



REDUCING SUICIDE REDUCING AND PREVENTING SUICIDE IN CANBERRA

The Greens will fight for better treatment and care

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The Australian Greens have backed calls for the development and introduction of a new approach to suicide prevention in light of the recommendations of the National Mental Health Commission and calls from Suicide Prevention Australia. We have targets for reducing road deaths and other preventable health issues - the ACT Greens believe we should do the same for reducing suicide.

ACT Greens MLA Amanda Bresnan introduced annual reporting of suicides into the Assembly in 2012. The ACT Government has now reported against this for the past two years, helping to reduce the stigma and taboo around talking about suicide which can stand in the way of people seeking the help they need, leading to tragic and preventable loss of life.

As a society, we must better equip our services, and indeed the broader community, to respond to suicide.

> The ACT Greens will

- » Set a target to reduce suicide by 50% by 2025, in line with calls from Suicide Prevention Australia.
- » Establish a Suicide Expert Committee, along the lines of the Child Death Review Committee, to properly examine suicides in the ACT and make policy recommendations to ACT Government to help us better respond to and prevent suicide.
- » Advocate for the creation of a national suicide register through representation at the Ministerial Council level, and the development of improved suicide prevention campaigns relevant to the ACT community.
- » Enhance anti-stigma and health promotions strategies to challenge the ongoing misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the lived experience of mental illness - particularly in relation to at risk groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTI and CALD communities.

Setting a target to reduce suicide means acknowledging, and responding to, suicide as a preventable health issue. It calls on all of us in the Assembly, and in the community, 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 health and mental illness. That is why the ACT Greens are committed to implementing Suicide Prevention Australia's call to reduce the suicide rate by 50 per cent by 2025.



INVESTING IN MENTAL HEALTH And Our Wellbeing

The Greens will create an Office of Mental Health and invest in our services

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> An Office for Mental Health

After many years of increased funding to the mental health sector, both community and government, the ACT Greens remain concerned by the ongoing reports of silos and gaps and the constant revolving door of acute services. There are still gaps in our mental system and long waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health.

Right now, people are struggling to access the right services, at the right time, and for the right period. We are committed to developing accountable, transparent and community focused approach to both chronic and acute mental health care that puts the people who need the service at the centre of it.

That's why the ACT Greens will:

- » Create a new Office for Mental Health in consultation with local representative bodies and service providers such as the Capital Health Network, local community based advocacy services and government officials; and
- » Empower the Office for Mental Health to provide independent reports and advice to the community and government on what is working and what is not working in the delivery of mental health services; and have a role in partnering and monitoring the delivery of programs.

The Office for Mental Health will also have a role in coordinating the range of support services that are available to Canberrans to ensure that nobody falls through the gaps. We need to ensure a continuum of support for patients through the full range of the existing services, including residential, outpatient and supported accommodation options. This will be based on the best practise examples of the Western Australian and NSW Mental Health Commissions.

The Office for Mental Health will:

- » Examine the recent gap analysis undertaken by the ACT Primary Health Network into mental health services, and support increased funding to key areas of need, particularly in the community mental health sector;
- » Ensure ongoing whole of sector coordination;
- » Increase carer and consumer representative involvement with the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team; and
- » Increase funding for behaviour management programs and cognitive behavioural programs that focus on emotional regulation.

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KEEPING CANBERRANS HEALTHY

Keeping Our Community Well and Out of Hospital

The ACT Greens believe that an effective health system must be based on primary health care and preventive health care, including health promotion, disease prevention and early intervention.

The ACT Greens understand that preventative healthcare is the most effective way to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

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We are committed to reducing barriers to access to primary and preventive health care wherever possible will encourage people to interact with health services before they become unwell.

That's why the ACT Greens - while acknowledging the need to ensure our hospital facilities are supported to meet the needs of our growing city - have launched a preventative health plan to reduce hospitalisation for Canberrans.

