

OLDER PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

The Greens want a Canberra that is truly inclusive. We want a Canberra where people are valued members of our community regardless of their age, and where everyone can live, work, play, thrive and reach their full potential.

We want a city that is built in a way that means everyone can get around safely and comfortably, no matter their age or circumstances, including those who are ageing, frail, unwell, heavily pregnant, or caring for small children.

We want a Canberra that is safe for older people. This includes physical safety but also safeguards against elder abuse.

Currently, older people face many obstacles to full participation in the community due to a variety of structural and systemic barriers that assume they are able to access the support they need. Many older Canberrans are living in poverty, with fixed incomes or relying on the aged pension to survive. The Covid pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, with many older people being further isolated and having to rely on family members for information and support. Unfortunately, in a few cases, family members are exploiting and abusing their older relatives, leaving them in debt and with minimal support.

We need to change how we do things to create a new and better normal. Many of these changes are quite simple like ensuring spaces are accessible without steps, helping the whole community, in particular people with mobility issues, to get around.

But it is not only lack of physical access to spaces and places that creates barriers to participation and living a full life, it is also the lack of access to information and support. This includes health services, finances and financial advice, and specialist knowledge. Older people can lack a voice, experience discrimination and have little recourse when something goes wrong or they are treated badly. This can cause existing barriers to become or feel insurmountable.

THAT'S WHY THE ACT GREENS WILL SUPPORT OLDER CANBERRANS TO GET AROUND THE CITY, GET THE INFORMATION THEY NEED AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSES TO ELDER ABUSE.

THE GREENS WILL:

1. Expand the Official Visitor Scheme to include aged care services
2. Fund the Older Persons Abuse Line to implement a concerted education campaign about abuse of older persons and obligations under Powers of Attorney
3. Continue to work with COAG in the development of a National Register of Powers of Attorney and a Will Bank
4. Fund an education campaign about advanced care directives
5. Increase funding for the Public Trustee and Guardian to better support elder abuse
6. Sign the National Code for Unregistered Health Workers
7. Provide technology and assistance to those who need it, including older people
8. Increase support for people with life limiting illnesses by providing better end-of-life palliative care services including:
 - a. palliative care ward at the Canberra Hospital
 - b. Enhanced after hours palliative care
 - c. Palliative care respite facility for carers
 - d. A scoping study for a secular hospice
9. Build an age-friendly city by:
 - a. Setting a proportion of new residential properties in the ACT built to meet Universal Design standards to make them able to be adapted and accessible to all people regardless of age, disability or other factors.
 - b. Implementing a dedicated Access Committee to provide advice on transport and urban planning
 - c. Enhancing on-demand and flexibus services which will make it easier for older people to get around Canberra
 - d. Increasing suitable and affordable housing for low income older people
 - e. Improving footpaths, and more footpath maintenance
10. Review the ACT Government targeted concession assistance measures to make sure that financial assistance is going where it is most needed
11. Establish an ACT Social Prescribing Framework and Program
12. Support The Neighbourhood to secure land to develop Canberra's first Dementia Care Village

1. EXPAND THE OFFICIAL VISITOR SCHEME TO INCLUDE AGED CARE SERVICES

Official Visitors already exist for homelessness, disability, mental health and corrections. The role of the Official Visitor is independent and receives and investigates complaints about care provided in residential settings. Whilst the Commonwealth is largely responsible for the provision of aged care, an Official Visitor would provide additional oversight for this vulnerable group. This is all the more necessary because the COVID pandemic highlights increased risks for people in aged care settings.

2. FUND THE OLDER PERSONS ABUSE LINE TO IMPLEMENT A CONCERTED EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ABOUT ABUSE OF OLDER PERSONS AND OBLIGATIONS UNDER POWERS OF ATTORNEY AND ENDURING POWERS OF ATTORNEY

Greens MLA Caroline Le Couteur has [long championed elder rights](#) and brought attention to elder abuse in our community. The Greens helped successfully secure more support for seniors, with a new Seniors Rights Service established in the ACT following our concerns that existing services in the Territory didn't go far enough. We were pleased that earlier this year, the Crimes Act was amended to include abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults to be a specific crime.

At the time, the need for a concerted campaign about elder abuse was identified and a delayed implementation date provides time for such a campaign. The Greens will fund the Older Persons Abuse Line at Legal Aid to develop and roll out a campaign about elder abuse that targets specific audiences including vulnerable people and those who care for them, and ensures that the relevant organisations, institutions and corporations who are stakeholders in this space are informed and educated about the legislation and its impacts.

The most common form of Elder Abuse is financial abuse, most often by family members. People with Powers of Attorney may not be aware of their responsibilities, and older people can be left in a position where the person they trust is exploiting them for financial gain. In some instances this can sadly result in the loss of a home or the ability to pay for residential aged care when needed.

While an older person's signature needs to be witnessed when appointing a Power of Attorney, the signature of the Attorney themselves does not need to be witnessed. Witnessing provisions ensure that the person signing the document understands their rights and responsibilities. This should go both ways. The Greens will implement a requirement for an Attorney's signature to be witnessed and for their rights and responsibilities to be clearly explained when taking on this responsibility.

