



TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Greens have a plan to tackle violence against women

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Violence against women is unacceptable. It is already well established that domestic and family violence and sexual assault occur largely as a result of society's attitudes towards women.

While men can be victims of domestic and family violence, it is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women. Promoting gender equality and changing the underlying attitudes that are held about women's role in society is a critical part of reducing rates of domestic violence and sexual assault.

> A Gender Equity Plan

In 2016, it's hard to believe that we are still having conversations about the role of women in our society, and the impact that gender attitudes have on employment, housing, financial security and personal safety for women.

The ACT Greens support the 2016-26 ACT Women's Plan but believe that we can do more to show leadership and achieve gender equality in our community.

The Greens will develop a gender equity action plan to:

» Guide actions and priorities for government, and the community, to ensure equal participation, treatment and recognition of and for women.

» Require all government legislation, policy and programs to undertake a triple bottom line analysis - including a gender analysis and impact assessment. Where this does not occur, clear and justifying statements must be made as to why not.

» Include stronger adherence to the existing target of 50/50 gender representation on government appointed boards, committees and other statutory positions and mandate that appointments will not be passed unless the gender balance exists - or sufficient explanation is given as to why this was not achievable.

As well as workforce participation and economic security, a gender equity strategy would also address issues such as women's development and leadership, health and wellbeing, violence against women and girls, and education and employment opportunities (including in science, technology, engineering and maths).

> **Respectful Relationships Programs for All Schools**

Research shows that the incidence and rate of domestic violence occurring in a society is directly linked to the underlying cultural attitudes towards women. Even just recently we have seen examples of young women in our schools being targeted in online forums in a disrespectful and abusive fashion by their own peers.

These negative attitudes start young, and by intervening in the early years through programs that teach respectful relationships and that value the role of women in our society, we can start to build community values that reject demeaning attitudes towards women - attitudes that are the foundation on which violent and abusive behaviour is built.

That's why the ACT Greens will provide \$2m funding over 4 years to implement primary prevention programs across all primary and secondary schools in Canberra.

Safe and supportive learning environments should also teach children and young people personal skills that enhance an inclusive and caring society.

The ACT Greens believe that there is an obligation for us to intervene with our children

and young people to provide evidence-based and age-appropriate primary prevention programs. The educational setting offers a unique opportunity to intervene when attitudes and values are still being developed. Delivering respectful relationships programs in all schools across the ACT will lay a solid foundation for our young people.

> **Supporting Women Escaping Violence**

Women's crisis accommodation services are a crucial part of our support to women who have suffered domestic and family violence. And, providing women with legal support ensures that women who are escaping violence have access to justice.

In recent years, ACT service providers have shown incredible resilience in the face of a series of funding cuts by the Federal Liberal Party, and uncertainty since the 2014 Federal Budget. However, these cuts have impacted on the services that can be delivered to clients, the morale of staff and the viability of the sector. Similarly, funding to Community Legal Services has been significantly cut by the Federal Government - and the ACT Government has failed to adequately protect them.

That's why the ACT Greens will:

» Significantly increase the funding for women's crisis accommodation services by \$2m over 4 years; and

» Provide an additional \$150,000 a year in additional funding to the Women's Legal Centre.

Funding cuts have occurred against a backdrop of increased pressure on frontline support services as referral rates have continued to grow. The number of women who have escaped DV being supported by one agency has increased from 35% to 65% in the last 18 months. The ACT Greens believe that is unacceptable that any woman fleeing violence and abuse should be turned away, and we are committed to ensuring that women escaping violence get the support they need.

The Women's Legal Centre is one of the Community Legal Centres in Canberra which provides critical community services, improving access to justice for women. Their frontline service delivery and advocacy save costs further down the line. An independent economic cost-benefit analysis of Community Legal Centres determined that, as well as removing pressure on the court system, every \$1 the Government spends on CLCs returns \$18 of economic benefits accrued to society, including financial, social and health benefits.

> Legal Reform to Identify, and Respond to, Violence Against Women

The ACT Greens understand that one of the greatest challenges in addressing violence against women is recognising it. Devastatingly, recent surveys still show that large sections of the population do not understand what constitutes violence, sexual assault or abuse.

While the ACT has extended the definition of emotional and psychological abuse into the Domestic Violence ACT, this is not yet included as a definition under the Crimes Act. We will also strengthen ACT criminal laws to

specifically address the issue non-consensual sharing of intimate images (revenge porn).

Further, the ACT Greens are committed to implementing the recommendations in the Australian Law Reform Commission report "Family violence - A national legal response" to ensure we support women who have survived family violence.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Amend the Crimes Act in consultation with the community to ensure the definition of domestic violence includes psychological and emotional abuse;
- » Strengthen ACT criminal laws to specifically address the issue non-consensual sharing of intimate images by creating offences for knowingly or recklessly recording an intimate image without consent; knowingly or recklessly sharing intimate images without consent; and threatening to take and/or share intimate images without consent, irrespective of whether or not those images exist; and
- » Prioritise the implementation of the recommendations in the Australian Law Reform Commission report to ensure that law reform in regards to sexual assault is progressed.

Emotional and psychological abuse can be as damaging as physical violence, and often is a precursor or accompanies physical violence. Emotional violence can look remarkably similar to other crimes. For example, if someone took your mobile phone at the supermarket they may have committed the crime of theft.

However, if your partner took your phone in an effort to restrict your access to family and friends, to isolate and disempower you, currently that may still only constitute a minor theft, rather than a more serious offence that is occurring in a context of abuse and control. The ACT Greens would look to Tasmania where emotional abuse has been included as a criminal offence in Tasmania, and has been used in limited circumstances, for guidance. It would be important to ensure that any new laws would be effective in being able to bring about prosecutions.

Further, while it has been encouraging to see increased public policy and legal responses focussed on domestic and family violence over the past two years, it is important the responses to sexual assault crimes are not deprioritized. Only 34% of sexual assault occurs in a domestic violence context and reforms are still need to address the remaining 66%. The ACT Greens are committed to implementing the reforms put forward by the Australian Law Reform Commission in 2010 to ensure women are given justice through the legal system.

> Preventing Violence Against Women

Stopping men committing violence is the number one way that we will stop violence against women. That starts with cultural and attitudinal change that we will see through initiatives like teaching respectful relationships at school.

However, there is a current service gap in programs for with men who are at risk of committing violence, or men who have committed violence, and who have not been convicted or come before the courts.

That's why the ACT Greens will:

» Provide \$150,000 per annum in additional funding for early intervention perpetrator programs.

Long-term behavioural change and a reduction in perpetration of violence against women should be a central goal to addressing domestic and family violence. The ACT Greens believe that working with violent or potentially violent men in an early intervention context is a vital part of our response to domestic and family violence.