

A VOTE FOR JUSTICE

CANDIDATES' SURVEY RESPONSES FOR ACT ELECTION 2016

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Housing

Questions for candidates

1. *What role do you think that the ACT Government can play in this area?*

The Greens believe all members of our community deserve to have somewhere affordable, safe and secure to live. The Liberal and Labor parties have failed to deliver this, and affordable housing is still out of reach for many Canberrans.

Housing affordability can be measured in different way using different definitions: a percentage of income or a percentage of market rates, but the Greens also believe there other important factors that impact on our quality of life which we must consider.

Beyond the costs of entering the market, servicing the loan or paying the rent; we need to also take into account the distance from work and amenity, the provision of good reliable public transport, and the cost of utilities.

The bottom line is that we know there are people in Canberra who are struggling to afford somewhere safe, stable and decent to live. There is no silver bullet to address this, but the Greens have committed to a range of actions to make housing affordable for every member of our community. These include increasing the quantity of community housing, introducing new and innovative housing models to Canberra to help renters and homeowners find affordable housing, assisting public housing tenants to purchase their own homes and more funding for our homelessness services.

The ACT has unacceptably high numbers of people experiencing, or at risk of being, homeless, and we understand that homelessness is a complex issue with a range of causes. The ACT Greens believe that housing is a basic human right, and that we need a range of strategies that address prevention, early intervention, crisis support and longer-term stable accommodation. There is always more that can be done to prevent, reduce and respond to people experiencing homelessness and a caring and progressive government that puts the community first can, and must, play a role in improving housing affordability and preventing homelessness.

2. *Is accelerating the rate of construction or acquisition of public housing a viable and appropriate part of the solution?*

We believe that we must increase the overall public and social housing stock, to reduce pressure on the long waiting lists, and to find real homes for people who are in 'crisis' accommodation, and waiting for months for secure and long term tenancies. While Shane Rattenbury was Greens Minister of Housing in 2014, he secured an ACT Government Cabinet commitment to grow the public housing stock for the first time in a decade.

While the numbers of public housing continue to slowly grow, we believe that it is now time to further support and grow the stock of Community Housing in the ACT.

3. *If so, what level of commitment will you give in this area?*

Community housing providers work with a range of clients and provide unique models of co-operative housing and specialised tenancy management services for vulnerable tenants, more economically than government providers. The community housing sector in Canberra is small, strong and growing, but needs more support from government to be sustainable. There is growing need for specific services to support indigenous housing, newly arrived communities, and people with disability. The ACT Greens will work to increase community housing in the ACT over time. You can find out more details here: actgreens.org.au/policies

4. *What other measures are you prepared to take?*

We will introduce a new affordable housing action plan to improve housing affordability for people in need. We will create a permanent steering committee made up of community, government and industry to put the Affordable Housing Action Plan into action.

The new revised Affordable Action Plan must be considered a living document with ongoing input from key experts and stakeholders, and should be reporting regularly to Cabinet on progress towards targets and emerging issues. And to ensure we are putting the community first, we will include a representative from the social/affordable housing sector on the Land Development Agency Board, to help guide decision making around future land release programs and new development areas.

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?*

The ACT Greens recognise and value the contribution that the private sector can make in social housing and the broader benefits these partnerships can bring to the whole community. We will always seek out new and innovative ways to partner with these organisations, primarily through the treatment of government land and assets, but also in terms of partnerships in service delivery and better coordination of targeted joint funding opportunities.

The ACT Greens support new and innovative housing models that increase affordable housing for the ACT. That is why this election we have committed to bringing HomeGround Real Estate to Canberra. HomeGround is a not-for-profit model which both increases the amount of affordable housing in Canberra and gives socially minded investors the option rent out their property at a reduced market rent or on a philanthropic basis to Canberrans in need.

It provides professional property and tenancy management like any other agency. However, management fees are re-directed back into the Affordable Housing Initiative arm of the enterprise. HomeGround Real Estate is committed to achieving both a financial and social return on investments - and the ACT Greens will bring it to Canberra.

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?*

The Greens have always, and will always, put the community first. That means making sure every member of our community is valued, and that we strive for our city to support every member of our community to live with dignity, meaning and purpose. Given that around one third of our population needs mental health care at some stage in their lives, it is paramount that services are able to match demand. The increases in funding to mental health on a local level over the past two terms of the Assembly, while positive, have still not been able to meet demand.

