



ACT Council of Social Service

Federal Election Survey – Candidates Responses

May 2022

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations. ACTCOSS’s vision for Canberra is a just, safe, and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

Using national analysis and ACT-focused research, ACTCOSS has identified six policy priorities that will give a fair go to people on low incomes and those disadvantaged by current systems. ACTCOSS’s 2022 [election priorities](#) are: income support; housing security; quality community services; fair, fast, and inclusive climate action; self-determination for Aboriginal and 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 against each of them.

ACTCOSS released a survey on these priorities to candidates in the 2022 federal election and received responses from Greens candidates and independent candidates Kim Rubenstein, David Pocock and Jamie Christie. Labor candidates also sent a separate co-sponsored letter advising stances on select policy issues; the answers have been inserted into the relevant questions where possible below. ACTCOSS did not receive any response to survey communications from Liberal, UAP or other candidates.

The responses are included below in full.

More detailed information about candidates/parties’ policies can be found on their websites:

[Animal Justice](#)

[Canberra Progressives](#)

[David Pocock](#)

[Fuxin Li](#)

[Greens](#)

[Informed Medical Options](#)

[Jamie Christie](#)

[Kim for Canberra](#)

[Labor](#)

[Legalise Cannabis](#)

[Liberal](#)

[One Nation](#)

[Sustainable Australia](#)

[Tim Bohm](#)

[UAP](#)

1. What is your stance on: increasing the rate of Jobseeker, Youth Allowance, and other income support payments to at least \$70 a day and index to CPI and wages?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Agree

Actually we have a policy of increasing it by \$80, the amount is too low for people to live well and healthy lives where they can socialise, buy necessities and enjoy recreational activities and be able to pay rent and buy food for themselves and their families.

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

The Greens believe it should be at least \$88 a day.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

I believe it should be even higher. At least \$88 a day. (p.s. I am currently surviving off income support payments).

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

I and the Greens believe the rate should be increased to above the Henderson poverty line - currently \$88/day. This is something I have been working for years and am deeply committed to.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): No response provided in their joint response to the survey

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): Conditionally Agree

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Agree

The current payments are well below the poverty line, and many dependent on them have health problems or carer responsibilities which limit their earning capacity. This increase still leaves their value about \$90/wk below the Melbourne Institutes 2021 poverty line.

2. What is your stance on: indexing national social housing stock by 25,000 homes per year and building at least 425 new social housing dwellings per year in Canberra?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Agree

I believe we can do more, build more and transform housing policy to be more sustainable in the future.

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

We should be building this amount and more.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

The Greens have a policy to build 1 million affordable homes.

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

This should be seen as an absolutely minimum.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): Disagree

It's clear to us that there's a need to build more social housing, upgrade existing housing, and make sure that the promise of home ownership is extended to all Australians.

To meet that need, Labor will create the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund which will build 30,000 new social and affordable housing properties in its first five years, creating thousands of jobs along the way.

Each year, investment returns from the Housing Australia Future Fund will be transferred to the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation to pay for social and affordable housing projects.

Over the first 5 years the investment returns will build around 20,000 social housing properties, including 4,000 to be allocated for women and children fleeing domestic and family violence and older women at risk of homelessness, and 10,000 affordable homes for frontline workers like police, nurses and cleaners who kept us safe during the pandemic.

In addition to this, a portion of the investment returns will be available to fund acute housing needs on an ongoing basis. Secure housing is often the first step to changing the trajectory of disadvantage and opening up wider opportunities for a safe and fulfilled life.

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Agree

The Productivity Commission's recent review suggests despite a population growth of around 65,000, the amount of ACT public housing stock has been stable or falling for a decade, and the wait for emergency housing is now around a year. Locally, supply is clearly well short of demand. Nationally, provision of housing generally now looks like a failed market for both home buyers and those renting. This is one of my three top policy focuses.

3. What is your stance on: adequate federal funding for services provided by the community sector, including aged care, disability, homelessness, domestic violence services ensuring appropriate remuneration of the community sector workforce at rates which are regularly indexed?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Agree

It's time to give priority to community services funding. They should get more secure and appropriate funding to do the work required of them. This is a system of funding that needs complete transformation.

