

CHOICE FOR WOMEN AND PEOPLE GIVING BIRTH

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO HAVE MORE AGENCY OVER THEIR BODIES

Pregnancy and birth are cherished life experiences. The ACT Greens want all women and pregnant people to have positive and fulfilling experiences through pregnancy, birth and parenting so they and their babies can have the best trajectory for fulsome lives.

But not everyone feels empowered throughout their pregnancy and birth to advocate for the care and outcomes they want. Most people see different doctors and midwives at each appointment - receiving different types of care from people who might not have all the information they need to provide the best options for you.

It can make women and people who are pregnant more stressed or anxious throughout this exciting time.

That's why the ACT Greens will deliver more choices for women and pregnant people - to support them to get the care they want and to feel more empowered to advocate for their needs throughout pregnancy, birth and early parenting.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- Deliver Canberra's first co-designed and midwife-led freestanding birth centre on the northside, fully separate to the hospital campus
- Expand access to midwife-led continuity of care to give everyone who wants it the ability to choose it.

MIDWIFE-LED CONTINUITY OF CARE FOR ALL

PROVEN MODEL OF CARE

Midwife-led continuity of care can be offered in many different settings, including home birth, birth centres and hospital birth. It is appropriate for all pregnancies, including those with universal care needs and those with additional care needs. It is cost effective, and improves satisfaction for women and birthing people, as well as for health professionals.

Midwife-led continuity of care is particularly important for women and birthing people with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse people, those at risk of experiencing domestic or family violence, and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Midwife-led continuity of care is also essential for culturally safe birthing on country models of care for First Nations women and those pregnant with First Nations babies.

The ACT has agreed to a target of 75% of women and pregnant people to have access to continuity of care by 2032. The ACT Greens believe we should extend this to give access to this model of care to anyone who wants to choose it.

We will expand our existing midwife-led continuity of care to include early pregnancy and six weeks postnatal, as

well as providing continued midwife support following pregnancy loss.

FREESTANDING BIRTH CENTRE

CHOICE FOR WOMEN AND BIRTHING PEOPLE

Canberra's existing hospital based birth centres are enormously popular. But they are not able to meet demand, with approximately 30-40 women per month unable to access this care in 2023. In November 2022, there were approximately 350 women on the waitlist ranging from six to 36 weeks pregnant.

Canberra women and midwives have been calling for a freestanding midwife-led birth centre, fully separate to the hospital, for over 30 years. It's time we deliver it.

EMPOWERING MIDWIVES

The midwifery profession is struggling to recruit and retain skilled midwives, in Canberra and across Australia.

The addition of a model of care that empowers midwives to work to use all of the skills in their training and past professional experience, in a fit-for-purpose co-designed facility, separate to a hospital would be an attractive option for midwives considering moving to Canberra, entering the profession, or for midwives who are

seeking a change from the existing models of care or facilities they have been working in.

The addition of a freestanding birth centre in Canberra will support workforce recruitment and retention.

The Greens will also give privately practising midwives admitting rights in our public hospitals, enabling them to provide continuity of care in the event of a homebirth transfer to hospital, and allow women and pregnant people to choose to give birth in hospital under the care of their chosen privately practising midwife.

WHAT COMES NEXT

After a Greens motion won the support of the Legislative Assembly in February 2023, the ACT Government committed to conduct early design and feasibility work on a freestanding birth centre for Canberra.

This is being undertaken in conjunction with the maternity reference group and University of Canberra, and is due to be completed late 2024, in the context of the North Canberra Hospital planning.

The Greens commit to building a co-designed midwife-led freestanding birth centre on the northside, fully separate to the hospital campus, and will commence that co-design and planning work within the first year of the next Assembly. This will be in addition to the two existing hospital based birth centres, not a replacement.

INVESTMENT:

- A feasibility study on a freestanding birth centre is due back by the end of this year. Details of capital costs for the Freestanding Birth Centre won't be known until that is returned, but capital costs will be incorporated as part of the northside hospital project.
- A freestanding birth centre will save recurrent funding from the health budget through avoided medical interventions and better outcomes for women, birthing people and babies.
- Expanding midwife-led continuity of care is around \$1,300 cheaper per woman or birthing person than standard care in a public hospital.