

PLANNING A CONNECTED, AFFORDABLE CITY

WHERE PEOPLE AND OUR ENVIRONMENT CAN THRIVE

The way we shape our city shapes our lives. A truly liveable city is one that supports everyone to live a healthy, fulfilling life, with strong connections to their community, in a way that cares for our planet.

Housing is a human right, but right now too many people are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. We need to build more homes, but not just on the outskirts where people are locked into the expense of owning a car, driving up climate pollution and disrupting precious habitat.

The ACT Greens will take on the housing crisis, the cost of living crisis, the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis with big reforms to our planning system. With the right vision and processes in place we can help deliver quality homes, in well-connected suburbs, with easy access to local services. We can also enhance the health of our local environment and build neighbourhoods that will adapt to climate change.

Our [proposed new suburb on the site of the horse racing track](#) is a model of what the Greens' planning reforms would deliver: thousands more homes, including many public and affordable homes, with easy access to fast and frequent public transport, as well as schools, community spaces, local shops and services, and more green space—all within our current urban footprint.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Set city limits
- ▲ Encourage Canberra to grow in, not out, with new zoning definitions
- ▲ Protect green space and enhance nature in the city
- ▲ Deliver vastly more public and community housing
- ▲ Support more density around public transport, local shops and community facilities
- ▲ Leverage community knowledge for great local outcomes
- ▲ Respectfully partner with Ngunnawal and other local First Nations communities
- ▲ Do social planning to deliver spaces that improve wellbeing, including for people with a disability
- ▲ Establish a Government Landscape Architect
- ▲ Resource and enforce the planning system to improve quality

PLANNING TO TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING

A MORE COMPACT CITY IS A MORE CONNECTED, CONVENIENT CITY

Sprawling cities leave us stuck a long way from the jobs, schools and services we need.

It's something Canberrans are increasingly familiar with – commuters here experienced the [biggest percentage increase](#) in commuting times of any Australian capital city between 2002-2017 and it continues to rise.

In this cost of living crisis, we can't afford the time lost on long commutes or being locked into the expense of running a car. A compact city encourages people to get to work, the shops or go out by walking, cycling or using public transport.

The other parties want you to believe that to solve the housing crisis, development has to happen on the outskirts, paving over the environment.

But a growing chorus of Canberrans are calling for a more compact, convenient, affordable city.

One that you can get around using public transport, where there's easy local access to education, medical services, shops and the activities you love. Where there's a variety of housing options to suit your changing needs as you grow older. Where you can walk to thriving

nature and green spaces and connect with each other. Where you can reclaim the convenience of Canberra.

We need well-designed proposals that meet the needs of our community and deliver the highest and best use of the land. The [concept plan the Greens released for the site of the horse racing track](#) is the kind of thing that's possible when planning is focused on delivering for the community, not developers.

We need to be smart when we think about making use of the land that we have. Yes, housing on the racing track is a great idea. But the smarter approach is to include the schools, health centres, shops and community services that the people living there will need.

PLANNING TO HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

SET CITY LIMITS

A plan to stop urban sprawl is also a plan to protect the environment.

The number one recommendation in the ACT's latest State of the Environment Report was to [stop sprawl](#) and set an urban growth boundary. Endless sprawl destroys our woodlands, grasslands and waterways, and the plants and animals that depend on them.

We should finish the suburbs we've begun like Ginninderry, Gungahlin, Lawson, Taylor, Throsby, and Whitlam the rest of the Molonglo District.

Then we should set a clear city boundary beyond which we don't develop.

Melbourne set an urban growth boundary in 2002 and Adelaide has had one for 30 years. They're also in place in Portland, Vancouver and many other parts of the world.

Urban growth boundaries protect the environment, create compact cities and help cities identify the right places to build and the places that need to be protected.

Canberra has a lot of land already identified for development such as Thoroughbred Park, East Lake, Dairy Road and vacant land next to Light Rail Stage 2 along Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen. We have enough land. We can and should set city limits and use our land well.