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

All these services need a large increase in funding.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

The way vital social services has been outsourced by government to NGOs and the community sector and then systematically starved of funds is atrocious. The programs need to be properly funded, indexed to inflation, and given long-term funding cycles instead of constantly having to re-apply and report.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): Conditionally Agree

Community sector organisations have invaluable experience and expertise. A Labor Government will listen to local organisations and workers when designing programs and policies so they work on the ground.

We will remove gag clauses from contracts, and change legislation to protect your freedom to speak up and your right to advocate. Government grants will reflect the real cost of delivering quality services, ending the practice of competing on wages. Contract terms will be longer so that organisations can plan for the future, workers have certainty, and services can become part of the community they serve.

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Agree

Leaving aside 'so what's the point of strong economy, exactly?', its clear that from a purely economic perspective there is currently room for spending on human services to generate significant benefit – eg. Per Capita's Nov 2021 review of NDIS outcomes indicated that overall, every dollar spent generated an economic return of \$2.25.

4. What is your stance on: committing to reducing carbon pollution 75% by 2030 (on 2005 level) and net zero by 2035 by implementing a fair and inclusive plan to achieve the targets?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Agree

The Greens Climate Action Policy is public and clear.

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

This is the Greens policy.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Conditionally Agree

At least a 50% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030. A just transition is key to our policy.

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

If we don't tackle the climate crisis, we have no chance of building an equitable and inclusive society. And we must tackle the climate crisis in an equitable and inclusive way.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): Disagree

For nearly a decade, the Liberal's mismanagement of energy policy has been a threat to our climate and our economy.

Under Labor, Australian families and businesses will reap the reward of our Powering Australia plan which will create jobs, cut power bills and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy.

- Our plan will create 604,000 jobs, with 5 out of 6 new jobs to be created in the regions.
- It will spur \$76 billion of investment.
- It will cut power bills for families and businesses by \$275 a year for homes by 2025, compared to today.

Alongside the economic benefits, our plan will reduce Australia's emissions by 43% by 2030 – which will become Australia's target under the Paris Agreement, keeping us on track for net zero by 2050.

At a local level, we will be rolling out solar banks and community batteries to help households get affordable clean energy.

Labor will restore the Climate Change Authority to its rightful role and demonstrate Commonwealth leadership by reducing the Australian Public Service's own emissions to net zero by 2030.

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): Conditionally Agree

I am committed to backing the Member for Warringah Zali Steggal's Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill which requires a 60% emissions reduction cut by 2030 but also support achieving the greatest gains possible in emissions reductions ahead of that time, while also looking out for our most vulnerable.

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Conditionally Agree

While addressing climate change is one of my three top policy priorities, I've not so far seen the social or political will to deliver net zero by 2035. If I'm elected, it will be partly because of our community's frustration with Australia's current "60th out of 60" ranking. As an Independent, I can commit to advocating cessation of fossil fuel subsidies, reducing all greenhouse gas pollution as fast as we can achieve, and supporting climate adaption and mitigation strategies, and I will do whatever I can to deliver these.

5. What is your stance on: beginning to address deep and ongoing wrongs inflicted against First Nations people, through commitment to the implementation of all recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; a constitutionally guaranteed Voice to Parliament; and a commitment to Closing the Gap?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Disagree

As a First Nations person who has lived with the colonial agenda and policies all my life these issues are not my priority as a Senator for First Nations peoples. There are legislative and policy changes we must make now that would change these three things that if implemented would ensure social justice in all three areas noted. Our priority as Greens is a Truth and Justice Commission, A sovereign Treaty and a Voice to Parliament that is sovereign and self determined not determined by the white dominant colonial system and not beholden to a Minister of Indigenous Affairs or an Australian colonial constitution. We should govern Australian equally as sovereign peoples. This is more than what ACTCOSS has stated above so I cannot mark a box but explain our position more clearly.