Despite many years of increased funding to the mental health sector, the ACT Greens remain concerned by ongoing reports from carers and representative bodies of silos and gaps, the constant revolving door of acute services, and the poor long term outcomes for people with mental health concerns.

Frankly, accessing the right services, at the right time, and for the right period, can feel like walking into a maze with no exits. After seeing successive ministers and health services frustrated attempts to improve the system, it is clear we need to try something new in the ACT. Sometimes, it's not about how much money you have, but how you spend it that matters. It is clear we need a more accountable, transparent and community focused approach to both chronic and acute mental health care. That is why the ACT Greens will work with local stakeholders such as the Capital Health Network, local community based advocacy services and government officials to follow other jurisdictions to create an Office for Mental Health, otherwise known as "Mental Health Commission". A new commission could follow in the steps of the national model, which seeks to provide independent reports and advice to the community and government on what's working and what's not; or a more hands on model such as NSW, which provides advocacy, partnering and monitoring.

2. *How might the community become more engaged in issues of mental health?*

The ACT Greens know that we need to do more to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and suicide self harm, and that is vital that we engage the broader community on these issues. To this end, in 2012 Greens MLA Amanda Bresnan introduced the proposal for annual reporting of suicides into the Assembly. The stigma and taboo around mental health has been proven to be counter productive, and as a society, we need to take measures to better equip frontline staff, and indeed the broader community, to respond. That is why we will:

- set targets for reduction of suicide - by setting a target, we are in effect stating that we believe that suicide is a largely preventable issue, and calls on all of us to do all we can to prevent suicide. It also serves as a constant reminder to never become complacent, and to continue to work to reduce the stigma attached to talking about mental illness, mental health and suicide.
- consider the creation of a Suicide Expert Committee, along the lines of the Child Death Review Committee, which examines suicides and makes policy recommendations to Government. This would help the government respond to the recent Assembly enquiry into youth suicide, and provide the ACT with a better database without waiting for the federal government.
- Commit \$20,000 p/a in funding for an annual forum to increase employment opportunities for people with mental illness and their carers

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?*

As ACT Greens MLA Shane Rattenbury has been the Minister for Corrections over the past Assembly term, we understand that the healthcare and rehabilitation system for AMC detainees still needs improvement. That said, we have worked hard to enhance existing services, and to develop a more truly rehabilitative and therapeutic Alexander Maconochie Centre. ACT Corrective Services has recently created a dedicated team of mental health professionals who have the skills and experience to work with detainees in the complex prison environment, and the benefits of this targeted team approach is already being felt, with detainees being supported to engage in more therapy groups and reduced anti social behaviour . While often a vital part of the picture, a prison is not the ideal place to rehabilitate some members of our community, and it takes a whole-of-government approach to improve community safety and reduce criminal behaviour in the first place. That is why it is so important to continue the work of the Justice Reform Strategy, which is looking at a range of matters from bail, to legislation, to supporting victims of crime and further investment in social services.

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?*

The ACT Greens have been watching closely the issue of mental illness being recognised as a disability for the purposes of NDIS personal funding support packages. The transition to the NDIS has appears to have created a gap in mental health care, and the ACT system overall has not been able to avoid the duplication and gaps that so many people experience when seeking support. Long waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health in particular is concerning.

There appears to be a lack of maturity in service provision for people with mental health issues, and difficulties in the approach of some traditional disability-focused providers. While noting that these are complex issues, the ACT Greens are concerned that the NDIS may be leaving some of our most vulnerable behind. We need to examine this much more closely; listen to the feedback we are hearing; and do more to understand the service gaps and how they can be filled.

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?*

Yes. The ACT Greens support the current legal protections and policies regarding abortion and human cloning.

2. *If not, how would you like to see them changed?*
See above.

3. *How would you protect children in utero when their mother is assaulted?*

The ACT Greens recognise that there must be consideration of a woman's pregnancy under the criminal code in any assaults, and understand that this is currently the case in the ACT. We also recognise that women are often particularly vulnerable to assault when they are pregnant, or just after giving birth. We

have announced a range of measures to end violence against women:
<http://www.actgreens.org.au/tackling-violence-against-women>

4. *Do you think that existing services give sufficient support to women who have an unexpected pregnancy, especially under difficult circumstances?*

The ACT Greens understand that the community needs and deserves a high quality, free and professional health system, that extends beyond the hospitals and encompasses every stage of life. The community need health initiatives that take the pressure off our hospitals, focus on preventative services and improve access for vulnerable groups and people. And we know that the foundation of our modern health system are our nurses - the frontline staff from emergency departments to managing chronic health in the community. We want to listen to these highly skilled professional nurses and midwives and will develop a more integrated, holistic and people centric system.

