

A BETTER DEAL FOR RENTERS

HEALTHY HOMES FOR PEOPLE, NOT PROFIT

More Canberrans are renting, and renting for longer. People are growing old, raising families, and retiring in rented homes.

But too many renters are living in homes that are making them sick. They are too hot in summer and too cold in winter. People are being forced to live in unhealthy homes or waste energy and pay huge amounts just to keep their homes healthy and comfortable.

The ACT Greens believe that renters deserve the same quality of life as homeowners. Our plan will bring in new minimum standards for rental homes to make them cooler in summer and warmer in winter, and put solar panels on public housing so that as many people as possible can enjoy healthy homes – without being forced to pay too much.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Install solar panels on all suitable public homes by 2030
- ▲ Ensure all new public homes have solar panels from 2025
- ▲ Upgrade all public homes to be efficient and all-electric by 2030
- ▲ Introduce new minimum standards for rentals to make sure everyone can live in a home that's healthy and comfortable
- ▲ Improve protections for students and other renters on occupancy agreements
- ▲ Prioritise homes over profits by cracking down on short-term rentals and designing a vacancy tax.

STRONGER RIGHTS AND HEALTHIER HOMES FOR RENTERS

SOLAR PANELS FOR RENTERS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

We know that installing solar panels makes a real difference to renters, bringing electricity costs down and making homes more comfortable. Energy bills have the biggest impact on people who earn the least, with bills taking up more of their weekly income.

By building all new Housing ACT properties to have solar panels we can set these homes up to be more affordable from the beginning, helping to share the benefits of solar with those who most need support as we face increasing living costs. From 2025, all the ACT Greens will ensure all new Housing ACT homes have solar panels.

The ACT Greens will also install solar panels on existing Housing ACT properties by 2030, wherever installation is possible. This will be a game-changer for renters in public housing, bringing down their energy bills and making their homes more comfortable.

Our plan includes all standalone homes and any apartment buildings that are fully owned by Housing ACT.

EFFICIENT, ALL-ELECTRIC PUBLIC HOUSING BY 2030

The ACT Greens have already delivered a major program to upgrade ceiling insulation in all Housing ACT homes. As part of that program, some homes are also having gas appliances replaced with efficient, electric appliances.

This is a great start, but many public homes in the ACT still have gas appliances. Our plan will build on our past wins to replace gas appliances with efficient, electric appliances in all public homes.

This will make homes more comfortable, more affordable to heat and cool, and lower bills by avoiding gas connection costs. This will save money, and help more people keep their homes warm in winter and cool in summer.

For people with health problems, we will go further, installing reverse cycle heating and cooling by 2026.

BETTER STANDARDS FOR RENTAL HOMES

Having blinds or curtains on the windows makes a big difference to a home, and the ACT Greens believe that all landlords should be required to provide them. This offers privacy, and helps keep homes warm in winter and cool in summer.

Having a heater is important for keeping a home comfortable during Canberra winters. Under our plan, all rental homes will have at least one fixed heater in the main living area to keep renters' homes at a liveable temperature. If a new heater is required, this must be an electric reverse-cycle that includes cooling.

Many Canberra rental homes are difficult to heat and cool because of holes in the walls and floor. Even when these gaps are easy to seal, renters are not allowed to make changes to the home. Our plan will require all rental properties to complete an approved draught-proofing service prior to being rented out.

We would also legislate to ensure rental homes meet basic requirements for safety and security, including:

- Being structurally sound and weatherproof
- Having basic security, such as deadlocks, locks on windows, and the ability to safely screen visitors
- Ventilation in all rooms, with homes being free from structural mould and damp
- Safe electrical and lighting, cooking facilities, bathroom facilities, waste collection, and water.

The Greens will expand the Sustainable Household Scheme to enable landlords to access interest-free loans of up to

\$5,000 to make improvements to meet the new minimum standards.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$37.2 million to install 5-6.6 kW solar panel systems on around 6000 government-owned Housing ACT homes
- \$30 million to replace 7750 gas appliances in around 5000 public housing properties and upgrade to electric appliances
- \$13.55 million to develop and implement new minimum standards. This includes staffing for 3 years for regulation development and implementation (\$0.85m), funds for monitoring and evaluation (\$0.2m) and zero interest loans of up to \$5000 for an estimated 10,000 landlords assuming 75% return rate and a long-term cost of \$1250 per property (\$12.5m).

PUTTING HOMES AHEAD OF PROFITS

CRACKING DOWN ON AIRBNB AND SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Short term rentals like Airbnb and Stayz take homes off the market that could be available for longer-term rent. The Greens will regulate short-term rentals to prioritise homes for rent. We will run a

Regulatory Impact Assessment by mid-2025, with options on the table like:

- Limiting short term rentals to primary residential homes. This would mean that people can rent their spare room, or their whole home when they are away, but cannot use an investment property solely as a short-term rental.
- Putting restrictions on the number of short-term rentals for one investor.
- Forcing short-term rental platforms like Airbnb and Stayz to provide transparent information about their operations, revenue and activities.
- Providing Owners Corporations with veto powers for short-term rentals in their buildings.

These regulations would come in by the end of 2025.

DESIGNING A VACANCY TAX

Between 2,400-6,000 homes in the ACT are sitting empty. Victoria has taken on this issue by increasing the vacancy tax rate for every year a property is empty. The second year a home is empty, owners pay 2% tax on the improved value of the land. In year three, they pay a 3% tax. Victoria's model also expands the tax to vacant land, to make it harder for owners and developers to land-bank.

The Greens will work with the ACT community to design a vacancy tax model that is tailored to our housing market – and tackles these issues head-on.

STRENGTHENING RENTERS' RIGHTS

Not all rental agreements are created equally. At the moment, 'occupancy agreements' as opposed to standard leases, provide fewer protections to tenants. Occupancy agreements are commonly used, for example in university residential colleges. We've heard concerns that landlords and organisations can use occupancy agreements to limit protections that have been extended to other renters.

The ACT Greens will protect all renters, including those on occupancy agreements. We will:

- Limit occupancy fees, including capping rent increases and limiting fees for ending agreements early
- Bring in minimum standards for properties, and timeframes for repairs and maintenance
- Make the rules for ending occupancy agreements clearer and create ACAT appeal rights
- Allow people to end an agreement if they are experiencing family violence.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- To be met within existing resources.