The recommendations of RCADIC have never been implemented, no government is going to start doing them now, the system needs a complete overall from a systemically racist one to an anti-racist one. Then incarceration will be reduced. We do not agree with a constitutionally guaranteed voice to parliament as it will take away our sovereignty and we do not agree to be included in the colonial constitution of the Country that stole our land, said we didn't exist and then gives us handouts instead of real self determination. Closing the Gap is a failure - despite it's ability to transform First Nations policy, being run by a colonial dominant culture bureaucracy will only continue the disadvantage. Only one of the statistics of CTG is reducing - higher education, and each report to Parliament has shown it's clear failure. This needs to be thrown out and a self determined representative body of sovereign nations determining our policies relating to all our clans must be formed under a sovereign treaty with the Australian Federal government in equal partnership.

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

We believe we need treaties for justice and healing.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

I support the Uluru Statement of the Heart.

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

We must recognise that our nation is built on genocide and dispossession, and we must work for deep reform to truly ensure Indigenous sovereignty.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): Conditionally Agree

Labor is the only party to fully support the Uluru Statement from the Heart. With its call for Voice, Treaty and Truth, this was a generous offer of genuine partnership, and a real chance for us to create a reconciled Australia.

A Labor Government would progress a referendum to constitutionally enshrine a Voice to Parliament in the Constitution as a matter of priority. We will also establish a Makarrata Commission to work with the Voice to Parliament on a national process for Treaty and Truth-telling.

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Agree

Its over 30 years since the this Royal Commission reported. The 2017 Deloitte review concluded that 64% of its 339 recommendations had been fully implemented. This means a third had not, and its been suggested since that this was an optimistic view. Despite the rhetoric, while the ACT Education Directorate requires its staff to document trajectories of First Nations children, this does not appear to result in any additional resource allocation even if their academic results are well below benchmark.

6. What is your stance on: raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 nationally as the ACT Government has already committed to doing?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Agree

It should be 16.

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

The Greens have already brought legislation regarding this in ACT (and other states) but so far it hasn't been agreed to by the other parties.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

This is a vital step for a better, fairer society. Treating children as criminals instead of helping them towards a better life is simply wrong.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): No response provided in their joint response to the survey

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): Agree

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Conditionally Agree

The vast majority of juvenile 'criminal' behavior is impulsive and/or driven by social factors. Professionally though, I have encountered rare exceptions where there was very clear evidence of extensive planning and pre-meditated intent, so I think the possibility of a finding of criminal responsibility should remain. The question of what you do following a finding of criminal responsibility is a separate one.

7. What is your stance on: rescinding unaffordable tax cuts for people on higher incomes to invest in public services and support for the people who have the least?

Tjanara Goreng Goreng (Greens Senate Candidate): Agree

Kathryn Savery (Greens Candidate for Bean): Agree

Tax should be rescinded to be spent on dental and mental health in Medicare, free childcare, increased public housing, improvements to aged care amongst other services.

Natasa Sojic (Greens Candidate for Fenner): Agree

Kim Rubenstein (Independent Senate Candidate): Conditionally Agree

Tim Hollo (Greens Candidate for Canberra): Agree

The Stage 3 tax cuts, giving the most to those who need it least, while refusing to raise the rate of income support payments because "we can't afford it" is unforgivable.

Katy Gallagher (Labor Senate Candidate), Alicia Payne (Labor Candidate for Canberra), David Smith (Labor Candidate for Bean) & Andrew Leigh (Labor Candidate for Fenner): No response provided in their joint response to the survey.

David Pocock (Independent Senate Candidate): No response

Need further definition of "unaffordable tax cuts" in order to respond but strongly committed to investment in public services and a safety net for the most vulnerable.

Jamie Christie (Independent Candidate for Bean): Agree

Taxes are the price of civilization, however 'Unaffordable' is a value judgment. It relates to what kind of society we want to live in. Though I've personally financially benefited from the recent round of tax cuts, I'd prefer to pay more to live in a society which supports the young and the vulnerable. I would strongly prefer to live in a society where politicians are held accountable for the way they spend our taxes, and if elected I will advocate for the taxation system to be reformed to return some of the burden the corporate sector has put down over the last decade.

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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.

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