

# HEAR OUR VOICE POLICY STATEMENTS

## INEQUALITY

Inequality in Australia has increased during the past decade.

Hear Our Voice believes that inequality is not only about income, it is also about access and opportunities. If access to affordable housing, decent schools, quality health services and employment opportunities are not available or affordable inequality increases.

Hear Our Voice believes that over the past decade the wealth of young Australians has declined, while it has increased for older Australians. Unemployment rates for young Australians are causing the problem and it is difficult for them to improve their wealth status as fewer of them can afford to buy a home.

Hear Our Voice acknowledges that the most disadvantaged group in Australia is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Their unemployment rates are much higher than other Australians, and their life expectancy is much shorter than the rest of society. Hear Our Voice supports programs and initiatives which improve the living conditions and financial circumstances of Indigenous peoples.

Hear Our Voice believes that children who grow up in poverty are more likely to have learning difficulties, drop out of school, become addicted to drugs, commit crimes, be unemployed, have children at an early age so we support initiatives that help break the cycle of poverty from one generation to the next.

Hear Our Voice supports policies, including tax reform, that will lessen the gap between the wealthy and working poor.

Hear Our Voice supports Australia's commitment to the worldwide Millennium Development Goals (MDG), to help make poverty history on a global scale, and we call upon the Australian government to meet its obligations.

Hear Our Voice endorses the MDGs which aim to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality by two thirds for children under five, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development.

Hear Our Voice supports an increase in our overseas aid budget and we believe the government should use the MDGs to shape a range of policies, including

trade, debt and the environment, which all impact significantly on people living in poverty.

Hear Our Voice supports lifting our foreign aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2010 and to 0.7% by 2015.