

# A VOTE FOR JUSTICE

## CANDIDATES' SURVEY RESPONSES FOR ACT ELECTION 2016

Response by Marea FATSEAS – Independent for Kurrajong

*As a general comment, I would like to note that as an independent candidate, I don't have the resources to develop comprehensive policies in all areas, so my responses below are preliminary views.*

### Housing

Questions for candidates

1. What role do you think that the ACT Government can play in this area?  
*The ACT Government has a key responsibility to provide, and work with other stakeholders to identify innovative funding models for providing, housing to the homeless and vulnerable, domestic violence victims, people less able and those with mental health issues.*
2. Is accelerating the rate of construction or acquisition of public housing a viable and appropriate part of the solution?  
*This would depend on the cost effectiveness of building public housing compared with purchasing rental accommodation by the government. I believe that government owned public housing provides a consistent long-term solution.*
3. If so, what level of commitment will you give in this area?  
*If elected to the ACT Assembly I will certainly advocate for, in our affluent society, Canberrans to be housed in safe and healthy accommodation.*
4. What other measures are you prepared to take?  
*I will honour my election platform to listen, engage and represent. I will consult widely with those in need as well as service providers, government services and peak organisations.*
5. What incentives are being provided by the ACT Government to encourage the private sector to invest in new developments of social housing in partnership with the ACT government?  
*I have encountered a situation where the government did not consider that public housing should be included in a major development in a suburb where I led the residents association, even though the association was proposing such diversity in the development. It was assessed that the property would be too valuable. I believe that government should work with developers to identify models for including public housing in new developments.*

### Mental health

Questions for candidates

1. What steps do you think that the incoming government can take to improve mental health services for people experiencing mental illness?  
*I would like to see more Government attention to early diagnosis and intervention, including at school and college level.*
2. How might the community become more engaged in issues of mental health?  
*By participating in health promotion programmes that provide information and tools for addressing and destigmatising mental health issues.*
3. Do you support the allocation of extra resources to ensure that prisoners of the Alexander Maconochie Centre receive the mental health services they need and that, as far as possible, the prison environment protects mental health?  
*Certainly I consider that adequate mental health services should be provided to meet the needs of prisoners in the Alexander Maconochie Centre.*
4. What strategies are in place to meet the growing demand from members of the community with mental health issues who are not eligible for the NDIS?  
*If elected I will investigate this issue thoroughly in order to make evidence based decisions. I believe strongly that in a civil society all people should have access to required health care.*

### The right to life

Questions for candidates

1. Do you consider that the ACT's current laws on abortion and human cloning adequately protect human life?  
*I support the ACT Government's laws on abortion, which give the woman the right to make decisions about her body. I understand that women seeking an abortion participate in a counselling session to discuss the circumstances and ensure all options have been considered.*
2. If not, how would you like to see them changed?  
*I would not like to see them changed.*
3. How would you protect children in utero when their mother is assaulted?  
*If you are referring to women who have been raped, I support the right of a woman to decide whether she wishes to proceed with a pregnancy that is the outcome of a violent crime.*
4. Do you think that existing services give sufficient support to women who have an unexpected pregnancy, especially under difficult circumstances?  
*I think that all levels of government provide a range of very good services and welfare support for women with unexpected pregnancies. There are also women's health and welfare referral services to ensure access to services.*
5. Do you support existing legislation to prevent euthanasia and, if not, what changes would you like to see?  
*I support a compassionate approach, which would allow terminally ill people to determine their own pathway.*
6. What do you propose to improve palliative care services?  
*Palliative care services in the ACT should always be at the cutting edge of international best practice in order to best support patients and relieve suffering.*

## The justice system

### Questions for candidates

1. Do you think that the penalties currently prescribed in ACT law are too severe, too lenient or about right?  
*Without expert professional advice I am not in a position to answer this question at this time.*
2. Are the needs of crime victims receiving enough attention and, if not, what might be done to address them?  
*As with my answer to the previous question, this would require expert advice, which I would seek if elected. My belief is that the care of victims should take precedence.*
3. Is rehabilitation given sufficiently high priority at the Alexander Maconochie Centre?  
*I understand that the ACT Auditor-General found in her report in 2015 that the Alexander Maconochie Centre was falling well short of expectations in rehabilitation and education of inmates.*
4. Do you see a place for restorative justice in the penal system?  
*Yes, I see a place for restorative justice, as long as the victim is fully in agreement and confident that they may benefit rather than be further damaged by the experience.*
5. If so, would you support allocating resources for this purpose?  
*I would need to see evidence in support of additional resourcing in order to make a decision on this matter.*
6. What do you propose to reduce the disproportionate rate of Indigenous imprisonment?  
*Indigenous communities face complex issues, which are historic and generational. There is not a quick fix and solutions to complex problems must be led by Indigenous communities. The provision of a good standard of amenities and services is essential, including quality health, early access to education, appropriate housing and community support services, and pathways to employment.  
*Where Indigenous people commit crimes they must face the ACT justice system. I believe that young Indigenous people should not be incarcerated for an escalation of petty crime such as failure to pay speeding fines. More appropriate early intervention should be applied with a focus on support and prevention.**
7. As employment is a key determinant of recovery and reduced recidivism, what strategy will you support to increase employment outcomes and options for people leaving incarceration?  
*If elected, I would advocate for ACT Government strategies that involve partnership with the Federal government and local businesses to leverage the best possible access to employment programmes.*