> A Preventative Health Strategy

Keeping people healthy should always be our priority, not just treating them when they are already sick. The ACT Government has significantly invested in implementing the Healthy Weight Initiative. This is helping our community, from childhood onwards, get active and stay healthy.

However, substantial continued investment is needed in helping our whole community start to improve their diets, increase exercise, reduce co-morbidity issues (such as smoking) and have active lifestyles.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Develop a new comprehensive preventative health strategy
- » Continue to invest in the Healthy Weight Initiative to continue to keep our community health, and reduce the incidence of heart disease, diabetes and other preventable illness;
- » Better co-ordinate and refocus the existing healthy weight initiative to ensure that the ACT is genuinely focused on preventing obesity, cardiac disease and type 2 diabetes in particular.
- » Provide \$1 million in increased funding for targeted and evidence based Health Promotions Grants.

> Invest in Two New Walk-In Centres

The ACT hospitals' emergency departments are struggling to respond to the needs of many patients who present at Calvary and The Canberra Hospital who could possibly be treated safely, effectively and more efficiently by professional nurses in community based walk in centres.

These essential services are well regarded in the community, reduce waiting times, and offer free, high quality care and one-off advice and treatment for people with minor illness and injury.

But the model can be improved. We will work with medical experts and Nurse Practitioners to explore what further services they can provide safely and appropriately to the community, and explore increased opening hours.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Open two more walk in centres - in Dickson and Weston Creek - to provide a viable alternative for the increasing and anticipated population.
- » Undertake a review of the data on emergency department presentations and referrals from existing walk in centres to identify whether opening hours and types of medical treatments can be expanded to further alleviate pressure and provide more choices for community based care; and
- » Ensure that walk in centres are providing the full range of appropriate services.

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There are still gaps in our mental system and long waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health. This approach could also support a better understanding of the possible gaps that may exist for NDIS clients with complex mental health needs.

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MORE NURSES FOR CANBERRA

The front line and backbone of our health system

Focusing on prevention to take pressure off hospitals

The ACT Greens will invest in preventative healthcare to help Canberrans stay well and out of hospital, then to get better faster when they leave, with more nurses, nurse practitioners, home and community nurses.

There is no doubt that Canberra's health system faces challenges. The ACT Greens have a comprehensive plan to not only ensure that people get the best possible care when they are sick, but to help our community to have the most healthy, happy and fulfilled lives as possible.

We 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 needs a health package that continues to take the pressure off our hospitals, focuses on preventative services and improves access for vulnerable groups and people.

> More Nurses, More Practitioners

We all know that the front line and backbone of the health system are our nurses, and that they are under increasing pressure every day. The ACT Greens want to see more nurses of all levels and provide them with the right levels of staffing to ensure they are safe, and patients are getting the best possible care.

But we also want to see more Advanced Practice Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, who are highly trained professionals capable of undertaking greater levels of care and medical interventions, which can reduce the burden on doctors and other specialists. It also provides a greater continuity of care for patients as they journey through the sometimes complex and resource-challenged medical system.

Nurse Practitioners and Advanced Practice Nurses work as key members of the healthcare team and collaborate with other nurses and healthcare professionals including GPs, medical and surgical specialists, physiotherapists, dieticians, occupational therapists, social workers, and many others. They work in a variety of locations, both in hospital and community settings. By creating more of these dedicated positions, we can also support our existing workforce who may want to advance their skills, and further their careers in new and exciting ways.

But we recognise that we will need to support the workforce to undertake further training, and that is why we will also fund new Nurse Educator positions to support ongoing skills development.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Employ more 50 Nurse Educators, Practitioners and Advanced Practice Nurses;
- » Enhance training and professional development pathways;
- » Ensure we are recruiting now for the future needs to avoid skills shortages; and
- » Ensure that both public hospitals are providing consistent recognition and utilisation of these positions.

