

SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND INTERSEX RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

The Greens want a Canberra that is truly inclusive, where we create conditions for equal opportunities for all. We want a Canberra where people who are same sex attracted, gender diverse or those who have intersex variations feel that they belong and that their contributions are valued. We believe that freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity are fundamental human rights that must be protected and believe our community is more just and equal when we support, embrace and celebrate our diversity.

While we now have marriage equality there is still a long way to go in terms of strengthening supports for people in our community who identify as same sex attracted, gender diverse or intersex. Disproportionately high rates of mental health concerns, isolation, discrimination and exclusion present us with the need to provide specific and additional supports to these members of our community. The outrage from some people in our community generated by the recent passing of legislation banning conversion therapy highlighted that there are still people who want to deny same sex attracted and gender diverse people the right to express themselves as they wish. At the same time, the sector has long been calling for a well supported peer based gender clinic and the ability to provide quicker and more accessible testing for blood borne viruses.

THAT'S WHY THE ACT GREENS WILL INCREASE CAPACITY OF DEDICATED SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS, TO WORK TO REDUCE DISCRIMINATION AND ISOLATION AND PROVIDE SUPPORT, BY:

1. Providing **secure, ongoing and additional funding for A Gender Agenda**
2. **Boosting the capacity of Meridian** to expand their reach
3. **Supporting The Friday Centre, a peer led gender based clinic** to assist gender diverse people to get the help they need, including funding for a part-time **paediatric endocrinologist**
4. **Funding a dedicated housing and homelessness officer** to provide advocacy and support to same sex attracted and gender diverse people needing a roof over their head
5. **Support** the roll out of **community based rapid HIV testing** and HIV/BBV prevention efforts
6. **Banning gender related surgery on intersex babies** (unless necessary for preservation of life) and providing training for midwives and doctors
7. Inserting a **non-discrimination clause** in all funding agreements between government and community organisations
8. **Working with survivors of conversion therapy** to determine further reforms and protections
9. Continuing the work to update **all government forms, including all school forms, to recognise sex and gender diversity**
10. **Updating the high school health curriculum** as it relates to gender and gender identity, and supporting A Gender Agenda to work with students to develop the curriculum.

1. PROVIDING SECURE, ONGOING AND ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR A GENDER AGENDA

A Gender Agenda has provided support to the gender diverse community for some years however, their funding is often insufficient and not guaranteed to be ongoing. Providing ongoing certainty and capacity of an additional \$150,000 per annum will allow A Gender Agenda to maintain a dedicated intersex worker, who has previously been on short term contracts. Committing to fund this in an ongoing way will ensure that this position, the only one in the ACT, continues to exist.

2. BOOSTING THE CAPACITY OF MERIDIAN TO EXPAND THEIR REACH

Meridian has experienced an increase in demand for supports, particularly during the COVID pandemic as experiences of isolation have been magnified. Additionally, they have implemented a Pride Hub as a place for people to gather and get a sense of belonging and have partnered with A Gender Agenda in establishing a peer led gender clinic.

Increasing funding by \$100,000 per annum to Meridian will allow for more activities at the Pride Hub and will enable the organisation to continue to be innovative in its approach and contribute to reducing mental health issues for this population group.

3. SUPPORTING THE FRIDAY CENTRE, A PEER LED GENDER BASED CLINIC INITIATED BY A GENDER AGENDA TO ASSIST GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE TO GET THE HELP THEY NEED, INCLUDING FUNDING FOR A PART-TIME PAEDIATRIC ENDOCRINOLOGIST

Evidence suggests that there is a local need for ongoing healthcare, sexual health, hormone initiation and management, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Counselling. Evidence also suggests there is much to be gained from peer led supports, as support is designed and delivered by the people who understand the issues through their own lived experience.

In partnership, A Gender Agenda and Meridian and have introduced a peer led clinic model in the ACT, however, more funding is needed, particularly for a paediatric endocrinologist to provide advice and support for young people who are transitioning.

4. FUNDING A DEDICATED HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS OFFICER TO PROVIDE ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT TO SAME SEX ATTRACTED AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE NEEDING A ROOF OVER THEIR HEAD

Rates of homelessness or risk of homelessness are high amongst same sex attracted and gender diverse people, and mainstream services can struggle to meet their needs. Better understanding of the issues is required, and tailored approaches are needed to resolve housing issues. Funding a dedicated LGBTIQ+ housing and homelessness officer to work with mainstream services will provide greater specialised support to members of the community needing housing solutions. This worker would be situated in one of the dedicated LGBTIQ+ community organisations.