## Education

### Questions for candidates

1. Are you satisfied with the evidence base on the distribution of education resources by geographic area?  
*While geographic area is one method of distributing education resources, I consider that a more sophisticated approach is required which takes into account the results of NAPLAN testing, existing resources and access to independent income of a school, and the most important ingredient for student success which is access to quality teachers.*
2. Do you think that school students from low-income families are receiving a fair share of the ACT Government's education dollar?  
*I would access expert advice on this should I be elected.*
3. If not, where do you think that the biggest shortfalls are occurring?  
*The biggest issue for the ACT in providing the best possible start for young children in order for them to reach their maximum potential is access to quality early childhood education. I would advocate within government for the extension of early childhood (preschool) education from the age of three years as supported by international evidence.*
4. How might the incoming government address these issues?  
*See response above.*
5. How will you respond to the recent review's recommendation that more funds be provided to ensure that every school has enough counsellors to support early intervention in relation to students' mental wellbeing?  
*I believe that adequate school counselling is essential to supporting children, teachers and parents. Consideration needs to be given to how to attract sufficient numbers of well-qualified school counsellors.*
6. As the second highest provider of school education in the ACT, do you agree that Catholic Education should be included in the planning of land release and accorded priority in the allocation of land for schools in new growth areas?  
*The Catholic Education system is a large education provider, which has shown flexibility and willingness to engage in change such as reforms in early childhood education. Catholic Education and all other relevant stakeholders should be included in discussions relating to allocation of land for schools in new growth areas.*

## **Gambling**

### Questions for candidates

1. Do you support a steady reduction in the number of poker machines in the ACT?  
*It seems sensible to reduce the number of poker machines, as I understand the ACT has more poker machines per capita than other jurisdictions, but it would be useful to see the evidence on the relationship between the number of poker machines and the harm to problem gamblers.*
2. If so, do you think that the current rate of reduction is adequate?  
*Such change needs to be incremental, however such reform should have targets to ensure that a reduction is achieved.*
3. How do you propose to deal with the revenue losses involved for the ACT Government and with the impact on community and sporting organisations?  
*Clearly, the Government would need to look at all sources of revenue and expenditure to rebalance the budget, and would need to do this before embarking on this path. This is complex as the current profit sharing arrangements do provide essential support to community organisations. The Government could also fund business development advisers to assist community organisations to refocus sources of revenue e.g. to philanthropic sources.*
4. How do you expect trading of poker machine licences from clubs to the Casino to impact the ACT?  
*I do not support the agreement for poker machines in the Casino, which will channel profits overseas rather than support the local community.*
5. Do you consider that the ACT Government should support Commonwealth initiatives to reduce the extent of problem gambling on poker machines?  
*Yes. The welfare of individuals and families should be a priority.*
6. How do you expect employment levels in the ACT will be affected by a reduction in poker machines?  
*There may be an adjustment needed, however an example of an approach to looking at different ways to generate income would be the Southern Cross Canberra Yacht Club which has removed poker machines and focuses on other sources of revenue such as the restaurant, Snapper fish cafe, weddings and conference room hire.*

## **Climate change**

## Questions for candidates

1. What is your position on the reality or otherwise of human-induced global warming?  
*I am convinced by the overwhelming evidence of human-induced global warming.*
2. How do you view the ACT's target of a 40 per cent reduction (of 1990 levels) in carbon [dioxide] emissions by 2020?  
*I support such targets aimed at reducing the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions.*
3. How might the incoming ACT Government encourage households and businesses to take greater responsibility for their own emissions?  
*While there has been excellent progress towards 100 percent renewable energy by 2020, there is still much to be done in reducing emissions from transport, waste, and other sources. I look forward to working with Assembly colleagues and the community in developing strategies for further reducing emissions.*

## Empowering Indigenous communities

### Questions for candidates

1. How would you support the Indigenous initiative after-school program, Solid Sista's and Brotha's?  
*If elected to the Assembly, I would be delighted to meet with those running the program to discuss strategies for seeking a stable source of funding.*
2. What is your position on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in our education system?  
*I believe this is desirable, but consider we must consult Indigenous parents for advice on this matter, including on which languages should be taught. We would also need to find out whether it would be easy to recruit teachers of these languages.*
3. How would you support restorative justice initiatives in the ACT, particularly the Circle Sentencing initiatives in NSW? Does this have application in the ACT?  
*According to Jacqueline MacKenzie's research "Does Circle Sentencing Reduce Aboriginal Offending?" for the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research - Circle Sentencing does not reduce Aboriginal reoffending. The re-offending rate was the same as for those not in the programme. This indicates that there needs to be a very detailed investigation of what works in re-offending prevention programmes in conjunction with the Indigenous community before decisions are made on the best approach to support.*

## Equity in the economy

### Questions for candidates

1. How would you apply the 'preferential option for the poor' to the vulnerable, those who are marginalized in society, including unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression, in public policy?  
*If elected as an independent, I will give careful consideration to proposed legislation, including to identify and address adverse impacts on the disadvantaged and powerless.*
2. How would you enhance equity through the distribution of capital, goods, and access to services throughout the Territory's economy?  
*In addition to the above, I would support an evidence-based approach to identify and advocate solutions in areas where there is inequitable access to services.*
3. What will you do to increase fairness in the ACT economy, particularly in regard to taxation or welfare, to afford equal life chances regardless of identity, to provide all citizens with a basic and equal minimum of income, goods, and services or to increase funds and commitment for redistribution?  
*As indicated above, I will carefully consider proposed legislation with a view to ensuring fairness, and will use an evidence-based approach to identify and advocate solutions.*