

CONSTITUTION OF THE PORT JACKSON GREENS

Revised and approved by the Port Jackson Greens on 22 August 2011

1. PREAMBLE

This is the Constitution of the Port Jackson Greens, a Green political organisation active in the Sydney Metropolitan region and specifically within the Leichhardt Council Local Government Area.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS

2.1 The Port Jackson Greens endorse the Charter of the Australian Greens.

2.2 This constitution is subordinate to the constitution of The Greens NSW, of which the Port Jackson Greens is a member-group, which is in turn subordinate to the constitution of the Australian Greens.

2.3 The Port Jackson Greens shall promptly pay affiliation/membership fees as required by The Greens NSW.

3. AIMS AND PHILOSOPHY

The Port Jackson Greens' vision for the future is predicated on the four principles described below.

I. ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

- To maintain biodiversity, to preserve wilderness areas, to end degradation of natural ecosystems and to protect plant and animal species from extinction.
- To abandon the addiction to a perpetual growth in resource consumption and to end the pollution and degradation of land, water and air.

- To transform the nature of work and consumption so that they are safe, socially useful and environmentally benign.

II. SOCIAL EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- To support every person's right to a life of purpose and dignity and to the satisfaction of such needs as housing, clothing, food, community support, and personal development.
- To replace the hierarchical, competitive and oppressive values of our existing society with caring and need oriented values.
- To abolish inequalities based on gender, sexual preference, race, creed or nationality.
- To support and work for self-determination and land rights for Australia's original inhabitants.
- To respect and recognise the value of all cultures, including Indigenous and ethnic cultures, leading to a truly multicultural Australia.

III. GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

- To democratise society and the economy through the devolution of decision-making powers from private industrial interests and parliamentary institutions to workplaces and local communities.
- To create a democratically structured public sector, and small business and cooperative sectors of the economy that own and control resources in a way that does not compromise ecological sustainability and social equality.
- To recognise the right of people in communities to assert control over all matters that affect their lives through processes that maximise community participation.

- To support the diversity in culture and opinion that exists in our society and to promote a responsible and diverse media that informs and reflects this diversity.

IV. NONVIOLENCE AND DISARMAMENT

- To develop a culture of non-violence, to remove the threat of war and social violence.
- To support a program of universal disarmament, both nuclear and conventional.
- To work towards the peaceful resolution of conflict and the development of tolerance, co-operation and mutual respect.
- To support and work towards an independent foreign policy for Australia and a defence orientation that is non-offensive and self-reliant.

4. MEANS

4.1 In the activities and functioning of the Port Jackson Greens, our democracy is founded on the equal and inalienable rights of each member.

4.2 Except under the circumstances described in this constitution and the constitutions of the Australian Greens and Greens NSW there is no higher authority than the collective decisions of the members of the Group.

4.3 ANY representatives or delegates of The Port Jackson Greens remain subordinate to the Group.

4.4 We seek to extend membership of The Greens to all who are in accord with our fundamental objectives outlined above. We do not represent or reflect the broader community in all its aspects which include racism, sexism, rule of the dollar and short-term self interest, but instead seek to bring together those who share a concern for the planet and its future and who are prepared to work for change in a collective manner.

4.5 Social change involves more than merely substituting one decision-maker with another who will act more responsibly. We aim for changes that will empower all people and allow them to act in greater harmony with each other and with the rest of nature.

4.6 We stand candidates for election to all spheres of government in order to put forward the Green agenda and to utilise the advantages that come with public office to effect change and to further promote the Green agenda.

4.7 We will be involved in grassroots campaigns that challenge destructive and undemocratic activities and values within the community. These campaigns will include:

(a) Resistance to oppressive and destructive practices through non-violent direct action.

(b) Educating ourselves and the community to enable us to analyse more rigorously, act more effectively and envision the future with more compassion and understanding.

(c) Cooperating with progressive social movements both in Australia and overseas so that complementary struggles for environmental protection and human emancipation may be seen as part of a multi-faceted, global project.

5. DECISION-MAKING

5.1 All decisions of the Port Jackson Greens will be made in accordance with the principles of participatory democracy, and consistent with the constitutions of the Greens NSW and the Australian Greens.

