

Domestic policy

1 *What changes, if any, should be made to Australia’s laws covering the rights of journalists, whistleblowers, and activists to speak out on matters of public interest?*

The Liberal Democrats are fierce defenders of free speech, including media freedom. The suite of national security legislation (there were 5 separate bills) enacted by the Abbott/Turnbull government adversely affected free speech and should be repealed as a matter of urgency. Taken together, they attacked freedom of speech, undermined press freedom, attacked whistleblowers, undermined legal professional privilege, and provided for mandatory data retention. Australia has now intruded on traditional rights and freedoms to such an extent its adherence to common law principles like the presumption of innocence has been called into question.

2 *Should Australia permit gay and lesbian couples to marry? Why or why not?*

Yes, it should. How individuals organize their private lives – as long as they do not harm others – is not a matter for the government.

3 *What would you do address the disproportionate incarceration of indigenous people in Australian prisons and jails?*

This is more properly a matter for the States, but as a matter of policy the Liberal Democrats propose that people should not be incarcerated for non-payment of fines (as happens in WA, which led directly to Ms Dhu’s death). Cannabis should be legalised for both recreational and medicinal use, thus avoiding the disproportionate incarceration of both poor and the black people for drug offences, and as a corollary other non-violent drug offences should be medicalised (as in Portugal), taking them out of the criminal justice system all together. Further, Australia’s fondness for over-policing, particularly of trivial offences (parking, speeding, swearing, public drunkenness, drinking in public, riding without a bike helmet) needs to be dramatically wound back. Inevitably, indigenous people – particularly in rural areas – bear the brunt of our decision to make such trivialities a matter for the police rather than civil society.

4 *What changes would you make, if any, to Australia’s laws, policies, and practices regarding irregular migrants and asylum seekers?*

The Liberal Democrats have a completely different approach to immigration policy to that pursued by any major party, based on research by Nobel Economics Laureate Gary Becker. Our policy is [available here](#), while a Productivity Commission Inquiry into our policy is [available here](#).

Foreign policy

5 *What should be done about the situation of refugees and people seeking asylum who are being held on Manus and Nauru?*

We are more comfortable with offshore processing than mass drownings, although neither situation is ideal.

6 *Should Australia work towards ending the use of the death penalty in Asia? How?*

Yes, but quietly. Foreign jurisdictions do not take kindly to unwanted interference from wealthy middle powers.

7 *How can Australia improve the human rights of people in countries with poor rights records with whom Australia is seeking closer commercial and other ties?*

'Where goods do not pass borders, armies soon will', as Bastiat once said. The best way to improve our influence overseas is to trade honestly and freely with other nations, allowing them to invest in our country, and encouraging tourism. Anything else will be construed as unwanted interference from a wealthy middle power.

8 *Australia has established ongoing "human rights dialogues" with China, Vietnam, and Laos. How will you make these dialogues more effective in promoting the human rights of the people in those countries?*

As a minor party Senator, this question is somewhat outside my purview. As a general statement, the prosperity that results from free trade becomes a powerful advocate for liberty.

9 *What role is there for public – as opposed to private or "quiet" – diplomacy in promoting human rights abroad?*

The NGO and charitable sectors have a valuable role in promoting human rights, through education and principled advocacy. Quite often, they are more effective than governments.

10 *What should Australia do to address the growing crackdown on human rights in China?*

Continue to trade, facilitate tourism and immigration, promote Australian culture, and accept political refugees.

11 *On your first visit to Indonesia, what human rights issues will you raise with Indonesian officials?*

As a minor party Senator, this question is somewhat outside my purview.

12 *Rape and other violence against women and girls is common in Papua New Guinea and other countries in the region. What can Australia do through its aid program or other means to reduce violence against women?*

The Liberal Democrats are not convinced that foreign aid achieves any long term benefits in recipient countries. To the extent that aid and other means are contemplated, Australia should encourage law reform that allows women to keep and manage their property upon marriage, promote education and delayed marriage, and provide education in the use and provision of contraception.