days for diesel, and 27 days for jet fuel. Australia needs to significantly increase the minimum stockholding obligation, so we have adequate time to find alternative solutions if we are struck by a major disruption.

Furthermore, the ACP would prioritise expanding Australia's domestic refining capacity, including with investment from the public Aussie Post bank, and proposes reviving the 1974-76 Petroleum and Minerals Authority, to have a state-owned resources company that would guarantee domestic fuel security.

7.2 Food security

Prioritise policies that support Australia's family farmers who, unlike corporate agribusinesses, guarantee the nation's food security. These policies include: cheap flexible credit from the public Aussie Post Bank; parity pricing that guarantees cost of production; expanded domestic production of farm inputs, including fertiliser and fuel (local refining and storage); tariff protection from free trade dumping; sensible land clearing and fuel reduction burning for fire protection; end Murray-Darling Basin water speculation to return more water to farms; regional infrastructure to support industries and towns; and encourage population growth in regional Australia to expand the permanent agricultural labour force.

7.3 Live export

The ACP supports the live export industry, which provides affordable protein to millions of people in low-income countries. Like all industries it should be adequately regulated so standards are maintained.

7.4 End the Coles-Woolies duopoly

Break the market dominance of the Coles-Woolworths duopoly by reforming national competition policy to encourage producers to bargain collectively to increase their bargaining power, ensure a level playing field for alternative retailers to expand their market share, and legislate divestment powers to break up the duopoly if Coles and Woolworths continue to abuse their market power.



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