5. *Do you support existing legislation to prevent euthanasia and, if not, what changes would you like to see?*

It's well known that the Greens support the right of people to make decisions at the end of their life and we support the creation of a compassionate, safe and workable scheme for voluntary euthanasia. In fact the majority of Australians agree and also support such a scheme. The ACT Greens believe that the community is ready to have a genuine conversation about end of life issues and voluntary euthanasia.

6. *What do you propose to improve palliative care services?*

We are willing to explore expanded hospital-based palliative care options, in consultation with key stakeholders, but right now we are focused on what we believe is an enormous issue in Canberra - increasing community based and home based health services with another 50 new nurses. This includes Hospital in the Home teams which can support enhanced palliative care.

The ACT Greens have been strong advocates for the Advanced Care Planning process which assists people in considering future medical scenarios they may face and what type of treatment they would wish to receive. This type of planning provides clear directions from a patient to their carers for when the patient is no longer able to communicate their wishes. It also assists patients with their right to refuse future medical treatment. In the 2012 Parliamentary Agreement, in recognition of the importance of these issues, we secured more funding for Advanced Care Planning, enabling ACT Health to develop and implement a range of appropriate care planning tools, including the Respecting Patients' Choices Program, and conduct a community run education and awareness program.

We agree that more can be done to improve processes and increase awareness, and commit to supporting calls on the ACT Government to improve the integrity and uptake of advance care planning across care setting interfaces, including examining legislative improvements.

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?*

The ACT Greens do not support the introduction of mandatory sentencing and the Greens right across Australia have always stood up for legal principles, in the face of pressure for ‘tough on crime’ and ‘law and order’ approaches. We want a safe and secure Canberra and this means we always support reviewing evidence and making improvements to laws to achieve better outcomes. Justice requires courts to have access to a range of sentencing options, from non-custodial sentences through to imprisonment for more serious crimes. The ACT Greens have been the strongest advocates of access to justice, legal aid and community legal centres. We recognise the challenges and inequities presented by access to justice. Through Parliamentary Agreements we have secured additional funding for ACT community legal centres such as the Aboriginal Legal Service and Street Law.

2. *Are the needs of crime victims receiving enough attention and, if not, what might be done to address them?*

The ACT Greens strongly support increased consideration of victims rights in the criminal justice system, and believe that the ACT could learn from other jurisdictions such as Victoria that have enhanced legislative recognition of the lasting negative impacts of crime on victims. We support the introduction of a Charters of Victims’ Rights and will have more announcements in this space shortly which you can find at actgreens.org.au/policies

3. *Is rehabilitation given sufficiently high priority at the Alexander Maconochie Centre?*

In the broader justice system, a well functioning correctional centre has a key role in reducing recidivism. The new special care unit and prison industries programs will help us better achieve these shared goals, and put some reality into the vision.

4. *Do you see a place for restorative justice in the penal system?*
4. *If so, would you support allocating resources for this purpose?*

Yes, the ACT Greens are supportive of restorative justice processes, both in the community and in custody, and do believe the existing ACT program could be better resourced and expanded. That said, it is essential that these programs are evidenced based and treated with sensitivity, and further expansion will require solid foundation work to underpin positive outcomes.

6. *What do you propose to reduce the disproportionate rate of Indigenous imprisonment?*

The ACT Greens are committed to working through the complex issues of the gross overrepresentation of indigenous detainees in the AMC and Bimberi, and to reducing incarceration.

We know that people end up in prison for many reasons - and many of those reasons relate to the chronic disadvantage, dispossession and disempowerment that members of our community face. Poverty breeds crime and crime breeds poverty, and unless we address the causes of crime we will never reduce the number of people in our prisons.

The Greens are committed to continuing the work of the Justice Reform Strategy, which looks at the whole spectrum of engagement with the criminal justice system - from bail, to legislation, to supporting victims of crime and further investment in social services.

At the end of the day, without justice reinvestment - that is, without investing back into our communities to address poverty and disempowerment where it starts, we will not reduce crime, we will not stop the cycle of recidivism and we will not reduce the unacceptable and disproportionate Indigenous representation in our prisons.

Unlike the Liberal and Labor parties who seem more preoccupied with cracking down on crime than trying to stop it happening in the first place, the Greens are committed to investing in the community to reduce the number of people we're putting behind bars.

