

TOWARDS 2024



ACT Election campaign
advocacy kit



YWCA CANBERRA

Acknowledgement

YWCA Canberra proudly recognises the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to own and control their cultures and pays our respect to these rights. YWCA Canberra acknowledges the need to respect and encourage the diversity of Indigenous cultures and to respect Indigenous worldviews, lifestyles, and customary laws. We extend our respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who for thousands of years have preserved the culture and practices of their communities on country. This land was never surrendered, and we acknowledge that it always was and will continue to always be Aboriginal land.



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CONTACT

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INTRODUCTION

YWCA Canberra is calling for members and supporters to get involved in our advocacy work to progress gender equality ahead of the 2020 ACT Election!

We need your help to promote our election priorities, *Towards 2024*, and advocate for change.

This campaign advocacy toolkit will equip you with the knowledge and skills to support *Towards 2024* in the lead-up to the election.

Who to contact

You can advocate for change to the relevant Minister, your local MLA, or a candidate contesting the election.

The relevant ACT Ministers are:

- Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA
 - Chief Minister
 - Treasurer
 - Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality
- Minister Yvette Berry MLA:
 - Deputy Chief Minister
 - Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development
 - Minister for Housing and Suburban Development
 - Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
 - Minister for Women
- Minister Suzanne Orr, MLA
 - Minister for Community Services and Facilities
 - Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety

The relevant ACT Opposition spokespeople are:

- Alistair Coe, MLA
 - Leader of the Opposition
 - Shadow Treasurer
- Guilia Jones, MLA
 - Shadow Minister for Women
- Mark Parton, MLA
 - Shadow Minister for Housing
- Elizabeth Lee, MLA
 - Shadow Minister for Education
- Elizabeth Kikkert, MLA
 - Shadow Minister for Families, Youth and Community Services.

Find your current member: www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/find-your-member/

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Write a letter or email

Politicians always like to hear from voters about issues that concern them. We have developed examples you can send as is or modify to include only those policy areas you're most interested in. You can find these at the end of this document and on our website.

If you want to write your own letter or email, there are a few key steps you can take to ensure that your letter is read and responded to:

1. Address the politician appropriately. In the ACT, members of the Legislative Assembly are referred to as '[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME], MLA'. If they are also a Minister, put that before their name.
2. If they are a member for your electorate, state that upfront.
3. Tell them how you feel about a particular issue. For example, if you are concerned about homelessness, talk about the prevalence of this issue and also discuss your own experience (or the experience of someone you know) if you feel comfortable.
4. Be specific about an action you would like to see them take. Would you like an update to legislation? Think about what change you want to see in your community.
5. Always be polite. This includes using correct names/titles and using formal writing structures and proper grammar and spelling.
6. Be short and concise; keep your letter to one or two pages.

Make a phone call

Phone calls are also an easy way to communicate with a politician about an issue that is important to you without taking a lot of time. A few steps to help you have a successful conversation with a politician are:

1. Determine who the best MLA is to speak to and who the member for your electorate is: www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/find-your-members.
2. When the phone is answered by the office staff, state your name and, if appropriate, that you're a member of the MLA's electorate. Ask to leave a message for the MLA.
3. Explain why you are calling and state your request for action: "I am calling to ask [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME] MLA to [insert one of YWCA Canberra's policy asks from Towards 2024 or a policy ask that you feel is linked to the priority areas]."
4. Thank them for passing on the message and provide your contact details if you would like a response.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Talk to a candidate

You may receive a door knock from a candidate or see a candidate at your local shops. This canvassing gives you an opportunity to engage directly with a candidate on a given topic that concerns you.

It can be confronting to get doorknocked which makes it hard to recall what you would want to discuss with a candidate. This is normal, so just remember to see it as a conversation. Here are some hints to help you:

1. Usually a candidate will ask you whether you have feedback or suggestions on a given local issue. This is a good opportunity to raise selected priorities from *Towards 2024*.
2. Think broadly about which policy themes you personally prioritise (e.g. safe, secure and affordable housing; valuing early childhood education; preventing violence against women) and ask open questions that demand more than a yes/no answer:
 - a. What are your thoughts on violence against women/housing affordability and homelessness among families/wages for early educators?
 - b. How can government respond to violence against women/housing and homelessness/affordability of early learning?
 - c. What do you think is a good solution to this issue?
 - d. How will you take action on this issue in the event you are elected?

We have provided some example questions later in this document.

Share on social media

Share our posts and use the #Towards2024 hashtag to join the online conversation.

You could also post the example questions later in this document to start on online discussion. Consider tagging in a candidate, MLA or Minister, but remember to keep it respectful.

You can connect with YWCA Canberra on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.



Facebook.com/YWCACanberra



@YWCACanberra



au.linkedin.com/company/
YWCA-of-Canberra



@YWCACanberra

WHAT TO ASK

Stuck for questions to start a conversation with a candidate? Here are some we have thought of to get you started.