New development risks significant impacts on Ngunnawal and other local First Nations cultural sites. Gaps in our records and the planning system mean we can't avoid this. So let's not kid ourselves – you can't protect nature or culture by bulldozing it.

[New suburbs also cost more to build.](#)

Government has to build new roads, schools, power, water and infrastructure. ACT Government calculations show a greenfields dwelling costs \$50,000-\$60,000 more than infill.

We need at least 100,000 more homes by 2050. Let's do what every mature city does. Let's put homes near jobs, shops, cafes, parks, and public transport, where people actually want to live.

PROTECT THE WESTERN EDGE

The Western Edge is a 9,800 hectare area to the west of Molonglo Valley and Belconnen, bordered by the Murrumbidgee River and Weston Creek. It should be a nature reserve.

We don't want more houses on Bluetts Block or the Western Edge. Smart density represents good planning. Greenfields development is expensive and leaves people with long commutes. We do not want to sprawl endlessly, destroying more and more habitat and increasing the risk of bushfire for people, property and the environment.

PLANNING TO CRACK THE HOUSING CRISIS

UPZONE FOR HOUSING

Alongside city limits, the ACT Greens will apply new zoning definitions to enable Canberra to grow in, not out.

We will **recreate RZ1 to the RZ2 standard**, to allow [townhouses, terrace houses and dual occupancies](#) everywhere.

This zoning reform will give more people the opportunity to provide more missing-middle dwellings with no limits on the size of the additional dwelling. Site coverage restrictions will ensure enough green space around homes so our homes remain livable in a warming climate.

We can maintain the existing character of an area and increase density.

We also propose to **recreate RZ2, RZ3 and RZ4 in key areas**, upzoning blocks close to local shops, public green spaces and parks, and next to public transport corridors and community facilities. Upzoning should allow low rise 3-4 storey development on consolidated blocks with big shared green spaces so everyone gets a backyard, like those we have in Kingston. Consolidation of blocks needs early engagement with the community to make sure we use local knowledge and maximise community benefit.

We will also **upzone in key areas of central Canberra and along Light Rail Stage 2**. More than half of jobs in the ACT are based in central Canberra, but less than a quarter of homes are there. We should upzone key areas that are currently RZ1, like those opposite ANU, and areas next to to Light Rail Stage 2 and within 5km of the CBD. We should allow townhouses and apartments there unless the area is in an existing heritage overlay (like Reid).

BUILD VASTLY MORE PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY HOUSING

Government can sell land below market rates in lots of situations. But they don't provide cheap land to Housing ACT for public housing or to community housing providers. They do provide subsidised land for commercial Build to Rent projects though!

That's one reason we don't build enough public and community housing where we need it – Housing ACT and community housing providers simply can't afford to buy the land at full market rates, especially when they're competing with a subsidised private sector. This system is nuts. It's our land! Let's use it to help those who need it!

The Greens will let the government use government land to help Canberrans who need a home by amending section 274 of the Planning Act and policy settings. This will let Housing ACT and community housing providers get land to build the homes we need, supporting [the Greens commitment to build and buy 10,000 more public homes](#).

We should also allow community and public housing on community-zoned land. Government does this case-by-case on underutilised church land. Let's be systematic! Let's allow public and community housing on underutilised community facility land where community consultation shows this makes sense.

Government requires affordable, community and public housing as part of land sales for unleased Territory land. But they don't do this in established areas. Government has done some work on this and options include a levy or planning reform for inclusionary zoning. We need an independent review to look at how we should use inclusionary zoning to ensure public and community homes are available all across Canberra.

PLANNING TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION

CUT COMMUTING, CUT CARBON

Over 60 per cent of the ACT's climate pollution comes from transport. It's our single biggest emissions challenge, and good city planning is part of the solution.

A more compact, convenient city will reduce the need for private car commutes. The [Greens' plans for public transport](#) will make this a genuine option for more Canberrans.