3. CONTINUE TO WORK WITH COAG IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL REGISTER OF POWERS OF ATTORNEY AND A WILL BANK

Work has been occurring at a national level to develop a national register of powers of attorney (POA) and a national will bank. Without a centralised register of POAs and wills, it can be difficult to assess and access relevant documentation. A national register would increase protections against elder abuse and introduce Power of Attorney laws which are the same across the country to protect people from this kind of abuse. A National POA Register will also enable checking whether POA documents are legitimate and current. A national will bank would also provide the same security.

The Greens are committed to continuing this important work to strengthen protections against elder abuse. A national register is the ideal, however, if there are significant lags in agreement across states and territories about the details, then we will push for the ACT to set up registers in the territory.

4. FUND AN EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVANCED CARE DIRECTIVES

An Advanced Care Directive is a legal document that outlines future health care, residential and accommodation matters and personal affairs. It is an important tool to ensure that a person has a say in whether they will accept or refuse medical treatment and what they want to happen if they are seriously ill or injured. An Advanced Care Directive is a way for someone to have a voice in these important decisions and will provide clarity to inform a substitute decision-maker and/or doctor.

5. INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE PUBLIC TRUSTEE AND GUARDIAN

The Greens want to increase funding for the Public Trustee and Guardian, to provide more case managers to meet their continuing community service obligations, including any increased demand as a result of the introduction of the new crime of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults. This complements our commitment to increase resourcing for the Human Rights Commission to address elder abuse issues in our Justice package.

6. SIGN THE NATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR UNREGISTERED HEALTH WORKERS

The Greens believe that the ACT Government should sign the National Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Workers, as it is desperately overdue. The purpose of the National Code is to protect the public by setting minimum standards of conduct and practice for all unregistered health care workers who provide a health service. The vast majority of health care workers practice in a safe, competent and ethical manner. However there is a small proportion who present a serious risk to the public because they require further education, training and supervision, or engage in exploitative, predatory or illegal conduct such that if they were a registered health practitioner, their registration would be cancelled and their right to practice withdrawn. This Code would include aged care workers and other workers in health settings who are not registered with their professional association.

7. PROVIDE TECHNOLOGY AND ASSISTANCE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT, INCLUDING OLDER PEOPLE

The ACT Greens will commit to the provision of technology and assistance to those who need it, including older people. We recognise that many older people experience technology exclusion and experience isolation and loneliness as a result. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the value of technology in times when we cannot physically meet in person and it is important that older people are not left behind through this challenging period.

8. PALLIATIVE CARE

In step with end-of-life choices and dignity in dying, the Greens know the ACT need additional palliative care and facilities in the future.

A. PALLIATIVE CARE WARD AT CANBERRA HOSPITAL

For many, ill-health and end-of-life can come suddenly, and the option to access hospice care is limited. It can also be very disruptive to a person's illness and health situation.

The Greens have heard from the community that people who are in in-patient settings and in end-of-life stages would benefit greatly from a dedicated palliative in-patient ward at Canberra Hospital.

Everyone deserves to die with dignity and the Greens will deliver a dedicated palliative care ward at the Canberra Hospital for people who are not able or willing to transfer to Clare Holland House, but deserve a more comfortable end-of-life and reduced stress for the patient and family.

B. ENHANCED IN-HOME AND AFTER HOURS PALLIATIVE CARE

Research overwhelmingly shows that people prefer to die at home where possible. An expansion of in-home and after hours palliative care will allow more families to be supported on the end of life journey for their loved ones.

The Greens will invest \$1 million in increased palliative care support for patients at home or in residential aged care. After hours care is identified as a specific area for greater resources, particularly as people tend to pass away in the evenings and require pain relief when choosing to die at home.

C. PALLIATIVE CARE RESPITE FACILITY FOR CARERS

The Greens have long advocated for more end-of-life choices and the ability to die with dignity. Dying with dignity means supporting people who wish to die at home, but it is also important that family and loved ones who are carers are in turn supported. Carer stress and fatigue is identified as being a key barrier to people dying in the home, and that is why the Greens will support establishment of Palliative Care ACT's proposed 4 bed respite facility 'The Hub'.

Through the COVID-19 Innovation Grants announced by Minister Rattenbury, Palliative Care ACT have been able to secure a temporary location for The Hub and are currently developing the business case for the respite service.

D. SCOPING STUDY FOR A SECULAR HOSPICE

Populations are ageing, internationally, nationally and domestically, and the Greens know that the ACT must start to plan and invest in the future of healthcare and services for ageing demographics.

The Greens commend and appreciate the fantastic service offered at Clare Holland House, however, as it is the only hospice in the ACT, and Catholic-affiliated, it does present a barrier to many people in end-of-life stages.

We understand that the ACT will need to increase hospice care in the near future and rather than increasing capacity at Clare Holland, the Greens believe it's time to start planning for a new secular palliative care facility. We will commit \$100,000 to conduct a feasibility study to determine the facility location, and bed capacity.