Safe, secure and affordable housing

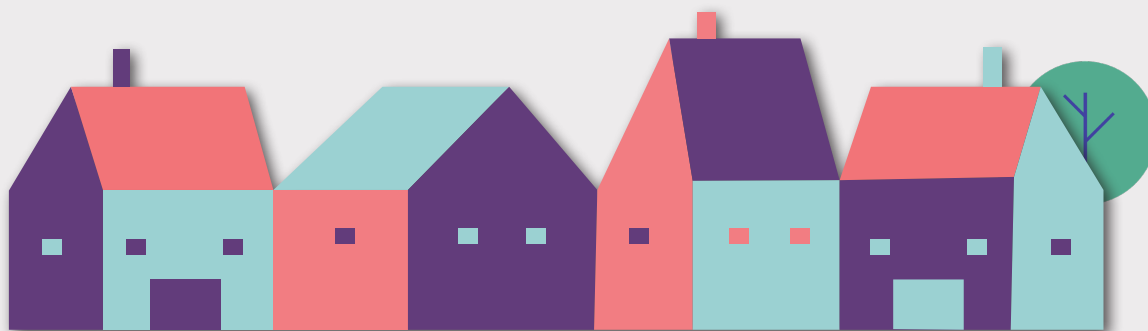
- What plans do you have for diversifying the affordable housing stock in Canberra?
- The visibility of homelessness in Canberra has increased; how should governments address this?
- What about older women and homelessness: how do you envisage a solution to this complex problem?

Valuing early childhood education

- How do you think the ACT Government can best show they value the work of those in the early learning sector?
- Early educators and providers were at the frontline of the COVID-19 response; what are your thoughts on how the Federal Government addressed uncertainty in the sector?
- Will you support the equal pay case for early educators if elected?

Preventing violence against women

- What would you do to make Canberra safer after dark?
- What is your position on positive consent legislation?
- What is your position on introducing Respectful Relationships Education in ACT public schools?
- How do you think Government can better understand and address sexual harassment in the workplace?



STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

When advocating for change, it's important to be able to back up your point with facts and data. We've collected some statistics relevant to our key policy areas to help you.

Safe, secure and affordable housing

- Older, single women are the fastest growing demographic cohort experiencing homelessness in Australia.¹
- More than a third of Canberra women reported spending more than 30 per cent of their household income on their housing tenure, putting them into housing stress.²
- ACT had a social housing shortfall of 3,000 properties before COVID-19 and last summer's bushfires.³
- With rising unemployment and job insecurity due to the COVID-19 crisis, the rates of housing crisis and homelessness are rising significantly.

Valuing early childhood education

- Early childhood education is one of the most feminised industries in the Australian economy. It is also one of the lowest paid. The situation is so dire that many early educators cannot afford to access the service they provide.⁴
- Early childhood educators are a qualified, professional workforce. Nationally, around 34 per cent have a Diploma or Advanced Diploma and 12 per cent have a bachelor's degree.⁵
- The sector's pay, however, does not reflect their expertise and is barely above the national minimum wage. As of June 2019, the industry award minimum wage for early childhood educators with a Certificate III or above was \$21.70/hour.⁶
- For early educators holding a bachelor's degree, there is a significant difference in the hourly pay rates (up to nearly \$14/hour) between those in early education and those in the school setting. This leads to a high level of turnover.
- There is significant international evidence that quality early childhood education and care gives children developmental opportunities and improves school readiness.
- Children's services also provide foundational education on lifelong social concepts such as respect and reconciliation, which can contribute to a fairer and safer society into the future.

STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

Preventing violence against women

- 55 per cent of Canberra women feel unsafe in public spaces after dark. This rate is higher for:
 - women age 18 to 24 (72 per cent)
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (63 per cent)
 - women living with disability (67 per cent).⁷
- 16 per cent of Canberra women experience physical, emotional, verbal or financial abuse in a domestic or interpersonal relationship each year. This rate is higher for:
 - women age 18 to 24 (24 per cent)
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (33 per cent)
 - women living with disability (18 per cent).⁸
- More than half of Canberra women experience sexism each year. Of them, 41 per cent said it happened in the workplace.⁹

¹ ABS, 2019, *Housing Occupancy and Costs 2017-2018, housing costs as a proportion of gross household income selected characteristics, ACT* <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4130.02017-18?OpenDocument>

² YWCA Canberra, 2019, *Our lives: women in the ACT*, YWCA Canberra

³ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2018, *Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway*, <https://everybodyshome.com.au/heat-maps/>

⁴ Listo, R and Dalley-Fisher, H, 2020, *Reimagining child care for an effective, equitable and resilient economic recovery*, Equality Rights Alliance, <http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/blog/reimagining-child-care-for-an-effective-equitable-and-resilient-economic-recovery/31/8/2020>

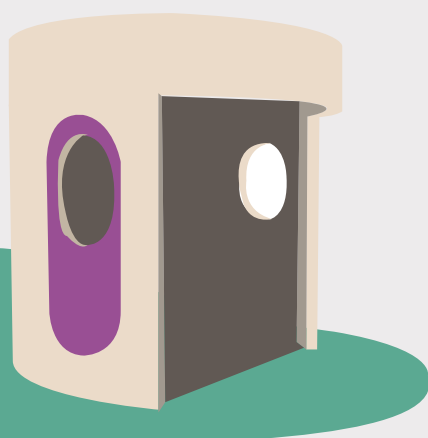
⁵ Early Learning: Everyone Benefits, 2019, *State of Early Learning in Australia 2019*, Early Childhood Australia <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ELEB-SOEL-2019-report.pdf>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ YWCA Canberra, 2019, *Our lives: women in the ACT*, YWCA Canberra

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid



FORM LETTER: CANDIDATE

Modify or delete any sections not relevant to you.