NATURE IN THE CITY

The Greens campaigned for years to set targets for 30% tree canopy and 30% permeable surfaces across Canberra. This reduces heat islands in a warming climate and gives everyone access to nature.

We've put site coverage and green space requirements in the planning system's design guides and technical specifications to deliver this. Now we need to make sure they are working.

The Greens will require the government to report on tree canopy and green space data every two years to monitor our green space on the ground.

We will ensure everyone has access to a nearby park or garden whether they live in an apartment, townhouse or detached home. These spaces are important in a compact city for people's wellbeing, so

we need to plan them, improve them and look after them.

We will also review the planning system in two years, with data to look at what progress has been made with the supply and maintenance of green spaces.

REVIEW PARKING PROVISION

The new Territory Plan and associated documents give development proponents the opportunity to better meet accessibility needs, but how much parking should developments provide, especially along public transport routes?

Good planning can support public transport and active travel uptake, as demonstrated in many cities around the world. The Greens will review parking provision across the city to encourage public and active transport, while ensuring there is enough parking for those who really need it.

DOING IT WELL

DELIVER MAXIMUM BENEFIT FOR THE COMMUNITY, NOT DEVELOPERS

Right now Canberra has large houses on big blocks, large apartment towers and not much else. Upzoning gives us more opportunity to deliver a broader range of options. But it's important we avoid ending up with piecemeal, profit-led decisions that benefit developers, not the community.

That's why the Greens will **set up an urbanising agency** to involve communities, leverage local knowledge

and ensure our suburbs improve as they densify. The agency will buy blocks and consolidate them. They will run deep engagement with the community to find out what we need. Then they'll build neighbourhoods, not just homes.

This will give us homes with shops, schools and parks nearby. We can have apartments and townhouses with large shared green spaces, so everyone has a backyard. We'll make greater use of our public transport, bike paths and footpaths and we'll connect them as a genuine network. We've got early examples already where planning led the way, like Urambi Village in Kambah, Wybalena Grove in Cook, Swinger Hill in Mawson and Grayson Street townhouses in Hackett.

GET THE RIGHT ADVICE

We have many great advisers in our planning system, but there are gaps.

The Greens environment policy of [Caring for the Bush Capital](#) will bolster the role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, enabling them to undertake nature compliance and enforcement activities, so that all Canberrans have confidence that our laws deliver real outcomes.

In addition to that, while we already have a Government Architect, we don't have a Government Landscape Architect. The Greens will establish this new leadership role, to ensure Canberra's new developments fit our land and meet community needs.

The ACT Government used to have a Social Planning Unit to focus on community needs. With a more diverse community than ever calling Canberra home, the Greens will bring back the Social Planning Unit.

The Social Planning Unit's work will include engagement with people from the disability community to consider and include everyone's needs. All people should feel they are welcome and included in Canberra, and universal design in urban planning can help achieve it. This will include audits of black spots and how designs of places and infrastructure can better support people living with a disability.

The Planning Authority gets a lot of advice and they don't follow all of it because sometimes different advice conflicts. That's okay - but they should publish reasons each time they depart from entity advice and report these in an aggregated form.

INTEGRATE COUNTRY INTO PLANNING

We need to respectfully partner with Ngunnawal and other local First Nations communities in planning as part of creating a sustainable and equitable city. Building partnerships and relationships are key in inclusive planning.

We need to know who should be consulted. We must take time, and involve the community from the outset.

The ACT Greens recognise the profound wisdom of the traditional owners of our

lands. First Nations people have been caring for Country for millennia. This deep knowledge and connection to Country must be respected.

We will work collaboratively with Ngunnawal and other local First Nations people to reflect indigenous knowledge in our city plans, and will work to build the cultural capability of staff to identify indigenous interests.

ENCOURAGE DENSITY

The Greens want good precinct planning and genuine understanding of the commercial settings that encourage missing middle density. We asked Parliament to look at missing middle zoning last year but both Labor and the Liberals voted us down.