5. SUPPORT THE ROLL OUT OF COMMUNITY BASED RAPID HIV TESTING

Evidence suggests that offering rapid HIV testing in outreach and community settings is a feasible approach for reaching members of new and emerging communities and people at high risk of HIV infection. In the ACT, gay men and people who have arrived from high prevalence countries are a significant proportion of people affected by HIV. The availability of community based rapid testing will ensure that their health issues can be addressed and reduce opportunities for transmission.

6. BANNING GENDER RELATED SURGERY ON BABIES WITH INTERSEX VARIATIONS (UNLESS NECESSARY FOR PRESERVATION OF LIFE) AND PROVIDING TRAINING FOR MIDWIVES AND DOCTORS

Babies born with genitals that are not clearly female or male are often subjected to surgery in the early days of their life that determines the gender in which they will navigate their life. These decisions are made by often well meaning parents and clinicians, however are not always necessary. They are influenced by the desire to stick to a binary understanding of gender. Furthermore, the person who has had the surgery done to them has had no say in the decision and may need or want to reverse or change their gender because the wrong one was assigned to them.

The ACT Greens will work towards banning any unnecessary surgery on babies born with intersex variations, unless it is necessary for the preservation of life. Many intersex bodies are perfectly healthy bodies where no intervention is needed. This work will also involve working with and training midwives and doctors.

7. INSERTING A NON-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE IN ALL FUNDING AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE ACT GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Whilst Canberra is an inclusive city and it is clear that the majority of Canberrans support the rights of same sex attracted, intersex and/or gender diverse people to marry, discrimination still continues when it comes to general acceptance and inclusion. We have seen heated debates in the community about banning conversion practices and the Federal Government attempting to wind back wins under the guise of religious freedoms. The ACT Greens are very clear that the services offered by non-government organisations and funded through taxpayer dollars must be available to all who need them. While organisations cannot legally deny services or employment to people on the grounds they are same sex attracted, intersex or gender diverse, the Greens want these obligations to be included in any funding agreement, contract, deed or grant with service providers performing functions of a public nature.

8. WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF CONVERSION THERAPY TO DETERMINE FURTHER REFORMS AND PROTECTIONS

The ACT Government passed legislation banning conversion practices on same sex attracted or gender diverse people. This was an important step in ensuring that these harmful practices cease. There is ample evidence that exposure to harmful ideologies that deny a person's authenticity and the right to live freely with their sexuality or gender identity has detrimental effects on mental health and the ability to live a fulfilling life. We know that survivors are keen to strengthen the current protections and we will work with them, including members of SOGICE (Survivors of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts) to identify further reforms.

9. CONTINUING THE WORK TO UPDATE ALL GOVERNMENT FORMS, INCLUDING ALL SCHOOL FORMS, TO RECOGNISE SEX AND GENDER DIVERSITY

The Greens will prioritise work to remove requirements for a person to identify their sex or gender on all ACT Government forms, where that information is unnecessary, and if such information is necessary, to give the person the option of identifying as female (F), male (M), intersex/indeterminate/unspecified (X).

These changes were first recommended in the [Law Reform Advisory Council Beyond the Binary Report](#) released in 2012, and supported by the Government in its [2013 response](#). While many public forms and identification documents have been updated consistent with best practice, there are still old forms being routinely used, particularly in school settings, which causes distress for members of our LGBTIQ+ community. There is no reason that these documents should still be in use almost a decade after the Government's commitment to update all forms.

The Greens want the [Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs](#) to audit all forms and provide support to operational areas of Government to update their forms, in line with the commitment in the [Capital Of Equality LGBTIQ+ Strategy](#) to ensure workplace settings and schools and education settings are safe and inclusive.

10. UPDATING THE HIGH SCHOOL HEALTH CURRICULUM AS IT RELATES TO GENDER AND GENDER IDENTITY, AND SUPPORTING A GENDER AGENDA TO WORK WITH STUDENTS TO DEVELOP THE CURRICULUM.

The high school health curriculum as it relates to gender identity and trans issues is not accurate, appropriate or up to date and, as a consequence, is causing discomfort and pain for some students. At least one high school, prompted by students, has sought assistance from A Gender Agenda to update the curriculum, but AGA does not have the resources to assist. The ACT Greens will ensure that AGA is provided with additional funding to work with students, schools and the Education Directorate to update the curriculum in line with expectations.