



Welcome to the first edition of Simms in the Senate, a regular e-newsletter I'll be sending out to keep you updated on my work as a senator for South Australia. In here you'll find out about my latest work in the portfolios I hold on behalf of the Australian Greens: Higher Education, Marriage Equality and Sexuality, and Water. I'll also tell you about the South Australian issues I have been raising in the parliament and working on within our community. I hope you find this update informative and useful, but if at any time you wish to unsubscribe from this communication, simply let me know via [return email](#).



Video: Introducing Senator Robert Simms

Last month I released [my introductory video](#), sharing my political story, and outlining the Greens' positive vision for South Australia. I welcome you to share it among your networks.

Also, in case you missed it - [my first speech in the Senate](#) is also up on my website for you to watch, along with the rest of my parliamentary speeches.



Supporting the Safe Schools Coalition

Last week, like many Australians, I was appalled to see the Turnbull Government order an inquiry into the Safe Schools Coalition, at the urging of arch-conservative South Australian Senator Cory Bernardi – [watch or read my speech here](#). Senator Bernardi pointed to a petition of 9499 signatures as evidence that the Safe Schools Coalition, which educates teachers, school staff and students on supporting LGBTI young people, needed investigating. The Greens began a petition to demonstrate the huge amount of community support for the Safe Schools Coalition, which within two days had attracted more than 20,000 signatures, and is still climbing past 32,000.

If a program like Safe Schools existed when I was at school, it would have made life a lot easier - and now it is under attack from the conservative dinosaurs on PM Turnbull's backbench. If you haven't already, please show your support for #SafeSchools by signing and sharing our petition: [grns.mp/safe-at-school](#)



No to a nuclear waste dump

The outcome of the Nuclear Royal Commission isn't surprising - we've known the most likely result of this process was to support South Australia becoming the world's nuclear waste dump. The Weatherill Government is selling out our state's reputation and future with its nuclear plans. It's been clear from the turnout at recent community meetings that the South Australian community isn't happy, and the Greens will fight to stop SA becoming the world's largest nuclear waste dump, creating a costly and dangerous burden for future generations.

[You can watch or read my speech in the Senate about this here.](#)

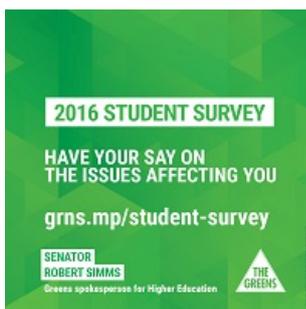
Future-proofing SA with smart innovation and green jobs

Innovation and new, sustainable technologies are key to South Australia's future. Holden has just announced hundreds more jobs will go from Adelaide's northern suburbs, so our state needs action on this now. [This week the Senate backed my motion](#) calling on the government to refocus South Australia's car manufacturing industry on electric cars. This follows the first [Private Senator's Bill](#) I introduced in the parliament, along with my colleague Senator Janet Rice from Victoria, to expand the Automotive Transformation Scheme so that smaller motor vehicle and motor vehicle component manufacturers in the green car sector could access government funds to support their operations. Electric car production is a multi-billion industry and would provide an opportunity for us to harness the skills and experience of our manufacturing industry and create new jobs.

In regional SA, towns in the mid-north like Whyalla and Port Augusta are on their knees. They need a plan that doesn't tether them to volatile world markets so if an industry like the Arrium steel works, or the Port Augusta power station, faces closure, the towns can still thrive. Green jobs in solar thermal, advanced manufacturing and electric cars would not only benefit our environment but would give the South Australian jobs market the boost it so desperately needs.

BP in the Bight

Last week was a big moment for protecting the precious marine sanctuaries in the Great Australian Bight. Together with Senator Nick Xenophon, I [launched an inquiry](#) into BP's plans to drill for oil in the Bight, which will look at the effect of any accident on the marine environment, the capacity - or lack thereof - of government or private interests to mitigate the effect of an oil spill, effects on tourism, commercial fishing activities and other regional industries, and the state of current research and science. This is a win for the Bight, and a win for those who want to protect the pristine marine environment that makes South Australia so special. You can add your name to the growing list of Australians who want to defend the Bight by [signing our petition](#). On behalf of the Greens, I will be holding BP to account during this inquiry. Stay tuned for details of how to make a submission, and how to follow its progress.



