

BY AND FOR THE SUBURBS

GIVING ACT BUDGET POWER TO THE PEOPLE

We need to invest in our suburbs, so they can develop and change in line with the evolving needs of the communities living within them. Canberrans are calling for improvements in their local area that will increase the liveability of their suburb.

The Greens have listened to the community, and this is the first of a number of Greens initiatives that will be announced over the course of the election campaign to improve the amenity of public land in Canberra's suburbs.

This first package is about giving a meaningful say to residents on what improvements should be made, whether it's a local desire for a new playground, traffic calming measures, fresh plantings in a local park, or an art mural at the local shops.

The Greens have an expectation that the government should be fulfilling its obligations on upkeep and maintenance, but that is not enough. The ACT Government has a responsibility to do more – in a way that sees new and uplifting decisions made *By and For the Suburbs*.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Invest in our suburbs, by allocating \$40M for suburb-level projects over two rounds of funding during the next term of government
- ▲ Empower residents to make the decisions on how this money is spent in their suburb
- ▲ Enable the volunteer-run district community councils to focus on community consultation rather than administration by providing them with a government secretariat and support services
- ▲ Convene a citizen's jury to consider further community council reforms, so they can have greater capacity to lead the suburb-level decision-making

LOCAL PEOPLE MAKING LOCAL DECISIONS

The Greens recognise that people are the experts in their own lived experiences. We want to empower people to have meaningful input on the future of the suburbs they live in, going beyond just giving feedback on government proposals, to instead make decisions on what should be done in their street, their suburb and their district.

Under this Greens plan, every suburb will receive a budget, relative to its size, for use on whatever the local residents would like. This can include local projects, initiatives, facilities, activities, services, events - or other things for the benefit of the suburb, in accordance with the suburb's wishes.

GOING BEYOND BASIC MAINTENANCE

This package is over and above normal suburban upkeep activities such as maintaining footpaths and mowing public parklands. It's also on top of any other bigger initiatives that the Government may commit to for district- and city-planning purposes.

Unlike proposals from other parties, the Greens want to empower the residents of a suburb to go beyond current processes of sending in ideas or giving feedback on proposed plans – so they can actually decide which projects are chosen for implementation in their suburb.

Decisions would only be constrained by existing programs and regulations designed for the protection of the natural and built environment, such as heritage listings and established masterplans which cover their area.

This initiative builds on the “little BIG idea” pilots in Richardson and Page for neighbourhood democracy – an initiative secured by the Greens following the last election.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

\$20m to be allocated between suburbs based on the number of households in each suburb, with each suburb to get no less than \$100k and no more than \$400k, and for this to be conducted twice during the term for a total expected cost of \$40m.

COMMUNITY-LED DECISION-MAKING

Our volunteer-run district community councils are a significant foundation for local, grass-roots democracy, especially in the absence of local councils.

The community councils are also under-resourced, with the expectations and demands placed on volunteers frequently going beyond what the average person can contribute. It's critical that we support, enable and invigorate our district community councils so they can lead and enable greater community participation and decision-making. The Greens will enable the volunteer-run community councils to spend more time on the substance of

issues affecting their district, by freeing them from administration.

This will be achieved by establishing a new public servant support team dedicated to supporting the community councils and the suburb project decision-making. This team will provide support services including governance and logistics, meeting facilitation and training, community engagement assistance, planning system advice, record-keeping, and help community councils to access government information and expertise. The team will be mandated to operate at arm's length of Territory Ministers, and prioritise the needs of the community.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

\$5m for a team of about ten people to support the community councils.

A CITIZEN'S JURY ON FURTHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL REFORMS

The Greens will also establish a citizen's jury to provide recommendations on further reforms to the community council and consultation models, without prejudice from the government on what their recommendations should be.

After building capacity in the community councils, and with recommended reforms in place, we will ask community councils to take the lead on facilitating suburb-level decision-making on the suburban budgets.

From conversations with constituents we know that some sections of the community do not feel represented by

the councils, particularly among renters and young people. We need these councils to serve the whole community for decades to come, evolving to involve a greater diversity of Canberrans.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

\$1.5m for the operation of a citizen's jury on enabling grassroots democracy and future community council processes.

WHAT COMES NEXT

This is the first of a number of Greens initiatives that will be announced over the course of the election campaign to improve the amenity of public land in Canberra's suburbs.