

SUPPORTING SELF-DETERMINATION FOR TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS AND FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A CULTURALLY STRONG, THRIVING FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY

The ACT Greens acknowledge that First Nations' sovereignty has never been ceded. We recognise the Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians of this country and their unique cultural and spiritual relationship with land, water and sky. We also recognise and respect any other groups with a connection to these lands and the many other First Nations people that reside in the ACT region.

We want a culturally strong, thriving First Nations community in the ACT. We want First Nations cultures to be celebrated and valued and First Nations perspectives to be recognised and invited into decision making. The ACT Greens respect the sovereignty of First Nations and their right to self-determination. We understand that true reconciliation is a process that involves truth-telling and acknowledging past wrongs.

It is unacceptable that First Nations people in Australia continue to have a lower average life expectancy, experience racism and discrimination and be over-represented in our justice system. This has gone on for too long and the ACT Greens are committed to working with First Nations people to deliver better outcomes.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Work closely with the community to deliver Truth, Treaty and Voice as called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- ▲ Increase community control of First Nations facilities and programs including Boomanulla Oval and Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm
- ▲ Implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way report
- ▲ Support establishment of an Aboriginal-controlled housing organisation to improve availability of culturally appropriate housing options
- ▲ Improve access to culturally safe holistic health and mental health care services that are governed and operated by First Nations people
- ▲ Reduce the over representation of First Nations men and women to match non-Indigenous incarceration rates by 2031
- ▲ Work collaboratively to encourage Traditional Custodian participation in land and water management and decision making
- ▲ Grow artistic opportunities by doubling the Cultural Arts Program funding.

SUPPORT COMMUNITY & SELF-DETERMINATION

WORK TO DELIVER THE ASKS OF THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

The ACT Greens are committed to delivering Truth, Treaty and Voice as called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We share the sense of grief that comes from the referendum result.

We will work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to raise its profile and improve its impact. We will work to strengthen its connection to Government Ministers and the Assembly, and to consider how we increase the voter participation in future elections to strengthen the Elected Body in the eyes of the community.

We will also explore opportunities for truth telling in the work of government and will continue work to support Traditional Custodians in their pursuit of native title and to work towards a Treaty process.

INCREASE COMMUNITY CONTROL OF FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Community-controlled organisations are critical for enabling self-determination and delivery of First Nations-led programs and services that are culturally appropriate and empowering. We want to

see growth in the number and strength of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's) in the ACT, and we are excited to see the emergence of a number of ACCOs that have registered as community housing organisations. We will work with the First Nations community to build the capacity of these organisations, support them as they participate in commissioning processes and ensure that they are set up for success. This will include advice on how to ensure ACCO's are successful in seeking Government funding.

Specifically, we recognise the importance in the community of seeing both Boomanulla Oval and the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm under community control. We are disappointed this has not already happened, but renew our commitment to collaborate with the community to identify viable models to ensure this transfer occurs in 2025.

IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE *OUR BOORIS, OUR WAY* REPORT

We consider the real power of the Our Booris, Our Way report is that it was authored by members of the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and as such represents a clear guide for Government and community agencies on the steps needed to make a real impact in supporting First Nations people and families. We affirm our commitment to implementing the recommendations in the report.

We commit to appropriately resourcing the Community Services Directorate, ACCO's and other non-government organisations to enable them to implement the recommendations in full.

SUPPORT ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ABORIGINAL-CONTROLLED HOUSING ORGANISATION

The ACT Greens believe that housing is a human right. We will continue current work led by the Community Services Directorate to support Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing Organisations that have been recently established and have successfully registered as community housing organisations.

Over the past term, the Greens Minister for Homelessness has secured funding for specialist homelessness services for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The commissioning has been co-designed in consultation with the sector. The commissioning is currently being finalised, with the announcement of the successful provider expected shortly. Information on the delivery of commissioning for the homelessness sector can be found [here](#).

SUPPORT HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

CONTINUE TO FUND AND SUPPORT CULTURALLY SAFE HOLISTIC HEALTH CARE SERVICES THAT ARE GOVERNED AND OPERATED BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

The Greens are committed to improving health outcomes for First Nations people. We understand First Nations perspectives on health are holistic and reflect not just the physical and mental well-being of individuals but the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community. We also understand that past and present discriminatory attitudes, policies and laws have an ongoing impact on health and social and economic wellbeing. We will need to overcome these barriers to improve health outcomes for First Nations people.

