

# Read the fine print on the Greens tin



**I**t is an odd priority. When the Greens leader, Bob Brown, was asked to name his first legislative priority for the new Parliament he had no hesitation – euthanasia. Brown wants to repeal the federal statute that outlawed euthanasia in the Northern Territory. “This will restore the rights of territorians to be able to legislate for euthanasia,” he told Network Ten.

I wonder if all those who voted for the Greens in August expected that? They might have thought a carbon reduction scheme was the No. 1 Green priority, or an end to logging. But it is euthanasia. Brown didn't run as the head of the euthanasia party. But that is the effect of making this his No. 1 priority.

The Greens have a funny attitude to people. They care about them, of course, but they worry there are too many of them and that this will choke the environment. They say we need a “sustainable relationship between humans and the environment”, which involves a lot more birth control and a lot less use of natural resources.

The Greens are the only party committed to abortion on demand. The others leave it to each MP to decide how to vote on abortion. Labor has members with differing views, as do the Liberals. Not the Greens. They have a party position spelt out in their platform.

It might be easier to die if the Greens have their way but they also want taxes levied on the estate of people who have died. Any other party that proposed to liberalise death laws and tax the dead would be accused of a revenue grab. But not the Greens.

They do not particularly target taxes at the dead; they target the living as well, with proposals for tax rises in superannuation, capital gains, car use, electricity prices and companies. Bob Brown could have campaigned as the head of the tax party, because that also is the effect of his policies.

Labor can govern only with the support of Adam Bandt, the newly elected Green in the seat of Melbourne. The Greens will have the balance of power in the new Senate. Now that they exercise such power they are entitled to more scrutiny.

Imagine taking a journey from the GPO to the state border. The Green vote is highest where you start – in the inner-city terraces and converted warehouses. In the seat of Melbourne, the Greens polled 36 per cent and in the seat of Sydney 24 per cent.

As you move out to the quarter-acre blocks in the suburbs, the Green vote declines. When you get to semi-rural and country areas it falls further. In Gippsland in Victoria it is 7 per cent and in Parkes in NSW 6 per cent.

As you take that journey, you will notice that families live in the suburbs where it is cheaper to buy a house with a garden for the children. They do not see their children as a threat to ecological sustainability but as their greatest contribution to society.

If you travelled on a Sunday you would notice, as you moved out from the inner city to the outer suburbs, that the church services attract bigger crowds. Conventional religious belief is stronger. This explains why these electorates do not warm to the Green agenda of euthanasia, abortion, gay marriage and adoption.

The fascinating thing about Green supporters is that their natural habitat is not the open spaces or the pristine forests but the crowded cafes and asphalt alleys of high-density, inner-city living.

Of course the inner-city areas were the traditional fiefdom of the political left. They still are. But the political left has found that marketing itself under the label “Green” has much better appeal, which is how Lee Rhiannon was elected as a senator for NSW.

She grew up as part of Sydney's first family of communism and followed her parents into the party. Her chances of being elected as a communist senator were zero but she has done well under the Greens banner.

Adam Bandt was an undergraduate and postgraduate scholar of Marxism. In another age he would have journeyed through the union movement to a Labor pre-selection. Now these activists turn “Green” and they are taking the inner cities with them.

But they are also taking a lot of support from people who think that Green is a description of environmental policies. It is much more than that. It is a clever marketing label. Beyond the label is a fully formed agenda of radical positions on tax, economics and foreign affairs. It pays to look carefully before buying the product.

**Peter Costello is a former Liberal federal treasurer.**