## For a fair and just ACT for women and LGBTIQA+ people, the ACT Government must:

* Commit to gender responsive budgeting and relocating the Office for Women in the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.
* Increase funding across the community sector to improve pay and conditions for women who make up 78% of the workforce.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* Introduce progressive paid parental leave entitlements that encourage shared parenting and build a culture that normalises equitable access to parental leave.
* Develope a new, funded ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy in line with national commitments.
* Increase transparency and accountability around the [Safer Families Levy](https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/levies/safer-families-levy) and ensuring a fairer share for frontline and community services.
* Provide additional funding for community-based specialist women’s services including domestic violence services, community legal services and housing and homelessness services.
* Provide additional funding for legal assistance services that support women and gender diverse people.
* Implement Respectful Relationships Education at a minimum standard for all staff and students in education settings, including from Preschool to Year 12, universities, and vocational training facilities.
* Commit to greater transparency and gender disaggregated data collection on women’s safety.
* Invest in ensuring women have access to affordable, accessible, and safe transport in the ACT.
* Fully resource services that address priority areas laid out in the [ACT Women's Plan 2016-26](https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/women/womens-plan-2016-26).
* End the overincarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
* Provide adequate funding and support for abortion and reproductive healthcare access.
* Develop a sexual and reproductive health strategy based on lived experience, including communications about how people can access free abortions.
* Further invest in the ACT Women's Health Service and provide subsidised health services for women and people who have experienced sexual violence.
* Fund and support LGBTIQA+ awareness training for frontline community service, particularly in housing, healthcare, and domestic and family violence responses.
* Increase funding for community controlled LGBTIQA+ organisations to continue to support LGBTIQA+ communities.
* Further reform legislation to be more inclusive of LGBTIQA+ people in line with A Gender Agenda’s position on transition accessibility.
* Improve housing responses for LGBTIQA+ Canberrans including: a LGBTIQA+ housing strategy, a trauma informed homelessness and housing support service and funding for ongoing LGBTIQA+ awareness training for housing and homelessness services.

## The Justification

* The cost of violence against women – of which the vast majority is domestic and family violence – is high and increasing in Australia and currently stands at $21.7 billion a year. In 2015, Price Waterhouse Coopers and the Women’s Centre for Health Matters calculate that the share of those costs of violence against women in the ACT equated to $355.2 million dollars a year.[[2]](#footnote-3)
* ACT women with disabilities experience violence at approximately twice the rate of non-disabled women.[[3]](#footnote-4)
* In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many women experienced an escalation or onset of domestic and family violence. According to the [Australian Institute of Criminology](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf), almost two thirds (65.4%) of women who experienced domestic and family violence in the first half of 2020, were experiencing it for the first time or were experiencing an increase in frequency or severity of the violence.[[4]](#footnote-5)
* The [ACT Family Safety Hub Design Insights Report](https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1168584/ACT-Family-Safety-Hub-Insights-Report-v2-5.pdf) found that the domestic and family violence system in the ACT focuses on crisis service, leaving gaps in prevention, early intervention and recovery.
* The ACT’s gender pay gap has increased from 7.9% in 2021 to 11.3% as of May 2022.[[5]](#footnote-6) Australia has marginally improved and is now ranked 43rd in the World Economic Forum gender gap index, compared with its placing of 50th in 2021.[[6]](#footnote-7)
* Just 1 in 20 Australian fathers take primary parental leave.[[7]](#footnote-8) Research from the [Australian Institute of Family Studies](https://aifs.gov.au/aifs-conference/fathers-and-work) tells us that the number of hours that men spend in employment remains the same before and after having children, and fathers are more likely to choose flexible working arrangements than to reduce their work hours to fit around child care.[[8]](#footnote-9)
* Every 1% of GDP invested in care work is predicted to increase direct, indirect and induced employment by 1.7% compared to 0.9% for the same investment in construction.[[9]](#footnote-10)
* Adverse health and social experiences were elevated among people with disability across the spectrum of genders. However, it was often the case that transgender or gender diverse people fared worse than was the case for cisgender people.[[10]](#footnote-11)
* LGBTIQA+ people experience intimate partner and family violence at similar rates or higher rates as those who identify as heterosexual.[[11]](#footnote-12) Data from the Australian Research Centre for Health and Safety (ARCHS) [*Private Lives*](https://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf) survey indicates that 41.7% of respondents had been in at least one abusive intimate relationship, and 38.5% had experienced abuse from family members.
* Non-binary respondents reported the highest rates of physical, verbal, and sexual violence from intimate partners. Almost three quarters (72%) of those who had experienced intimate partner violence did not report the abusive behaviour to anyone.[[12]](#footnote-13)
* LGBTIQA+ people are two and a half times more likely to have been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition in the past 12 months. 71% of LGBTIQA+ people aged 16-27 did not use a crisis support service during their most recent personal/mental health crisis.[[13]](#footnote-14)
* More than half (57.2%) of young LGBTIQA+ people in the ACT felt unsafe or uncomfortable at high school due to their sexuality or gender identity and 30% of young LGBTIQA+ felt uncomfortable or unsafe at university. Two-fifths (40%) reported experiencing verbal harassment, more than a quarter (28.4%) reported sexual harassment and 8.9% reported physical violence based on their gender identity or sexuality in the past 12 months. One fifth (20.8%) of young LGBTIQA+ people in the ACT had experienced one or more forms of homelessness in their lifetime.[[14]](#footnote-15)