With the Greens Shane Rattenbury currently serving as Corrections Minister, and having previously held the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, we are well aware of the need for specific and tangible actions. Shane has recently directed ACT Corrective Services to undertake detailed data analysis of the nature of offence and sentence, profile and length of stay at the AMC for indigenous detainees on remand or custodial orders. We will use this important baseline information to develop new targeted programs and evidence-based legislative reforms where required.

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?*

We will build on the existing work being undertaken by Shane Rattenbury as the Greens Minister for Corrections, such as the continued expansion of prison industries, and expand the highly successful Extended Throughcare program, which provides intensive support post release. The ACT Greens will be making further announcements about specific Justice Reinvestment approaches in the near future, which will focus on breaking the cycle of recidivism and preventing criminal behaviour before it starts.

Education

Questions for candidates

1. *Are you satisfied with the evidence base on the distribution of education resources by geographic area?*
2. *Do you think that school students from low-income families are receiving a fair share of the ACT Government's education dollar?*
3. *If not, where do you think that the biggest shortfalls are occurring?*
4. *How might the incoming government address these issues?*
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?*
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?*

Single response to all the above:

The ACT Greens believe that high quality, free education is keystone of our democracy and a basic human right. The ACT Greens support a needs-based funding model for education, where we can be sure that children across all schools are funded in an equitable way. We remain committed to the Gonski funding model and its implementation in the ACT to ensure that we support teachers and principals, and that we create schools where all our students can achieve their best.

In the ACT, we have many great schools that are doing great things for our students. However, we have been challenged to be more inclusive and to better support all students in ACT schools – no matter their postcode or their parents income. Our teachers and principals are challenged by the complexity of behaviours and issues that students are presenting with, as well as the spectrum of learning needs in each and every classroom. Where the ACT has traditionally performed well on national assessments, we cannot be complacent about our academic achievements, and crucially we must ensure that students are not left behind.

In Canberra's public schools we are seeing the impacts of strong population growth in some new areas, as well as an ageing stock of schools buildings in some of Canberra's older suburbs. Building and maintaining the physical infrastructure of our schools is an important part of delivering a high quality education for our students.

The ACT's schools have been challenged by the *Schools for All* report to become more inclusive and to address the underlying culture that excludes children from maximising their participation in their classrooms. The 50 recommendations have touched on a range of aspects about how we put students at the centre of their learning and provide individualised learning opportunities that are rich and meaningful. The successful implementation of the Schools for All report will be clear not only when we have achieved the 50 recommendations, but also when we have seen a positive culture of inclusion across all schools in the ACT.

The ACT Greens remain committed to the implementation of the *Schools for All* report and an ongoing focus on the program of change over the next three years. We understand that, while the recommendations may be complete by the end 2016, cultural change in ACT schools will take longer to achieve. As such, the ACT Greens will commit to extending the independent oversight of the *Schools for All* program that report directly to the Minister and reports six monthly for an additional two years.

The ACT Greens will also:

- fund **additional school psychologists** in 2017 to build the assessment capacity for children with learning difficulties to ensure that families don't need to spend thousands of dollars undertaking tests privately.
- **substantially increase funding to youth mental services, so that every student, no matter which school they go to, can get the help they need.**
- Commit to \$4m over the next four years to fund counselling services in the community specifically for children and young people;
- Implement a streamlined referral process that can be utilized by all Canberra schools;
- Ensure resource materials are made easily available in all schools to ensure that students, teachers and principals are fully aware of services available;
- fund a comprehensive evaluation of the existing services available across government and non government support service;
- work with experts in the field such and ACT Health Child and Adolescent Mental Health services and Headspace ACT to develop a school system-wide (including non government schools) referral process.

In relation to access to land for new schools in growth areas, as Greens Minister for Education, Shane Rattenbury has advocated on behalf of the Catholic Education Office for a fairer, more transparent and consistent approach to land release and identified land allocation, and will continue to do so.

Gambling

Questions for candidates

1. *Do you support a steady reduction in the number of poker machines in the ACT?*
2. *If so, do you think that the current rate of reduction is adequate?*
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?*
4. *How do you expect trading of poker machine licences from clubs to the Casino to impact the ACT?*
5. *Do you consider that the ACT Government should support Commonwealth initiatives to reduce the extent of problem gambling on poker machines?*
6. *How do you expect employment levels in the ACT will be affected by a reduction in poker machines?*

RESPONSE:

The ACT Greens are committed to reducing gambling harm in our community. The ANU Centre for Gambling Research tells us that more than 4000 Canberrans are currently gambling unsafely; and the Productivity Commission tells us that up to 80% of gambling harm is due to electronic poker machines.