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[ADDRESS LINE 1]
[SUBURB] [STATE] [POSTCODE]
[EMAIL]

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[EMAIL ADDRESS]

DATE MONTH 2020

Dear [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME][, MLA (if currently serving)],

I am writing to you to draw attention to issues affecting women and girls in the ACT.

My name is [YOUR NAME], and I am constituent from the electorate you are [re]contesting for the election.

Although the ACT is considered a leader in the space of inclusion and equality, there is still significant gendered inequality that needs to be addressed for women and girls to be able to participate equitably in our workforces and community.

Safe, secure and affordable housing

Housing is a human right, and COVID-19 has highlighted how shelter is a fundamental pillar of public health. Homelessness is not an intractable problem and a policy response of providing housing as a first step to holistic individual wellbeing is achievable.

To address this issue, I believe the next ACT Government needs to:

- invest in building capacity within the sector for appropriate services and supported housing to assist gender and sexually diverse persons escape family and domestic violence
- fund specialist and culturally-appropriate housing and homelessness services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women escaping domestic violence
- upgrade Canberra's existing refuge housing stock to ensure access for women with disabilities who require crisis housing
- improve the diversity of housing stock by supporting community housing-led solutions to cater for people and families with a range of needs
- lift the supply of three- and four-bedroom dwellings available through the Affordable Home Purchase Program to better meet market demand, as recommended by the ACT Audit Office review of land supply and development.

Preventing violence against women

The current policy framework of responding to family violence is too late for some women and children. We need visionary and evidence-based primary prevention strategies that eliminate violence before it starts and creates a future without violence for Canberra girls. We still see systemic issues of workplace sexual harassment which, when unaddressed, displaces capable women from their chosen profession across a range of industries.

To address this issue, I believe the next ACT Government needs to:

- collect and publicise anonymised data relating to workplace sexual harassment and develop annual reporting of sexual harassment in Canberra workplaces
- collect and publicise gender-disaggregated and intersectional data on perceptions of personal safety and harassment in public spaces in Canberra for women
- lobby the Australian Government to adopt the legislative reform recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission *Respect@Work* report on workplace sexual harassment
- include the prevention of sexual harassment in workplaces, educational and public settings as a priority area, with measurable outcomes, in the implementation of the ACT Women's Plan and Fourth Action Plan
- amend the *Crimes Act (ACT 1900)* to include the concept of positive consent, as recommended by the corrigendum to the Inquiry into Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill
- establish the cross-government, cross-sector working group to advise on how prosecution outcomes for victims of sexual assault can be improved, as recommended by the Inquiry into the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill
- broaden the scope of the Family Safety Hub to respond to violence that occurs between intimate partners who do not constitute a family unit
- implement Respectful Relationships Education for students from P-12 and tertiary education, including students in special needs educational settings, in line with Our Watch's recommended whole-of-school approach.

Valuing early childhood education and promoting access

Access to early childhood education and care provides children with the best start in life. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the value of early education services to the economy and families. However, there is a pressing need to recalibrate how policymakers conceive of early childhood education and care. Rather than being viewed as 'babysitting' or 'childminding', quality early childhood education and care is an investment in the future economy of our nation.

To address this issue, I believe the next ACT Government needs to:

- fund the extension of universal access to early childhood education and care to three-year-old children (in line with the Australian Government Child Care Subsidy maximum hourly fee cap for children below school age)
- lobby the federal government to support equal pay for educators
- create an ACT Early Childhood Educators Professional Development Fund to support ongoing professional development in the sector
- re-establish the Early Childhood Advisory Council to streamline sector insight and advice to the relevant Minister.

Should you be [re]elected, I look forward to your response outlining what steps will be taken to address these issues.

Yours sincerely,

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]

FORM LETTER: MINISTER

Modify or delete any sections not relevant to you.

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[ADDRESS LINE 1]
[SUBURB] [STATE] [POSTCODE]
[EMAIL]

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[EMAIL ADDRESS]

DATE MONTH 2020

Dear Minister [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME], MLA

My name is [YOUR NAME], and I am constituent from the [YOUR ELECTORATE] electorate.

As the Minister for [MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIO], I am writing to you to draw attention to issues affecting women and girls in the ACT that are relevant to your portfolio.

Although the ACT is considered a leader in the space of inclusion and equality, there is still significant gendered inequality that needs to be addressed for women and girls to be able to participate equitably in our workforces and community.

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[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]