## The Issues

* Australia ranks increasingly poorly in the [World Economic Global Gender Gap Report 2022](https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022). Moreover, women, more than men, have lost paid work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ACT Government must play its part in addressing existing and new economic discrepancies by prioritising gender responsive budgeting and serious investment in the community sector, which employs women at higher rates and frees them from unpaid care work, enabling more participation in the paid economy.
* The ACT Government is clearly committed to addressing domestic and family violence, particularly through the implementation of the Safer Families Levy. However, these funds need to be targeted more effectively to ensure adequate and timely frontline services, as well as recovery and prevention mechanisms, that are accessible and inclusive. Moreover, expenditure on domestic and family violence should be rigorously transparent, given it is sourced from ACT rate payers.
* The Government has committed to ensuring the ACT is a capital of equality and inclusion.  LGBTIQA+ people experience serious disadvantage and need welcoming and affirming community spaces, as well as access to mainstream services that have capacity and training to recognise the unique needs of gender and sexually diverse people.
* Reproductive healthcare needs to be consistently safe, inclusive, affordable and accessible. Without culturally safe and inclusive practices, we will continue to see [disproportionate rates of suicidality](https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/8acc8a97-3af3-4ca4-99e7-829167e57d50/aihw-per-106.pdf.aspx?inline=true) for pregnant people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, as well as people from lower socioeconomic areas.

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| Delivering commitments in the ACT Parliamentary and Governing Agreement |
| **Delivering on election commitments: Gender & LGBTIAQ+**  The Labor/Greens Government should honour commitments made in their election campaigns and policy position statements as they relate to gender equity and identity, sexual orientation, and intersex rights. These include, from ACT Labor:   * Build on existing supports to establish a whole-school approach to developing a respectful relationship and gender equality among children and young people. * Continue to support capacity building within the health sector to ensure medical professionals across the sector understand the specific needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, particularly our trans gender-diverse community. * Implement our commitment to the Darlington Statement for the protection of intersex Canberrans. * Support community access to the Pride Hub Canberra. * Progressively implement the *Capital of Equality First Action Plan* * Continue funding the Capital of Equality Grants Program, and support LGBTIQ+ events including SpringOUT and Yes! Fest.   Election commitments from The Greens include:   * Ensure well-funded systemic women’s advocacy groups, including community legal centres, women’s legal centres and women’s resource and support centres, and increase the capacity of domestic and family and sexual violence services. * Develop a women’s employment and education strategy to close the income gap. * Improve early intervention programs for people who use violence against their partners, family members or pets. * Ensure a gendered lens for policy and program development through gender responsive budgeting and producing an annual women’s budget statement that clearly outlines the impacts and benefits for women. * Increase the capacity of Meridian and continue support for CBR Pride Hub. * Fund a dedicated housing and homelessness officer to provide advocacy and support to same sex attracted and gender diverse people. * Provide increased funding for A Gender Agenda including for a dedicated intersex officer and delivery of services in The Friday Centre. * Update the high school health curriculum as it relates to gender and gender identity, and continue updating all government forms, including for schools, to recognise sex and gender diversity. * Roll out community based rapid HIV testing and HIV/BIV prevention efforts. * Ban gender-related surgery on intersex babies (unless necessary for preservation of life) and provide training for midwives and doctors. * Work with survivors of conversion therapy to determine further reforms |

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3. Women With Disabilities ACT, [*Submission to Discussion Paper: Domestic and Family Violence – Policy Approaches and Responses*](https://www.wwdact.org.au/publications/), Women With Disabilities ACT, September 2017, accessed 1 June 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Boxall, H., Morgan, A., & Bown, R., [*The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic*](https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sb/sb28) Australian Institute of Criminology, Statistical Bulletin 28, 2020, accessed 1 June 2021. [Full article: Spotlight on the gendered impacts of COVID-19 in Australia: a gender matrix analysis (tandfonline.com)](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1323238X.2022.2078535) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Gender pay gap data | WGEA](https://www.wgea.gov.au/pay-and-gender/gender-pay-gap-data#:~:text=Australia%27s%20national%20gender%20pay%20gap,Bureau%20of%20Statistics%20(ABS).) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. World Economic Forum, [Preface - Global Gender Gap Report 2022 | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)](https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full?_gl=1*hmbfrn*_up*MQ..&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIp6KP3NW-_AIVTpNmAh09wgiVEAAYAiAAEgIeYfD_BwE) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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8. Baxter, J., [*Fathers and work: A statistical overview*](https://aifs.gov.au/aifs-conference/fathers-and-work), Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019, accessed 1 June 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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10. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University Living with Disability Research Centre, La Trobe University [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Campo, M. & Tayton, S., [*Intimate partner violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer communities*](https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/intimate-partner-violence-lgbtiq-communities), Australian Institute of Family Studies, December 2015, accessed 1 June 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Hill, A., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. [*Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*](https://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/publications/private-lives/private-lives-3), ARSCHS Monograph Series No 122. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, 2020, accessed 1 June 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
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