



INVESTING IN MENTAL HEALTH And Our Wellbeing

The Greens will create an Office of Mental Health and invest in our services

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The ACT Greens believe in a Canberra where wellbeing is prioritised, quality mental health services are easily available and everyone has access to the treatment and support that they need, when they need it. Given that around one third of our population needs mental health care at some stage in their lives, it is paramount that services are able to match demand.

> **An Office for Mental Health**

After many years of increased funding to the mental health sector, both community and government, the ACT Greens remain concerned by the ongoing reports of silos and gaps and the constant revolving door of acute services. There are still gaps in our mental system and long waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health.

Right now, people are struggling to access the right services, at the right time, and for the right period. We are committed to developing accountable, transparent and community focused approach to both chronic and acute mental health care that puts the people who need the service at the centre of it.

That's why the ACT Greens will:

- » Create a new Office for Mental Health in consultation with local representative bodies and service providers such as the Capital Health Network, local community based advocacy services and government officials; and
- » Empower the Office for Mental Health to provide independent reports and advice to the community and government on what is working and what is not working in the delivery of mental health services; and have a role in partnering and monitoring the delivery of programs.

The Office for Mental Health will also have a role in coordinating the range of support services that are available to Canberrans to ensure that nobody falls through the gaps. We need to ensure a continuum of support for patients through the full range of the existing services, including residential, outpatient and supported accommodation options. This will be based on the best practise examples of the Western Australian and NSW Mental Health Commissions.

The Office for Mental Health will:

- » Examine the recent gap analysis undertaken by the ACT Primary Health Network into mental health services, and support increased funding to key areas of need, particularly in the community mental health sector;
- » Ensure ongoing whole of sector coordination;
- » Increase carer and consumer representative involvement with the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team; and
- » Increase funding for behaviour management programs and cognitive behavioural programs that focus on emotional regulation.

> Reducing Suicide by 50%

The Greens have backed calls for the development and introduction of a new approach to suicide prevention in light of the recommendations of the National Mental Health Commission and calls from Suicide Prevention Australia. We have targets for reducing road deaths and other preventable health issues - the ACT Greens believe we should do the same for reducing suicide.

ACT Greens MLA Amanda Bresnan introduced annual reporting of suicides into the Assembly in 2012. The ACT Government has now reported against this for the past two years, greatly reducing the stigma and taboo around talking about suicide which can stand in the way of people seeking the help they need, leading to tragic and preventable loss of life.

As a society, we must better equip our services, and indeed the broader community, to respond to suicide.

The ACT Greens will:

- » Set a target to reduce suicide by 50% by 2025.
- » Establish a Suicide Expert Committee, along the lines of the Child Death Review Committee, to properly examine suicides in the ACT and make policy recommendations to ACT Government to help us better respond to and prevent suicide.
- » Advocate for the creation of a national suicide register through representation at the Ministerial Council level, and the development of improved suicide prevention campaigns relevant to the ACT community.
- » Enhance anti-stigma and health promotions strategies to challenge the ongoing misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the lived experience of mental illness - particularly in relation to at risk groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTI and CALD communities.

Setting a target to reduce suicide means acknowledging, and responding to, suicide as a preventable health issue. It calls on all of us in the Assembly, and in the community, to do all we can to prevent suicide. It also serves as a constant reminder to never become complacent, and to continue to work to reduce the stigma attached to talking about mental health and mental illness.

That is why the ACT Greens are committed to implementing Suicide Prevention Australia's call to reduce the suicide rate by 50 per cent by 2025.