

EXPANDING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

THERE ARE UP TO 55,000 PEOPLE IN CANBERRA WHO DESERVE TO HAVE A SAY, BUT CURRENTLY DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN ACT ELECTIONS.

The Greens want Canberra to be a city for all of us. That means empowering more Canberrans to participate in our democracy, sharing ideas and understanding to shape the community we all call home.

Unlike the old parties, the Greens don't shy away from the needs of young people, or of the myriad multicultural communities who have found new homes in Canberra. We welcome input and scrutiny.

That's why we want to give more Canberrans a say in ACT elections. That includes 16- and 17-year olds, who our society already empowers to enter into contracts and make medical decisions. It also includes permanent residents, who are no less Canberrans than others who were born with citizenship.

We will all live with the consequences of the decisions our parliament makes on climate change, public transport and healthcare. Everyone is affected by how the government deals with our cost-of-living and housing affordability crisis. And everyone deserves to be able to pass judgement at the ballot box.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- Lower the voting age to 16
- Give voting rights to permanent residents
- Uphold the principle of compulsory voting
- Ensure appropriate community education about new voting rights and responsibilities

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Right now there are over 10,000 16- & 17-year-olds in Canberra who should have the opportunity to vote.

These young people are treated as being mature enough to enter into contracts, make medical decisions for themselves, choose a career, drive on our roads, and pay taxes and fines.

They will bear the brunt of the climate crisis that older generations are leaving them, and they deserve a say in how we fix it.

VALUING DIVERSITY

Another 45,000 people who call Canberra home also pay their taxes and contribute to this community, but aren't eligible to vote because they don't have citizenship.

They are mostly from migrant backgrounds, and once they are permanent residents, we should recognise that they deserve to have a say.

A RIGHT, A RESPONSIBILITY

The Greens propose to maintain compulsory voting, which is an important and valued feature of Australian democracy.

We will ensure adequate community education to ensure new voters are aware of their right to vote, and understand their responsibility to do so.

We know that compulsory voting is about how you institute a positive duty to vote, not the tool by which you enforce it.

WHAT COMES NEXT

In 2023, we introduced amendments to the Electoral Act that would lower the voting age to 16, but - despite their obvious discomfort in denying young people - the old parties wouldn't support it.

The Greens are committed to sharing the power of the parliament and making it ever more representative of our community.

In the next term of the ACT Legislative Assembly we will introduce amendments again, this time including the right of permanent residents to vote, to improve equity in our democracy.