

ANIMAL WELFARE

SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO CARE FOR ANIMALS

We share this planet with an extraordinary number of unique animals, some of which share our lives as beloved pets, and all of which are sentient beings.

The ACT Greens believe that animals have inherent worth within the rights of nature, we humans are interdependent with animals, and we should ensure the highest standards of care.

The ACT Greens are proud to have secured some of the most progressive reforms to improve and protect the rights and welfare of animals in the country. But there is more to be done.

In a cost of living crisis, it is important to support people to keep beloved pets responsibly, which in turn protects animal welfare and stops animal shelters becoming further stretched. And there are further actions we can take to protect wildlife from unnecessary suffering.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Provide 500 free cat and dog desexing vouchers each year to help people on low incomes desex their pets
- ▲ Employ more domestic animal rangers to respond to domestic animal welfare issues, and assist with cat containment management and enforcement and review the ACT Cat Plan
- ▲ Increase the powers of the RSPCA to investigate and intervene in cases of reported suspected animal cruelty and neglect
- ▲ End government funding and windfall handouts for horse racing, and ban the raising of live hatched chicks in schools
- ▲ Fully fund the injured wildlife hotline and access to wildlife veterinary services, and expand the wombat mange treatment program, so the community knows any injured animal they find can receive the best medical care possible
- ▲ Provide wildlife carers with \$500 vouchers each year to help cover costs
- ▲ Reduce unnecessary harm and suffering to wildlife by reducing the use of barbed wire fencing, starting with public land, and banning the sale of second-generation rodent poisons (rodenticides)
- ▲ Reduce animal and human harm caused by wildlife colliding with cars, by funding wildlife overpasses and underpasses, and virtual fencing at collision hotspots.

500 FREE DESEXING VOUCHERS

SUPPORTING RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP IN A COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Canberrans love their pets, and they are often dear companions for people who are doing it tough or live alone.

The cost of living crisis has placed additional pressure on people experiencing financial stress, and heartbreakingly, many people feel they need to surrender their pets. This is particularly the case when pets have not been desexed and become pregnant.

To support people to keep their pets and stop unwanted litters, the ACT Greens will provide 500 free cat and dog desexing vouchers a year to people with concession cards.

The RSPCA has also reached capacity at its current site and needs an upgraded facility to properly meet the demand for its services in a growing city. The ACT Government is working to provide the new site to the RSPCA, and the ACT Greens are committed to ensuring this is delivered.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$1.2 million over the forward estimates for 500 vouchers to cover the costs of desexing
- Ensuring existing ACT Government funding and site

commitment to RSPCA is met within existing resources.

CARING FOR URBAN ANIMALS

WITH MORE RANGERS & DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICE OFFICERS

Canberra is a caring community where people readily take action to report domestic and wild animals that appear to be lost, dumped, hit on the road, or at risk of harm.

The ACT's progressive laws governing backyard farm animals and cat containment have also increased the need for a greater number of Domestic Animal Service Officers with sufficient capabilities to respond to domestic animals of all kinds, not just dogs.

There is also a need to review the regulations regarding the keeping of backyard farm animals, to ensure we have the right balance between supporting local food growing, and responsible backyard raising, that doesn't cause animal disease concerns or impact on neighbours, leading to conflict.

Roosters are a good example. Too often unwanted roosters are getting dumped, and the keeping of roosters is causing conflict for neighbours impacted by their noise.

The wildlife that we share Canberra with is for many people what makes living

here so special, and we know people care deeply if they see an injured animal on the road, particularly if it takes rangers a long time to be able to respond due to high demand.

The increasing diversity of domestic animals, the need to ensure proper cat containment, and ensuring that someone responds rapidly to animals hit on busy roads mean we need more resources.

The ACT Greens will fund an additional 5 positions across Domestic Animal Services and Animal Rangers, and we will consult the community to get the balance right on effective and fair regulation for backyard farm animals like roosters.

Where cases of domestic animal neglect and abuse are suspected, we also need to **increase the powers of the RSPCA to intervene.**

At present the RSPCA can only enter a premises or private land if one of their animal welfare officers has directly sighted an animal in extreme pain or neglect with the imminent chance of death. That means even if a member of the community witnesses and reports a case of serious animal cruelty, the RSPCA has to complete many steps to access and assess the animal.

Increasing the powers of the RSPCA to intervene earlier will help prevent cases of significant animal neglect and suffering, and maximise the opportunity for community education and safe and caring pet ownership.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$2 million over 4 years for animal welfare officers
- Consultation and changes to backyard farm animal regulation and increasing RSPCA powers to be achieved within existing resources.