> More Home and Community Nurses

Home and Community Care nurses are vital for many in our community who need regular non-acute care, or who are recuperating after an injury or surgical procedure. They work with people suffering mental health issues who may be socially isolated, with mothers and newborn babies in the vital first days and weeks after leaving hospital, and with people suffering long term chronic pain or disability.

Many Canberrans rely on nurses to come to their homes for minor nursing care. These nurses ensure that vulnerable patients are cared for in the comfort of their homes, while greatly reducing the chances they will need to re-enter the hospital system.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Review the current ACT Health outpatient and community based services to ensure that vulnerable patients are getting the care they need, and services are adequately resourced and appropriately targeted;
- » Increase funding to these services across the board to reflect outcomes of the review, and provide up to 50 new nurses;
- » Increase the pre and post care available for surgical procedures and post-natal care in particular, to reduce the likelihood of readmission, support enhanced wound care, and increase preventative healthcare measures such as medication reviews, mental health support and nutrition plans; and
- » Increase the level of post-natal home visits.

We also believe that aged care, both residential and in the home, could benefit from a better, more responsive, and integrated approach with continuum of care, in collaboration with doctors. We would seek to partner with the “Home Doctor” service to develop a best practice approach to supporting nurses and carers in a range of environments, and see a stronger preventative system that supports ageing in place where possible.

> Keeping Our Health Workers Safe

Nurses and midwives are undertaking increasingly complex work with a growing patient load. As a professional workforce, doing a hard job well under trying conditions, the ACT Greens want to ensure that all nurses are able to undertake their duties safely, and in line with their full scope of practice. Every member of our community has the right to be safe at work

That is why we will hold a series of forums with the Chief Nurse, Australian Nurses and Midwives Federation, Worksafe ACT, the Australian Medical Association, the Australian College of Midwives and other relevant groups to explore areas of common concern regarding: safe staffing levels; appropriate staffing allocations; legislated baseline ratios for high risk areas; and importantly, how to ensure nurses and midwives are able to work to their fully trained capacity.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Host a series of forums to explore and develop recommendations to ensure health workers are safe at work.
- » We commit to working collaboratively with all these stakeholders to take action on any recommendations for Enterprise Agreement or legislative change.

> Indigenous Health

Closing the gap when it comes to health is a priority for the ACT Greens. We acknowledge that life outcomes and health indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Canberra region are below that for non-indigenous people, and despite the Closing the Gap targets, these figures reflect the ongoing inequality in our community.

We recognise that these issues require more than just health interventions to really improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - that is why we support a whole of person, whole of community approach.

The ACT Greens will commit \$13 million to:

- » Support the creation of a social and health services hub in Narrabundah, provide immediate funds to support final design work to begin as soon as possible as proposed by Winnunga Nimityjah Aboriginal Health Service, and commit to providing capital funding once a final feasibility study has been submitted and agreed to by Government.

We also recognise the key concerns raised by the Aboriginal community about the impacts of drug use and mental health, and will provide an additional \$2.5 million dollars in recurrent funding to immediately boost their capacity.

> \$1.5 Million to Dental Care for Low Income Families

The ACT Greens believe that it is crucial that essential dental care is provided to Canberrans who need it most. Many Canberrans struggle to afford dental care and are faced with long waiting times. Failing to get the treatment they need can lead to heart disease and stroke. Part of having a good preventative health plan means making sure people can access the dental care they need to prevent more serious illness in the future.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Increase funding to the ACT Health Dental Service which provides a range of dental treatment to ACT pension, concession and health care card holders;
- » Increase the scope of the mobile dental clinics;

- » Work with ACT Health and local private and public dental clinics to support more low income adults, youth and children to access quality proactive and emergency dental care, through increased opening hours and maintaining targeted subsidies; and
- » Raise the inclusion of dental care in the Commonwealth Medicare scheme through the federal Ministerial Council on Health

The ACT Greens have already announced:

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provide more choices for community based care; and

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> Establish a Mental Health Office

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service providers such as the Capital Health Network, local community based advocacy services and government officials; and

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COMMUNITY SPORTS & RECREATION

Keeping healthy, active & happy

Our \$14.8 million plan for community sport and recreation.