5.2 All members shall be notified by the Secretary or Convenor of meeting times and venues, and of significant proposals to be discussed. Meetings of the Port Jackson Greens shall be held at least six times in each period of twelve months.

5.3 Five financial members shall constitute a quorum for meetings of the Port Jackson Greens. If, after 30 minutes from the time appointed for the meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting

shall stand adjourned, although those present may determine the date, time and venue of a subsequent meeting.

5.4 All people in attendance at any meeting of the Group have the right to participate in discussion. However, the meeting can decide to censure or to expel or suspend from the meeting:

5.4.1 Participants responsible for disruptive or offensive language or behaviour or

5.4.2 Non-member participants, whose presence would for other reasons, compromise the objectives of the Group.

5.5 Decisions of the Group shall, when possible, be made according to the consensus decision-making process. When consensus cannot be reached and the decision is unable to be deferred, a ratio of three or more votes in favour to one vote against shall be required for the motion and/or amendments to be carried. Abstentions may be recorded but shall not count as votes for or against. Proxy or absentee votes are not admissible.

5.6 Observers present at a meeting can, with the permission of the meeting, participate in discussion but may not vote.

5.7 Election of office-bearers and candidates shall be achieved by an optional-preferential ballot.

5.8 The Secretary will ensure that meeting minutes are recorded and presented to the subsequent meeting for acceptance as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

6. MEMBERSHIP

6.1 Membership of the Port Jackson Greens is open to any person who:

6.1.1 Agrees to abide by this Constitution, including the Charter of the Australian Greens;

6.1.2 Pays an annual membership fee, the amount to be determined annually by the Group;

6.1.3 Is not a member of a proscribed organisation. A list of proscribed organisations shall be maintained by the Secretary and shall include all those organisations proscribed by The Greens NSW, plus others added by a decision of the Port Jackson Greens.

6.2 Membership fees shall fall due on the 1st of July each year. New members who join after 1 January will be financial until the 30th of June the following year.

6.3 The Membership Officer shall maintain the list of members, including all details legally required. The details of the membership list shall not be used for any purpose other than the business of the Port Jackson Greens or the Greens NSW, except where clear consent of the member concerned is given.

6.4 Interested members of the public can contribute an annual donation in order to be on the Port Jackson Greens mailing list, which shall be maintained by the Treasurer or delegate.

6.5 The membership of any member shall cease in either of the following circumstances:

6.5.1 Failure to pay the membership fee within two months of the due date;

6.5.2 The member contests an election, without the approval of the Group, against the Group's endorsed candidate(s);

6.5.3 The Group decides by the usual decision-making processes that the member has placed herself or himself outside of the Group by one or more of the following:

6.5.3.1 Activities contrary to the membership criteria of the Group;

6.5.3.2 Persistent, wilful activities that undermine the objectives of the Group and/or the Greens NSW;

6.5.3.3 Repeated disruptive behaviour within the Group or behaviour that brings the Group into disrepute.

6.6 Action to terminate membership under clause 6.5.3 above shall not proceed until:

6.6.1 Notice of motion to terminate the membership, moved by three members, is forwarded to the Convenor.

6.6.2 The notice of motion is circulated to all members prior to the meeting which will decide the motion.

6.6.3 The member has been informed of the text of the motion to terminate her or his membership, and of the date, time and venue of the meeting at which the motion is to be presented, and of their right to participate in the discussion and voting of the meeting and to address the meeting in writing. A member shall be deemed to have been properly informed if, at least ten days prior to the meeting, the Convenor shall have posted written notice to the member at the address which she or he last provided to the Group as her or his mailing address.

7. ORGANISATION

7.1 In all the activities and appointments of the Port Jackson Greens, attempts shall be made to ensure that there is at least 50 percent representation by women and representation by minority and disadvantaged groups.

7.2 The Group shall elect, at the first meeting after October 1 each year, members to the positions of:

7.2.1 Convenor - responsible for organising the meeting venues, ensuring members are aware of the meeting time and place, ensuring meetings are well facilitated, and liaising with other organisations and Greens groups.