Community control is central to achieving and maintaining cultural wellbeing. We will ensure continued funding and support for culturally safe, holistic health care services that are governed and operated by First Nations people. We will also continue to fund the dedicated First Nations health service at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO A CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE BIRTHING ON COUNTRY MODEL OF CARE FOR ALL WOMEN AND BIRTHING PEOPLE WHO ARE PREGNANT WITH FIRST NATIONS BABIES

Midwife-led continuity of care and Birthing on Country models of care are important to First Nations women and birthing people. Birthing on Country is a metaphor for the best start in life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies and their families and is a continuation of thousands of years of knowledge and practice, which provides holistic maternal, child and family health care that embeds cultural integrity and safety during pregnancy, labour, birth and postnatal care.

Birthing on Country models designed by stakeholders, led and delivered by First Nations people and communities, have been shown to drastically improve outcomes for women and birthing people, and babies. We will collaborate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including Elders, and First Nations midwives and academics to develop and implement an ACT specific, culturally appropriate and culturally safe Birthing on Country midwife-led continuity model of care.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

We will ensure the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

mental health service is designed and led by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, and that the dedicated youth mental health and trauma service is co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experience. We will also work to build the culturally responsive capacity of the mental health sector to make culturally appropriate mental healthcare more widely available.

REDUCE INCARCERATION RATES & IMPROVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The rate of incarceration and overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system is a national shame. We are committed to achieving parity between indigenous and non-Indigenous incarceration rates by 2031. This is an ambitious goal and one that we place a high priority on working towards. To help meet this goal, we must listen to the expertise, wisdom and experience of our First Nations community.

We are strongly opposed to the law and order agenda being propagated by some parts of our community, because we know this would have a disproportionate impact on First Nations people. We understand there are smarter ways to make our community safer, and justice

reinvestment lies at the heart of that smarter approach.

We agree with experts like the Justice Reform Initiative that ‘jailing is failing’. While sometimes a sentence of full-time imprisonment is the most appropriate sentencing option, in many cases incarceration perpetuates cycles of offending and does not protect victims.

We commit to working with the First Nations community to build capacity of emerging Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations (ACCOs) in the justice sector, providing support and guidance as they participate in commissioning processes and ensuring that they are set up for success.

We are committed to implementing the findings of the review being conducted by the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology in Sydney, into the over-representation of First Nations people in the ACT criminal justice system. The first report identified the need to properly fund Aboriginal organisations who are working to reduce Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system in areas such as bail and post-release support. Such programs can reduce the remand population, assist in people complying with bail conditions, and help people not return to prison after release. The provision of suitable housing is also a critical issue, particularly for Aboriginal women on remand and leaving prison. We will continue existing programs to support

people on bail including the Ngurrumbai Bail Support Program and Front Up and expand the Justice Housing Program to fulfil unmet housing needs.

We will explore establishing a cross-border justice scheme with NSW Government as called for by leaders of the First Nations community in the ACT and consider the development of an agreement or legal regime with the NSW Government to more effectively respond to instances where a person arrested and imprisoned in the ACT has an outstanding warrant or charge in NSW (and vice versa).

We will also maintain the Galambany and Warrumbul Circle Sentencing Courts, expand the Throughcare Program at the Alexander Maconochie Centre and make the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre’s Throughcare Program permanent.

WHAT’S THE INVESTMENT?

- Details and costs of these measures are included in our [Community Safety initiative](#).

ENCOURAGE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIAN PARTICIPATION IN LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT

INVEST IN FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP

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, and the Greens believe programs empowering First Nations people to care for the land should be prioritised and well-funded.

The ACT Greens will invest in First Nations conservation management, employment career pathways and leadership to embed First Nations care for Country into environmental decision making.

The Greens will support First Nations conservation management with a goal of establishing joint management agreements for the ACT's iconic nature reserves and waterways. Supporting community led processes, we will work to embed traditional knowledge and practices into all conservation management.