Improving access to sport and recreation is an investment in healthy, happy kids and more connected communities for Canberra's families.

Investment in community sport is an investment in our communities. It's an investment in healthy, happy kids and in the future of Australia's healthcare system. With rates of childhood obesity skyrocketing in Australia, we need to encourage kids away from the TV and on to the sporting field or into nature.

Participation in sport also has the benefit of growing community connections for families and kids. Being active, making friends and sharing in community activities are important building blocks for well-being in all areas of life.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Provide an additional \$2 million over 4 years for essential upgrades to ageing sporting facilities;
- » Build a 'Tan Track' around Eddison Park in Woden;
- » Develop Strategic Plans for Equestrian and Mountain Biking;
- » Fund a dedicated trail bike facility for Pierces Creek;
- » Provide \$30,000 per annum in sporting fee and costs subsidies for low-income families;
- » Develop a climate adaptation plan for sports infrastructure and events;
- » Construct more Multi-Purpose Indoor Sports facilities;
- » Keep swimming in the city;
- » Create a Sports Events Bidding Fund;
- » provide new Women as Leaders in Sport Grants; and
- » Undertake a trial of Physical Literacy in schools

> Upgrading Sports Facilities

Participation in recreation and sporting activities delivers many health and wellbeing benefits right

across our community, however, many organisations, particularly smaller community based ones, are currently struggling to find adequate facilities, and storage space.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Provide \$2 million in a new capital upgrades program to target ageing facilities and basic amenities; and
- » Fund \$300,000 towards the creation of a Fitness Track around the already popular Eddison Park and cemetery precinct similar to the very popular Tan Track in Melbourne

> Supporting grassroots sports

The ACT is host to a fantastic natural environment and friendly people. This has seen Canberra become the place of choice for many large sporting competitions, such as the Mont 24 hour mountain bike race, the ever popular Kanga Cup, and many more. We want to continue to support this type of grassroots events to come to Canberra, and for us all to benefit from the quantified social and economic returns they bring. That is why the ACT Greens will:

- » Fund a 10 year strategic plan for Kanga Cup, and work with the local organisers to provide sustainable recurrent funding
- » Create a Sports Event Bidding Fund of \$250,000 to help local organisations to better attract large mass participation events.

> Supporting a level playing field

Active engagement in organised sport and recreation can be great for celebrating diversity, enhancing social inclusion and improving health and fitness. But there are many families in Canberra who cannot take advantage of these opportunities due to cost or access barriers for people with disability.

That is why The ACT Greens will:

- » Create a more “level playing field” by providing \$30,000 per year to an appropriate community service provider to assist people with disability and low income families to increase their participation in sport and recreational activities.

Funding will be available for membership fees, uniforms, equipment and travel to give everyone a chance to play!

> Trail bike facility for Pierces Creek

There has long been the need for a dedicated trail bike facility for the ACT, to encourage trail bike users away from sensitive environmental areas and to provide a home for this popular sport.

The ACT Greens continue their support for such a facility and will:

- » Fund up to \$600,000 in capital works to build a safe and challenging competitive course;
- » Work with local riders, environment stakeholders, and Parks and Conservation Services, to identify the best possible site; and
- » Provide initial recurrent support of \$20,000 to the local riders association for the maintenance and upkeep of the facility over the first 4 years of operation.

> Swimming in the city

The Canberra Olympic Pool in Civic is a much-loved but sorely ageing facility that needs replacing. The ACT Greens want to ensure that there is a recreational swimming pool in the city area to meet the needs of the city workforce as well as the increasing number of city residents.