9. BUILDING AN AGE-FRIENDLY CITY

The ACT Greens have led the way in developing age-friendly suburbs, with a commitment to develop age-friendly suburb improvements in the last Parliamentary Agreement. The ACT Greens will ensure more 'aged friendly suburbs' by:

A. SETTING A PROPORTION OF ALL NEW RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN THE ACT BUILT TO MEET UNIVERSAL DESIGN STANDARDS TO MAKE THEM ABLE TO BE ADAPTED AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF AGE, DISABILITY OR OTHER FACTORS.

The Greens want a **proportion of all new residential properties in the ACT to be built to meet Universal Design Standards to make them accessible** or adaptable to meet the housing needs of all people, including older people and people with disability. The Greens want the ACT to continue to advocate at COAG for National Construction Code changes to introduce national accessibility standards for residential housing. However, this process has already been underway for some time, and if national agreement on this reform cannot be reached in the near future, the Greens will push for the development of an ACT-specific Appendix to the Building Code of Australia to ensure that a proportion of new residential buildings in the ACT meet improved accessibility standards.

The Greens want a government-led roundtable to discuss options with industry to achieve this.

B. IMPLEMENTING A DEDICATED ACCESS COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON TRANSPORT AND URBAN PLANNING

Universal access in urban areas enables all people to get where they need to, regardless of their age, gender or ability. It is about ensuring that people can move about the city freely and with independence. This includes walking and cycling, use of the bus and light rail network, as well as other transport services.

Those who struggle to get around our city are the people who can offer the best insights into how to make it better.

The Greens will establish an Access Committee, to provide advice and feedback to the ACT Government on urban planning, transport design, and active travel issues. The Committee's membership will include people with a range of disabilities, including women and people of diverse ages and backgrounds. This will improve the level of community involvement in infrastructure planning and ensure a greater diversity of community input.

C. ENHANCING ON-DEMAND AND FLEXIBUS SERVICES WHICH WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR OLDER PEOPLE TO GET AROUND CANBERRA

The ACT Greens will **fund a review of community need for expanded flexible, community and on-demand bus services**, and identify the best options for future investment in expanded and innovative services to better meet the needs of people who cannot easily use public transport. This must be done with the community sector and include reconsideration of recommendations from the 2004/5 review into Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, and examine the findings of recent trials of on-demand services in Sydney. Investment in new services and/or more vehicles would be considered from the 2022 budget onwards.

D. INCREASING SUITABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR LOW INCOME OLDER PEOPLE

Our Homes for All plan details our plan to make over 1000 new affordable homes available to support our community so that everyone can have a secure and stable home, regardless of income or age.

E. IMPROVING FOOTPATHS, AND MORE FOOTPATH MAINTENANCE

Our Walking and Cycling plan sets out a range of new investments in footpath upgrades and maintenance. The Greens believe Path improvements should be based on users' feedback, and reflect local conditions, such as existing infrastructure, demographics, and geography. Other changes that improve walking, cycling and safety in neighbourhoods, such as lower speed limits, pedestrian crossings, speed humps, or signage should also be identified through this consultation.

10. REVIEW THE ACT GOVERNMENT TARGETED CONCESSION ASSISTANCE MEASURES

The ACT Greens want a **review of targeted concession assistance measures, including the current rates concessions, rebates and deferrals system**, to ensure concessions and rebates are adequate and well-targeted to meet community need. The Greens believe this is necessary, particularly since the COVID pandemic has increased hardship for many people affected by job loss and lack of income. This review must be undertaken with input from relevant community organisations working to support people in the community, and the rates section of the review should be undertaken after the ICRC investigation.

11. ESTABLISHING AN ACT SOCIAL PRESCRIBING FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAM

Social connectedness is one of a number of factors that contributes to wellbeing for older adults. Social isolation and loneliness in older people can be addressed through projects and initiatives that increase social connectedness through social prescribing.

With the Greens in government the ACT Health Directorate will develop policy to establish an ACT Social Prescribing Framework and Program to support social prescribing in ACT healthcare delivery. This initiative will work with GPs and NGOs to create a formal referral process for patients to engage in activities like art therapy, walking and reading groups, exercise classes, nature based activities, volunteering as well as support with employment, debt, housing and legal advice.

There are a range of different interventions or programs that can be utilised to address loneliness in the elderly including arts and dance programs in aged care and transgenerational programs in Residential Aged Care Facilities.

12. SUPPORT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD TO SECURE LAND TO DEVELOP CANBERRA'S FIRST DEMENTIA CARE VILLAGE

Dementia is a significant and growing issue for many people in the ACT. The Neighbourhood is a not for profit organisation that is working to develop a world class dementia care residential village in Canberra. They are aiming to build residential care for 90 residents and their carers in a village setting with community facilities, healthcare providers, retail and restaurant facilities and childcare onsite too.

The Greens will support The Neighbourhood to identify and secure land for the development of their village.