Having just completed a five-year planning review, ACT Labor's Planning Minister has only now decided to start looking at zoning reform. Let's not waste another five years! The Greens will make sure that this work is conducted in a timely manner, that it considers Lease Variation Charges and that the report is released for public consideration.

RESOURCE IT, ENFORCE IT

ENOUGH STAFF TO DO THE JOB WELL

Land is the ACT's primary raw resource. It's a false economy to cut corners on planning and development decisions. In a housing and climate crisis, we need to

make good decisions and we need to make them quickly and efficiently. Then we need to ensure what's approved is built.

Over the past few years, less than 66 per cent of Development Applications were decided on time. The ACT Government has added six more assessing officers and things have improved, but it's still not good enough.

The National Capital Design Review Panel gives quality design advice for major development. There used to be a 6-month waitlist and this is improving, but we need to make it quick and accessible.

The ACT Government needs more ongoing staff for planning. Short term savings from having lower staff numbers will let down the quality and efficiency of local development decisions in the long run.

INSPECT AND ENFORCE

We should inspect where there's a complaint. But we also need to conduct proactive, routine checks to see if developments match approvals and rules. Where they don't, we need to issue rectification orders or fines.

The Government also needs to check that its own decisions are delivering good outcomes.

The Greens will make sure the ACT's new planning system has robust enforcement. Here's what we propose as the annual schedule for year one:

- 3 Construction Environment Management Plan checks
- 3 greenhouse gas emission statement checks
- 10 tree protection and sediment control checks
- 10 DA checks to see if developments match DAs
- 10 checks to see how much trees and green space we're getting with our new system
- 10 checks to see if design guide and technical specifications deliver good outcomes
- 10 internal audits of DA approvals to see if our planning decisions deliver good outcomes
- Bi-annual check with data to see if our trees and green spaces increase where they should.

The Greens will increase these proactive checks in future years as we learn which areas need more attention, and ensure all results are recorded in annual reports.

STOP LAND-BANKING

People in the community have told us they're frustrated by developers banking land for future profits, instead of building what we need now. At Giralang, there were 5 Development Applications between 2004 and 2018. The developer did not build shops during that time. The lease was eventually sold to another developer, who has built shops and homes.

With undeveloped shopping centres, such as the one in McKellar, our community loses out on services and

feels betrayed by false promises of local shops and cafes.

Sometimes commercial development takes longer than expected, but government should set clear expectations. The Greens will review how we can best use the ACT's leasehold system to keep local shops open and running.

HOLD POLITICIANS TO ACCOUNT

Many of the best recent improvements to the planning system are in design guides and technical specifications. These set the standards for development, but right now, the Planning Minister can change design guides and technical specifications without any consultation or scrutiny.

The Greens will change the rules so the Minister has to consult the community using the Planning Act principles of good consultation. All changes will be disallowable by the ACT Legislative Assembly so we, as a community, can hold politicians to account.

The new planning system that commenced this year removed pre-DA consultation, introducing a two-pass community engagement system instead. The Greens will consult to ask the community if this is working and if not, change it back.

Territory Priority Projects are major decisions that can't be appealed in ACAT. But the Planning Act (section 218) only gives a 15-day community consultation

requirement. Is this enough? Let's ask the community, and change it if not.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

These Greens proposals for a more robust planning system will help shape Canberra into a truly liveable city as our population grows.

Our initiatives propose the re-formation of the Social Planning Unit (three staff), the appointment of a Government Landscape Architect, and additional ongoing staff to deliver quality and efficient decision-making. A total of 6 full-time equivalent positions at an annual cost of \$900,000.

These investments in additional public servants will pick up the pace and quality of development in Canberra. The fees for development applications and fines on non-compliant development will help to recover the cost of employing additional people.

Developers say that every day delayed is a huge hit to their budget, so better resourcing our planning system will enable us to make better, faster decisions, reducing the overall cost of housing. Fixing non-compliant builds will also save money for residents and tenants long-term.