We commit to reviewing the advisory mechanisms we have with Traditional Owners, with the intent to elevate their status and assist in the pathway to joint management of Country. The Greens recognise that this will take time and must occur in conjunction with community-led work around native title claims, and recognition of who speaks for Country.

DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF FIRST NATIONS RANGERS

We will empower First Nations cultural leadership in conservation and environmental management by doubling the number of First Nations Rangers and establishing career pathways to support First Nations conservation leadership.

We will set First Nations Rangers hiring targets with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate that includes the Parks and Conservation Service and support internal restructuring to increase career pathways for First Nations staff. We will provide supplementary resources as required to ensure these targets are met.

ESTABLISH A FIRST NATIONS-LED CULTURAL BURNING UNIT

We will establish a new First Nations-led cultural burning unit in the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, which the ecological burning team will collaborate with and learn from.

SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS-LED BUSINESSES TO SHARE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

We will establish a pilot project to support First Nations-led businesses to share traditional knowledge, explore joint management opportunities and establish eco-tourism and cultural-environmental education opportunities.

We will support the development of Indigenous food-based enterprises through our local food initiative. We have committed to rejuvenating the Mugga Mugga Cottage farm site, which has significant First Nations heritage, in collaboration with the Ngunnawal community, as a dedicated site to support the development of local Indigenous foods to commercial viability, and the establishment of First Nations-led food enterprises.

PLACE CULTURAL HERITAGE DECISION MAKING INTO THE HANDS OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The Greens recognise that the ACT occupies unceded land where people have lived and passed through for millennia before European settlement. We acknowledge that much of this heritage is not yet adequately recognised, protected or celebrated. Traditional Owners must have stewardship and decision-making power over their cultural heritage. Without adequate protections for Aboriginal cultural heritage, we risk the devastating destruction of sites and objects.

The ACT Greens will establish a legislated Cultural Heritage Body. This Body will return power to traditional custodians to determine their own cultural heritage. This Body will complement the work of the Elected Body, specifically recognising the role of Traditional Owners in caring for this Country. Its structure and operational functions will be co-designed with local Traditional Owners, and will be an independent body with the authority to determine Aboriginal cultural heritage decisions and outcomes. The Body will also make recommendations to the Heritage Council and ACT Heritage on improving policies and processes to remove barriers to the active participation of First Nations people in heritage in the ACT.

As part of this work, we will resolve the role of Registered Aboriginal Organisations, and work towards a process that enables Traditional Owners and knowledge holders to be central to the identification, protection and management of First Nations heritage.

We recognise that this process needs to be led by community and may take time to realise, and the journey will be as important as the final outcome.

CREATE TWO NEW DEDICATED FIRST NATIONS POSITIONS IN THE OFFICE OF WATER

In 2021 we created a dedicated Ngunnawal Water Policy Officer position in recognition that Traditional Custodian knowledge is critical to our

understanding of the natural environment and sustainable management of the land and water. Establishing this position, and working closely with Traditional Custodians within this region, has provided great depth to our work in, water management, catchment planning and policy development.

Building on this work, we will establish two more dedicated First Nations positions within the Office of Water to further embed First Nations knowledge and perspectives into water management in the ACT.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- The cost of these proposals are included in our [Caring for the Bush Capital](#) and [Caring for Waterways](#) initiatives.

GROW ARTISTIC OPPORTUNITIES

PLATFORM FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS

Canberra has an incredibly vibrant First Nations arts scene and we need to support First Nations artists and invest in and promote their work at every opportunity.

The Greens will double the Cultural Arts Program funding from \$100K to \$200K per year. We will also commission more First Nations art in government projects.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

The Greens will create a commissioning officer in ArtsACT who will better connect local artists with existing artistic opportunities and projects within ACT Government. We will prioritise commissioning First Nations art, and art that promotes and showcases the ACT's circular economy.

The commissioning officer will find existing ACT Government spaces that are underutilised. They will also make sure we include art spaces in new developments from the beginning, such as at shopping centres and in new suburbs and precincts.

This Greens initiative will foster networks between the Government and the community, so that more of the ACT's local talent can be connected to subsidised studios and workshop spaces all over Canberra, including the south side.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- The cost of these proposals are included in our [Art at the Heart of the Capital](#) initiative.