To ensure that this happens, the ACT Greens will:

- » Immediately begin work to either replace the Canberra Olympic Pool on site or identify an alternative location in the Civic area; and
- » Ensure that an Olympic diving tower is included either the new City pool, or investigate further the feasibility of including it at the new Stromlo Pool.

> More indoor sports facilities

In 2015, a comprehensive study into the current and future needs of indoor sports in Canberra was presented to government. Planned facilities such as the indoor cricket centre at Gold Creek will help meet some demand but ultimately demand from population growth in Molonglo, West Belconnen and Gungahlin cannot be met with existing facilities.

The report clearly indicated that the Government must start planning now for a range of new facilities, particularly in Gungahlin, and for growth sports such as futsal. To ensure we are not left playing catch up later, the ACT Greens will develop a future pipeline of key capital works, funding for feasibility and design studies for the top priorities in 2017, and commit to funding the feasibility, design and construction in the next term for:

- » Multi courts facility for the Woden region, to replace the loss of the Southern Cross and CIT facilities;
- » Multi courts facility for the Gungahlin region, to respond to growing population pressures;
- » Seek expressions of interest from the private sector and commercial developers for the construction of an

ice rink, with government in kind contribution of land or other support.

> Planning for the future

Our city is growing, and so is our population, and there are increasing pressures on our recreational space. The ACT Greens want to ensure that Canberra have access to a diversity of recreational activities as Canberra matures. Local sporting and recreational groups need assistance to respond to the future challenges of funding, access to land and facilities, and changing trends in participation. The Greens believe that, with the right support, Canberra can become a sporting and recreation travel destination of choice. To support the development of sport in the ACT, the ACT Greens will:

- » Create a permanent position of “Recreation Co-ordinator” to work across the government agencies to coordinate issues of land use, environmental protection, and sport and recreation user groups’ accommodation/facility needs;
- » Hold a recreation summit in early 2017 to work with local recreation organisations to hear what they need from government over the next 5 to 10 years; and
- » Undertake strategic master plans for Mountain Biking and Equestrian in 2017.

> Women in Sport

The ACT Greens know that women's sports are often undervalued, and female sports players are faced with an uphill battle to receive the recognition they, and their sports, deserve.

On average, female players are paid less, receive limited media coverage, and are underrepresented on sporting clubs executive committees and boards.

That is why the ACT Greens will:

- » Provide \$400,000 in new grants over 4 years to support women in sport.

This will be based on the existing successful Australian Government initiative that is managed by the Australian Sports Commission in partnership with the Office for Women. Each year, in alignment with the Commonwealth program, we will provide \$100,000 in women in sport grants under the following categories:

1. Individual Development Grants,
2. Organisation Leadership Development Grants, and
3. Targeted Leadership Development Program.

> Physical literacy in schools

Classroom teachers are often under equipped to deliver the quantity and quality of physical education and sport required for the development of sufficient physical literacy, or to the standard expected by the National Physical Education curriculum.

There is compelling evidence that improved understanding of physical literacy could improve the effectiveness of school based PE and sport in preventative medicine, psychological well-being and academic results in the ACT.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Fund a trial of a Physical Literacy Facilitator to a group of 8 schools within a designated ACT district. The Facilitator's role would be to link the school with community and government services, sporting clubs (in liaison with PE Pulse) and conduct in-class PE professional development for classroom teachers.

This position would be held by a primary school teacher with specialist training and experience in physical education. They will have no fixed class responsibilities, and will work with the group of 8 schools.



A NEW APPROACH TO DRUGS

Keeping people safe and healthy

The law and order approach to drug use is not working. It's time for a new approach

The law and order approach to drug use is not working, and people are dying because of it. The ACT Greens believe that our priority must always be keeping people safe, alive and healthy - not punishing them. We need a new approach to drug use that prioritises health and harm-minimisation over an outdated and ineffective 'war on drugs.'