SUPPORTING CANBERRANS WHO SUPPORT WILDLIFE

\$500 VOUCHERS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Registered wildlife carers in the ACT provide an invaluable community service, dedicating significant parts of their lives to raising and rehabilitating orphaned and injured wildlife.

Our community relies on wildlife carers and organisations like both ACT Wildlife and Wombat Rescue NSW/ACT to provide a hotline to call when someone finds injured wildlife, to raise animals that can be rescued and released, and to help ensure they get the veterinary care they need.

Wildlife carers provide thousands of unpaid hours of community service, at significant financial cost to themselves. It's time to recognise wildlife care as an essential service to the community and ensure secure funding and support.

In recognition that the welfare of wildlife carers is critical for the work they do for the community, the ACT Greens will provide \$500 vouchers to registered carers each year to help with their costs.

Further, the ACT Greens have made clear our commitments to support the work of both **ACT Wildlife** and **Wombat Rescue NSW/ACT**, including proper resourcing for access to veterinary services in our plans for [People Powered Sustainability](#).

That plan outlines how the ACT Greens will: Fund ACT Wildlife's injured wildlife hotline and Wombat Rescue's community outreach; Fund wildlife veterinary services and work with the **RSPCA** to progress a wildlife friendly animal hospital; Fund a ramped up wombat mange treatment program, and; Work with wildlife carers and public land managers to identify suitable land for specialist animal rehabilitation and release.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$200,000 over the forward estimates to provide registered wildlife carers with \$500 a year in vouchers to help cover the costs of specialist food and equipment that they incur
- Other investments are detailed in the [People Powered Sustainability](#) initiative.

REMOVING WILDLIFE HAZARDS

REDUCING THE USE OF BARBED WIRE

Barbed wire causes significant wildlife injuries and death every year, particularly to bats and nocturnal birds such as owls, many of which are endangered. Barbed wire also causes injuries to livestock and abandoned barbed wire fences are a long-term hazard to wildlife, livestock and people. Other fencing methods including electric and smooth wire fencing are now in most instances as economical and effective and don't cause animal suffering and death.

The ACT Greens will phase out the use of barbed wire, beginning with the replacement of barbed wire on any public fencing as it reaches end of life, and work with private landholders to identify and adopt cost-effective alternatives.

Beginning with public fences means that private leaseholders who share the boundary will benefit from the public upgrade and particularly sensitive boundaries with nature reserves will be addressed first. We will then work with rural landholders to identify alternatives, and provide incentives and support through the Rural Grants Program to reduce the use of barbed wire across the Territory.

BANNING SECOND-GENERATION RODENTICIDES

Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides, known as 'SGARS' cause severe harm and death in our native wildlife. Some wildlife directly eat SGAR baits laid around homes and businesses. This is known to happen to possums, skinks, bandicoots, native rodents, frogs and native bird species that are attracted to the baits.

But much more widespread is secondary wildlife poisoning by SGARS. This is because poisoned rats and mice often die outside where predators see them and eat them, and the poisons then accumulate in wildlife and kills them. This impacts owls, hawks, eagles, goannas, kookaburras, magpies, snakes, and quolls, and domestic cats and dogs.

We can control rats and mice with other rodent poisons and traps that don't harm wildlife and save thousands of needless animal deaths and suffering. The Greens will ban the sale of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in the ACT, and lobby for a nation-wide ban.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- To be delivered within existing resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ANIMALS

WILDLIFE OVERPASSES, UNDERPASSES AND VIRTUAL FENCING

Every year thousands of Canberrans have the traumatic experience of hitting a native animal on our roads, which too often results in suffering and death for the animal, and a deeply distressing, dangerous and costly experience for people.

We know that wildlife especially try to cross where roads have become a barrier to them moving through their natural range, and mapping shows us where the worst locations are for wildlife – car collisions.

The ACT Greens will invest in building wildlife overpasses and underpasses to overcome key road barriers and reduce wildlife death on roads, working with our expert ecologists to site them over known barriers such as **Horsepark and William Hovell Drives**. We will invest in the trialling, and if successful, deployment of virtual fencing that deters animals from crossing at known high collision spots and instead encourages crossing at safer areas.