7.2.2 Secretary - responsible for meeting minutes (recording the names of members present, recording votes, decisions made and the person(s) to carry each decision out) and their archiving,

and ensuring that correspondence is appropriately responded to and brought to the meeting. When the Group is separately registered with the Australian Electoral Commission, the Secretary performs the duties of the "Registered Officer".

7.2.3 Treasurer - responsible for the payment and receipt of monies for the Group and maintenance of the Group's financial books. When the Group is separately registered with the Australian Electoral Commission, the Treasurer performs the duties of the "Party Agent".

7.2.4 Membership Officer - responsible for the membership list, liaising with The Greens NSW regarding membership, expanding membership and contacting lapsed members, and tabling new members at Group meetings.

7.2.5 Other positions of an ongoing nature, such as spokesperson(s) and convenors of local reference groups.

7.3 Meeting facilitators shall be decided at each meeting.

7.4 From time-to-time, the Group may choose to delegate an individual, or individuals, or to delegate an individual to convene a working group to undertake certain activities. Such individuals or working groups are subordinate to the Port Jackson Greens and their duties, authority and procedures shall be determined by Port Jackson Greens.

7.5 Office-bearers and other delegated individuals shall present reports to the Group on their activities as required by the Group.

7.6 Any appointment made by the Group can be revoked and the position be declared vacant provided that:

7.6.1. A motion of "no confidence" is put to a Group meeting following circulation of a notice of motion consistent with clause 6.6 above; and

7.6.2 The motion of "no confidence" gains the support of at least 50 percent of members who vote at that meeting.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY

8.1 Members shall be accountable to the organisation for any actions they take on behalf of the Group.

8.2 Any elected representative of the Group shall attend regular meetings with the Group to discuss issues pertaining to their responsibilities.

8.3 The Group has a responsibility to its representatives to provide both moral and material support, and to consider the representative's responsibilities to their electorate in its decision-making.

8.4 The actions and public statements of all elected representatives of the Group shall be consistent with the Charter, Principles, Constitutions, policies and decisions of the Group.

8.5 Members of Port Jackson Greens shall have the right to raise and question, within Group meetings or Council or electorate reference groups only, any action or statement by elected Greens representatives from their Group that they believe is inconsistent with Greens policies, with a view to the Group or reference group determining what action, if any, shall be taken.

9. WORKING WITH COUNCILLORS

9.1 Local government is the sphere of government that best reflects grassroots democracy. Consequently, support for elected Greens councillors represents a critical means to further the interests of local communities.

9.2 Councillors require sufficient autonomy to respond immediately, consistent with Greens policy, to concerns of people in their electorates.

9.3 The Group may establish, determine terms of reference and elect convenors and other members of local council reference groups which shall be a focus for activities around council issues and assist councillors in planning, decision-making and dispute resolution provided that:

9.3.1 All members of the Port Jackson Greens are eligible to participate in their relevant council reference group and

9.3.2 Decisions of a council reference group shall be consistent with decisions of, and if necessary, subject to ratification by the Port Jackson Greens.

10. WORKING WITH MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10.1 Support for elected Greens MLAs and MHRs represents a critical means to further the interests of local communities.

10.2 MLAs and MHRs require sufficient autonomy to respond immediately, consistent with Greens policy, to concerns of people in their electorates.

10.3 The Group may establish, determine terms of reference and elect convenors and other members of electorate reference groups which shall be a focus for activities around state or federal government issues and assist MLAs and MHRs in planning, decision-making and dispute resolution provided that:

10.3.1 All members of the Port Jackson Greens are eligible to participate in their relevant reference group and

10.3.2 Decisions of a reference group shall be consistent with decisions of, and if necessary, subject to ratification by the Port Jackson Greens.

10.4 MLAs and MHRs representing the Group shall tithe monthly to the Group a percentage of their of their gross salary as determined by the Group provided that this must not exceed the tithe established by the Greens NSW for Members of the Legislative Council.

10. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Notice of motions to amend this Constitution must be circulated to all members at least ten days before the meeting at which the motion is to be decided upon. The usual decision-making process shall be followed.