



ACT Council of Social Service

2022 Federal Election Forum Report

May 2022

On 28 April 2022, ACTCOSS hosted a forum with a range of candidates for the 2022 federal election. The forum was an opportunity for local dialogue with a local focus, providing an opportunity to:

- hear from local candidates about their federal priorities, services and programs for ACT residents
- have direct conversations with candidates about electorate issues for the House of Representatives (Bean, Fenner and Canberra) and two Senate seats.

Aunty Violet Sheridan gave a warm Welcome to Country from where she urged candidates to ensure their continuing connection to community beyond the electoral cycle. The forum provided a space for candidates to reflect on community sector priorities, have conversations and dialogue with community sector membership and reflect on community concerns through a local lens.

ACTCOSS Board Chair, Jeremy Halcrow, in his opening comments to the forum, noted that the ACT is not just the seat of government; it is a growing Territory where over 430,000 people live, work and depend on services, transfer payments, tax arrangements and infrastructure arranged in whole or part by the Australian Government. ACTCOSS Chief Executive Officer, Dr Emma Campbell, outlined [ACTCOSS' election priorities](#). These cover six key areas: income support; housing security; quality community services; fair, fast, and inclusive climate action; self-determination for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples; and revenue. These are the main priorities ACTCOSS believes need to be addressed to build a fairer community in which no-one is left behind, and we have identified specific asks for each of them.

All candidates of the three major parties standing for election in the ACT in both the three House of Representative seats and the leading candidates for the two Senate seats were invited to participate in the forum. Members heard from party/independent candidates present: Tim Hollo and Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Australian Greens), Andrew Leigh (Australian Labor Party), and independent senate candidates David Pocock and Kim Rubenstein. Candidates gave an opening pitch responding to the ACTCOSS priorities they believe are most important. The video recordings of their pitches [will be viewable here](#). At the end of the session, candidates also had the opportunity to feed back to members what they heard.

Andrew Leigh outlined [Labor's](#) support for the [Uluru Statement of the Heart](#), the importance of expanding the tax base, improving access to child care, addressing climate action, and appropriately funding aged care staff and expanding nursing care. Due to prior commitments, Andrew was unable to remain for the whole forum and therefore did not provide reflections back to members on issues he heard raised.

The [Greens](#) candidates, Tim Hollow and Tjanara Goreng Goreng, identified the need to ensure a living income guarantee by raising income support payments and taxing wealth; as well as supporting the Uluru Statement of the Heart in its entirety emphasising the need to ensure an equitable treaty with First Nations People. Post-forum reflections from Tim and Tjanara focused on the strength and diversity of the community sector, the importance of the human rights act in the ACT, and lack of funding for particular services such as women's health, implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and free dental and mental health services under Medicare.

[David Pocock](#), independent Senate candidate, focused on housing security and climate change, noting the need to have a housing strategy that is properly funded, and to support local initiatives in the build-to-rent sector. Following discussions with members, he identified the need to have appropriate funding for early intervention which would have significant flow-on effects; the impact of climate change on all aspects of life; and the importance of valuing multiculturalism to strengthen our community.

[Kim Rubenstein](#), independent Senate candidate, highlighted the importance of active and inclusive citizenship, with action on climate change and issues impacting First Nations peoples. Her feedback focused on her personal experience of engaged community and noted the ACTCOSS election forum provided a good model for this to happen.

ACTCOSS is grateful to all candidates for their willingness to engage with the community sector and ACTCOSS members who participated in the event in a

constructive manner. Prior to the forum, ACTCOSS surveyed members of all major parties and the most prominent independent candidates for the Senate on the six priorities ACTCOSS has identified as most important to make a positive change in the lives of those on low incomes and experiencing systemic disadvantage in our community. Their [responses can be found here](#). In addition to the candidates who attended the forum, James Christie, independent candidate for Bean, also responded to the survey. It was disappointing that we did not receive any responses from Liberal candidates or the UAP. When Canberrans go to the polls, we encourage them to review and reflect on the responses from the candidates.

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ACTCOSS is committed to reconciliation, acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to elders past and present.

ACTCOSS advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

Authorised by Adam Poulter for the ACT Council of Social Service.