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> A Pill Testing Trial

Young people are dying at parties and festivals because of drug use - and the law and order approach to stopping them is not working, and it's certainly not keeping them safe. Last year at music festivals in Australia the use of 'party drugs' caused the deaths of six young people, and injured many more. That is six young people too many.

To save lives and reduce the harms of drug use at festivals, the ACT Greens commit to introducing a festival 'pill testing' trial in the ACT in 2017.

Pill testing is already routine at festivals in several countries with successful results. It involves a simple, on-site test by medical experts, using portable laboratory-grade equipment, that allows festival-

goers to have a pill or pill-scraping tested for toxic impurities that will harm or potentially kill them. The law and order approach to drug use is not working. Illicit drugs can cause harm on their own, but they are also often adulterated with substances that can cause rapid and serious health impacts, and even death. It's our responsibility to do everything we can to keep young people safe - that means trialling pill testing in the ACT.

A pill testing trial will:

- » Give young people, and festival organisers, information immediately about any dangerous drug batches at events or festival sites;
- » Give health professionals and festival organisers the opportunity to engage with and educate young people who are planning to use drugs at events about the potential risks associated with their choices;
- » Allow for data about drug compositions and drug using behaviour to be collected to better inform our response to drug use and harm minimisation;
- » Provide police with additional data on illicit drugs (and impurities) that make their way into our

communities to better identify and prevent the supply of these illicit substances.

"It is very difficult to respond to a problem when we don't have the right information at the right time. Some people are unknowingly taking new drugs that as health professionals, we know very little about. Some people are taking pills with very high doses of well-known drugs like Ecstasy.

Testing these drugs at festivals and providing the results back to all stakeholders can really change the game. With this information at hand, police, health and welfare agencies that deal with the fall-out from drugs are better equipped to do their jobs.

And there is strong evidence from UK and other countries that many people will discard drugs after receiving unexpected results from a credible service.

These services take particularly dangerous drug combinations out of the market while providing what can often be the only interaction with a health professional about drug use that a festival-attendee may have.

The evidence strongly supports conducting an Australian trial of testing drugs at festivals, so I commend the Greens on their pragmatic approach to this area of health policy."

» Dr Monica Barratt, Research Fellow at the Drug Policy Modelling Program, UNSW

> A Drug Law Reform Summit

The social, financial and health costs associated with illicit drug use are a huge burden on every government. We know that there are many other jurisdictions that are responding to the challenges faced by drug use in new and innovative ways, testing the evidence base and seeking new research and law enforcement methods to address this complex issue.

Governments of all persuasions across Australia are wrestling with these complex social, legal and health issues, and our community cannot afford to be left behind.

As a small, progressive city state, we have opportunities to address these issues head on, and

become a national leader in evidence-based Harm Minimisation.

The ACT Greens will hold a high-level, whole of government expert roundtable with input from leading law enforcement agencies, academics, and clinicians from around the world, to genuinely explore what's working and what's needed to have more intelligent approach to illicit drug use in the ACT.

> Establish a medicinal cannabis trial

The ACT Greens have campaigned for over a decade to ensure the ACT Government will allow sick and dying people to access cannabis as a medical treatment, where it can help them with the symptoms of their condition.

The Greens will ensure that eligible patients are able to access consistent and government approved medicinal cannabis products on prescription by 2017, and will establish appropriate regulations, administration and education and training to ensure people can access these treatments in a timely and efficient manner.

We will ensure the scheme is not unnecessarily restrictive, as the most important thing is ensuring that people who are seriously ill can actually access an effective treatment. The scheme will cover the terminally ill, children with severe epilepsy, as well as people with other serious illnesses, provided there is appropriate medical support and approval.

The scheme will also allow people to access products made from the cannabis leaf or plant (which will be consistent and government approved), as is the case in the Netherlands, rather than limiting access to the very few expensive and often ineffective pharmaceutical cannabis products.