Our city has the highest rate of poker machines in Australia. Every year, Canberrans spend millions on poker machines. These machines break up families, ruin lives and send people into financial ruin. The ACT Greens will put the community first and reduce the number of pokie machines in our city by 30% over the ten years. The ACT Greens have also committed to introduce a range of harm minimisation measures including \$1 maximum bets and mandatory pre-commitment. These are the most effective ways to target problem gambling harm without unduly impacting on recreational gamblers.

Climate change

Questions for candidates

1. *What is your position on the reality or otherwise 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?*
3. *How might the incoming ACT Government encourage households and businesses to take greater responsibility for their own emissions?*

The Greens support the view that global warming is human-induced, consistent with the Academies of Science from 80 countries plus many scientific organizations and around 95% of actively publishing climate researchers. We have consistently advocated for climate change targets that are consistent with the science.

The Greens have always campaigned to stop human-induced climate change at every level of Government. In 2009 we were the first political party in the ACT to support a 40% emissions reductions target for the ACT - a target that is consistent with climate science. We put forward a comprehensive plan to source renewable energy for the Territory and have been part of delivering the 100% renewable energy target. We want to see the ACT reach zero net emissions by 2030, and have a plan to transition of gas, and to build a sustainable transport network across Canberra. We will double the funding to

programs to improve energy efficiency for those households on very low incomes as we understand that disadvantaged households should not bear any cost burden as we move from to a clean energy future. We will also set energy efficiency minimum standards for rental properties that mean that tenants don't have to freeze in winter or fry in summer.

We support the development of transport options that are able to run on clean energy and good public transport that improves access for all Canberrans and which reduces reliance on cars. The ACT Greens have a target to transition our bus fleet to clean technologies by 2030. We will ensure that the ACT is insulated against the impacts of climate change through the planting of 7000 additional trees each year to reduce the heat island effect.

Empowering Indigenous communities

Questions for candidates

1. *How would you support the Indigenous initiative after-school program, Solid Sista's and Brotha's?*
2. *What is your position on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in our education system?*

The ACT Education system aspires to provide a world class education for all students, however Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, on average, are being left behind, with clear gaps being highlighted on school engagement, retention and year 12 completion rates. As the ACT Government continues to implement the Parliamentary Agreement item that covers the "Gonksi" reforms that will see a genuine needs based funding, now is the time to seriously address these gaps and take the opportunity to see real equitable outcomes.

In 2017, we will continue to drive these reforms, and move to funding based on low SES backgrounds, english as second language or dialect, and indigenous status, and from 2018 will see this expanded to disability. Closing the gap is about more than just money - it's also about developing a new culturally appropriate approach, and about working with the community to ensure program funding is effective and relevant. That is why we will work with local providers to develop a new "transitions team" to work with indigenous students at key points in their education journey - from preschool to primary, primary to high, high to college and college to either higher education or employment. This approach will help parents, carers and their broader families prepare and plan for these changes, and support the students to successfully overcome many of the challenges that they may face.

We will also work to expand the successful "Solids" after school program that is currently running in the north of Canberra with great results. The ACT Greens will also further support local Indigenous culture and language programs being integrated into our public primary and high schools, such as a current proposal that has links to Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

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?*

As mentioned previously the ACT Greens are strong advocates for Justice Reinvestment and restorative justice. We are also very supportive of the existing ACT Galambany Circle Courts,

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?
2. How would you enhance equity through the distribution of capital, goods, and access to services throughout the Territory's economy?
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?

Single response to all above:

Our platform, **Community First**, puts forward the ACT Greens' agenda for the ACT. It was developed by our members, and represents our vision. Our [policies](#) are informed by values of social justice, equity, diversity and compassion.

The Greens are a party of the people, the environment and the future of our city - not a party for big business, developers or pokies. We will speak up for everyone who has been forgotten and ignored by the other parties.

The ACT Greens have been considering the Social Determinants of Health framework in our policy development for many years, and are pleased to see more mainstream stakeholders and representative bodies utilising the terminology and underpinning approach. But at the foundation of this critical analysis is a very simple message for all political parties and funded services: **people with a lower socioeconomic position in society have poorer health**. The Greens policies are always guided by the unfortunate and unavoidable fact that the most vulnerable in our community are often facing compounded disadvantage by lack of access to essential services, and that is why we focus our initiatives on putting the community first. This includes prioritising housing, transport, health and education improvements.

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