We will also remove the cap on licenses for caring for orphaned Eastern Grey Kangaroos resulting from road collisions, and increase the number of animal rangers to respond to injured wildlife on our roads.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- Wildlife passes and virtual fencing will be funded from the ACT

Greens' proposed Bush Capital Conservation Fund, detailed in our plan: [Caring for the Bush Capital](#).

- Animal ranger activities to be funded through our increased investment in more rangers, detailed above.

END GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR UNNECESSARY PRACTICES THAT HARM ANIMALS

NO MORE PUBLIC MONEY FOR HORSE RACING

Commercial horse racing causes immense suffering to horses and is rapidly losing its social licence as a result. It is completely unacceptable that the ACT Government subsidises harm to horses for private profit, to the tune of \$8 million a year.

The ACT Greens will end government subsidies for commercial horse racing the ACT, and reclaim Thoroughbred Park for affordable and sustainable homes, along with the schools and services to support new residents. More detail is in our plan for [Homes, Not Horse Racing](#).

BAN LIVE HATCHING AT SCHOOLS

Another outdated harmful practice is the tradition of raising live chickens from eggs in schools. Raising chickens in classrooms means many chicks suffer stress and injury through the actions of enthusiastic and well-meaning children causing too much noise, mishandling and dropping chicks, and sickness in chicks going unnoticed.

Raising chicks in classrooms results in hundreds of young chickens that then need to be found homes, and with many turning out to be roosters, the result is adult chickens being dumped, neglected or euthanised.

There are many other ways we can now teach our children about animals, and core to that education should be respect for their lives and needs. Fortunately, only a handful of schools in the ACT are still raising live chicks.

Ending the raising of live chicks in classrooms will not preclude schools keeping chickens as part of learning about food and agriculture.

The ACT Greens will ban live hatching programs in our schools and introduce strict welfare-based regulations on live animals in classrooms.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- This initiative will save \$32 million over the forward estimates by ceasing government subsidisation of horse racing.
- Banning live chicks will realise a minor saving to the small number of schools that do it.

ENSURING ANIMAL WELFARE BEST PRACTICE

IN CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

The ACT is home to many endangered species that are impacted by urban development, climate change, bushfires and other causes of habitat loss. The ACT Greens are committed to ensuring any management of animals is led by evidence, moral consideration, First Nations and an ecological approach to our relationship with nature. The ACT Greens therefore reluctantly accept the need for the conservation cull of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, recognising the weight of evidence that it is necessary as part of managing grassland ecosystems impacted by Canberra's urban fringe.

The recent expert independent review of the Eastern Grey Kangaroo Management Plan identified that the cull is evidence-based and continuously informed by ongoing research, and meets or exceeds prescribed animal welfare requirements. It also identified a range of measures that could be implemented to further improve the management of Eastern Grey Kangaroos and ensure the conservation cull continues to set animal welfare benchmarks, including further refinement of the relevant codes of practice and standard operating procedures, and expanding the use of Gonacon as a

contraceptive for suitable kangaroo populations.

Having successfully secured the resources in the current term to ensure Gonacon was moved from trial phase to being fully integrated into Eastern Grey Kangaroo management, the ACT Greens are committed to ensuring that the government provides sufficient resourcing to support the expansion of the use of Gonacon and implementation of the review recommendations as part of the revised Eastern Grey Kangaroo Management Plan.

Twice and sometimes as much as four times the number of kangaroos are dying on our roads compared to the conservation cull, and enduring unacceptable suffering as a result. As detailed above, the Greens will build missing wildlife overpasses and underpasses, deter wildlife from crossing the road at known black spots for collisions, and lift the number of animal rangers responding to call-outs.

WHAT'S COME BEFORE, AND WHERE TO FROM HERE?

How we treat animals reflects who we are as a society.

In the four years since Canberrans elected a record number of Greens to the Legislative Assembly, we have:

- Banned fruit tree netting that harms our native wildlife such as endangered flying foxes
- Refused to support funding for commercial horse racing in the ACT Budget and called for repurposing of the site
- Secured the first four-year funding agreement for ACT Wildlife and the first funding for wildlife veterinary services
- Secured funding for wombat mange programs and increased cooperation between public land managers and wombat rescuers to treat mange and start to prevent wombat displacement due to development.
- Introduced cat containment to protect local wildlife and while improving the welfare and safety of pet cats.

The initiatives we've detailed for the coming term are simple, practical steps we can take that will significantly reduce animal suffering.

Canberrans care deeply about the welfare of animals and deserve to have properly funded and effective domestic animal services, including support for people on low incomes.