

CARING FOR CANBERRANS WITH FREE AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE

MORE BULK BILLING DOCTORS AND QUALITY CARE FOR CHRONIC CONDITIONS

The Greens believe that every Canberran should have access to free, high quality healthcare when they need it.

But over a decade of neglect from the Commonwealth Government means that the Medicare Benefits Schedule payment is not enough to cover the cost of General Practitioner (GP) services, and the cost of living crisis means too many Canberrans can't afford to see a GP.

The ACT Greens have a plan to ensure that every Canberran has access to the healthcare they need in order to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Our goal is to provide a genuinely free universal healthcare system, because you shouldn't need more than a Medicare card to get the care you need.

The ACT Greens want to make it easier to see a bulk billing GP, in order to improve health and life outcomes for everyone, and reduce pressure on our hospital system.

For people with chronic conditions, we want to provide GPs with a particular focus on specific conditions in order to provide more integrated ongoing care.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Establish four GP clinics (two northside, two southside), so Canberrans can access a doctor for free, closer to home.
- ▲ Partner with interested GPs to develop their skills and expertise in specific conditions to provide ongoing, free, specialist care to people with long-term illnesses.

BULK BILLING GP CLINICS

PROVIDING MORE THAN 160,000 FREE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS

Every Canberran should be able to see a GP when they need to.

However, the ACT has the lowest rate of bulk billing GPs in Australia and most Canberrans can't reliably access free healthcare. This, combined with the rising cost of living means that healthcare is becoming unaffordable for many.

When health issues aren't addressed early, it can often result in more urgent treatment further down the road. Trips to the emergency department are more stressful for the patient and add more pressure onto our hospital system.

The ACT Greens want to ensure Canberrans can get the care they need, when they need it, not only when they are in crisis.

That's why we will establish four ACT Government owned and operated clinics - two in the north and two in the south - where GPs can provide bulk billed care.

The clinics will provide routine appointments for all health related matters, like vaccinations, check-ups and

sexual health and family planning. Clinics could also support other clinicians such as psychologists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, and physiotherapists.

The ACT Government would employ medical receptionists on secure permanent contracts and cover all costs associated with running the clinic, including cleaning and maintenance.



Any registered GP can register to work at a GP clinic and see patients, on the condition that all appointments are bulk billed. The GP would be self employed and receive 100% of the MBS payment.

Because the clinics will be fully bulk billed, they will not be subject to GP payroll tax.

The arrangement would allow GPs to choose their working hours at the clinic and not have to deal with the administrative burden of running their own practice. The centres would operate by appointment and be open 7 days a week on an extended working day basis (eg. 7am to 7pm).

Based on seeing 3 patients an hour and working a 7 hour day, 5 days per week a doctor would see approximately 105 patients per week.

In a clinic with 8 doctors, that's 840 FREE doctor's appointments per clinic, per week.

With four clinics across Canberra that's 3,360 bulk billed patient visits a week, or more than 160,000 appointments per year.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$2m per year to operate four bulk billing GP centres.
- \$1.5m in capital costs to fit out existing ACT Government-owned properties.

QUALITY CARE FOR CHRONIC CONDITIONS

PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE, FREE, ONGOING CARE FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT

People who live with long term health conditions need reliable access to healthcare providers who understand their clinical history and health needs.

However we know that many people seeking care for their chronic condition have had to travel interstate to access a service within an appropriate timeframe.

The ACT Greens will establish a program that contracts with local general practices to develop and maintain clinical knowledge in specific condition groups to provide free, ongoing care to those with chronic conditions.

People living with long term conditions can require significant clinical management to manage their condition and stay well. They often need more medical appointments and, when their condition goes through a rough patch, they might need to get appointments quickly to get the help they need.

Our plan will provide reliable access to a GP who understands their condition, their history and what's normal for them as an individual. Their GP will (where necessary) work with hospital-based clinical teams to keep them as well as possible and prevent hospitalisation.

If hospital treatment is necessary, the GP can be across what's happened in hospital and be in a position to continue with their care post discharge.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

After receiving a diagnosis, patients will be connected with a participating special interest GP. The participating GP must provide longer, bulk billed appointments to people with those conditions across the course of their health journey.

The ACT Government would ensure strong working relationships between community health teams and participating GPs to assist with management of conditions. In return, GPs would provide de-identified population health data to ACT Health about how to best support people with particular long term conditions. This will ensure greater integration between our primary and acute care services and deliver better health outcomes for the individual.

We propose that the first two conditions for this program would be mental health and musculoskeletal conditions. In the ACT, these conditions have the most impact on a person's day to day living.

This dedicated program will provide GPs with an avenue to pursue their special interest and professional ambitions, without having to leave general practice.

For most GPs, the pressure to maintain revenue for the practice by billing patients means there usually isn't enough time for this kind of work.

Through this initiative, GPs will be given the time to improve their depth of knowledge about the conditions, invest in greater follow-up patient care and management, and participate in or conduct research that will improve care for people with those conditions.

This initiative will give patients with chronic illness the ongoing care that they need - for free - and take pressure off emergency departments and general practice clinics that are not set up to support this type of care.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$1m per year to facilitate the upskilling of special interest GPs.

WHAT COMES NEXT

We propose that future phases of the program would expand to include other conditions. We anticipate this will be expanded to other conditions that have a significant impact on everyday living, such as cancer, neurological, and cardiovascular conditions. However, we will prioritise conditions that are impacting most Canberrans when we get to the stage of expanding this program.