Take the 2016 Student Survey

We kicked off Orientation Week last week by launching the 2016 Student Survey, for students to have their say on issues affecting them. We're still taking responses now – head to grns.mp/student-survey to answer the ten quick questions.

SAVE
OUR
SCHOLARSHIPS



Save Our Scholarships

In the final parliamentary sitting week of 2015 we saw Labor and Liberal team up to lump students with more debt by changing the Student Start-Up Scholarships to loans – a lousy move for students, just in time for O’Week 2016! The scholarships provided much needed relief for students at critical times by providing funds to cover bills for textbooks, laptops, internet access and other necessities. Turning the scholarships into loans will result in an extra \$6000 of debt for a student studying a three-year Bachelor degree. I spoke out against these attacks on higher education [in the parliament](#) and [in the community](#). You can [add your voice to the Greens’ Save Our Scholarships campaign](#), urging Labor and Liberal to reverse this unfair decision.



Marriage equality plebiscite credibility crumbling

The Turnbull Government’s position of holding a plebiscite on marriage equality is crumbling, as elected members within their own coalition openly state they won’t listen to the people of Australia if the plebiscite is resolved in the affirmative. What an absurd waste of money this would be when we know public opinion strongly supports marriage equality. During Additional Estimates last month I interrogated the government and learnt that they are already burning through taxpayer funds just to plan for the plebiscite. I also enjoyed [sending Valentine’s Cards to 41 government and cross-bench senators, as well as Prime Minister Turnbull](#), urging them to legislate now for marriage equality! I’ll continue to push the government however I can to ditch the \$160 million plebiscite and get on with making marriage equality a reality by legislating for it in Parliament.



Love is Love – show you agree!

Our ‘Love is Love’ rainbow stickers have been very popular at recent community events, including LGBTI festivals across the country. [Contact my office](#) if you’d like your own sticker to show you agree.

Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Late last year I attended hearings of the Senate Select Committee on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan’s inquiry into the impacts of the plan in Goolwa and Renmark. It was great to engage with the local community on ensuring a thriving river system for generations to come.

Recently in the Senate we referred the Water Amendment Bill (2015) to an inquiry over concerns that trade revenue from the Murray-Darling Basin Plan would be used for purposes other than purchasing water. The Greens’ primary concerns are that there is no guidance on how these funds can be used for ‘environmental activities’, and that this change could result in subsidising environmental programs that should be funded from other areas.

During Additional Estimates last month I submitted questions about these concerns the fact that the

current Murray-Darling Basin Plan doesn't mention 'climate change' - not once!
This year I'll be tackling issues like innovative water use, including water-sensitive urban design.
Keep an eye out for these as the year progresses.

Out and about

2016 has already been a whirlwind of vibrant events and activities in the South Australian community – and Mad March is only just upon us! Here are some snapshots of a few things I've been up to.



1. Jan 18: The Tour Down Under is an exciting event for our state. I enjoyed seeing Stage 1 up close at Prospect.
2. Feb 5: It was a pleasure to sell The Big Issue in Rundle Mall alongside vendor Luke during Vendor Week.
3. Feb 5: It was great to host Leader of the Australian Greens, Richard di Natale, in Adelaide.
4. Feb 13: What a fantastic Adelaide Fringe Opening Parade, down North Terrace for the first time.
5. Feb 19: I joined my South Australian Greens MLC colleague Tammy Franks at the RSPCA's Bestie for a Bestie dinner.

Materials available

My office has a number of new materials available, including a hard-copy transcript of my first speech, a printed booklet, *Positive Vision for South Australia's Future*, and fridge magnets. Please [email my office](#) or call (08) 8410 4588 if you'd like some sent to you.

Coming up

I'm looking forward to catching up with Young Greens and other politically engaged university students at the Uni Drinks I'm hosting on Thursday 10 March, from 5pm at the Adelaide Unibar. [Find out more and RSVP for the event here.](#)

To find out more

If you wish to find out more information about any of my work, please visit www.robertsimms.com.au, where you'll find my speeches (transcripts and videos), media releases, motions and more. You can also find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), or drop me a line at senator.simms@aph.gov.au