



AASW
Australian Association
of Social Workers

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The Hon. Andrew Barr, MLA

GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Chief Minister,

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the professional body representing over 13,000 social workers throughout Australia. We set the benchmark for professional education and practice in social work and have a strong voice on matters of social inclusion, social justice, human rights and issues that impact on the quality of life of all Australians. The ACT Branch represents almost 400 members across the Territory. Our members are employed in a range of roles in government departments, non-government organisations and in private practice in areas including child protection, family violence, health, mental health, justice, housing and homelessness, disability, aged care along with other disadvantaged individuals, families and communities.

Social workers aim to enhance the quality of life of every member of society and empower them to develop their full potential. We believe that everyone has the right to an environment (social, economic and natural) in which it is possible to flourish and thrive.

A Territory election is a pivotal opportunity for a government to create the conditions under which people will pursue healthy, meaningful and rewarding lives. As social workers, we measure the success of any government based on the social impact of their policies.

We would like to commend the great work and significant progress that your government has achieved to date in relation to providing supports for some of the most vulnerable in our community. In particular, we would like to commend the government's commitment to provide rapid and immediate funding to mental health service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On behalf of our members we are seeking your party's response to the following questions. We will share your response with our members to assist in informing their voting decision in the election.

Please find attached our **ACT Election Policy Platform** which outlines our positions and rationale for our questions.

1. Social Work Registration

- If re-elected, what is your commitment to statutory registration of social workers in the ACT?

2. Mental Health

- If re-elected, what is your commitment to the full implementation of the *ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*, such as the increased support for older people and the professional development of mental health workforce?
- If re-elected, what plans are in place to invest in primary intervention programs (such as PACER) and suicide postvention programs?
- Can you clarify what plans are in place to expand mental health peer work programs and further invest in lived experience organisations that co-design mental health programs with ACT Health?
- Can you clarify what mechanism are in place to oversee on the delivery of crisis services?

3. Family Violence

- Given that gender inequality is so inextricably linked to family violence, if re-elected, what policies and initiatives will your party implement to address gender inequality?
- If re-elected, could you clarify for our members what plans are in place to invest in family violence services?

4. Child Protection

- If re-elected, what plans are in place to increase the funding to family support, intensive family support services, and other early intervention programs?
- Can you clarify to our member what plans are in place to fully implement of the recommendations of the *'Our Booris, Our Way'* report, such as the increased investment to ACCOs?
- If re-elected, what strategies are in place to consult with key stakeholders, including peak bodies, lived experience organisations, and ACCOs to develop a refresh of the *'A Step Up for Our Kids Strategy 2015-2020'*?

5. Homelessness and Housing

- If re-elected, what is your commitment to invest in additional public and community housing and renewal of current stock?
- If re-elected, what is your commitment to invest in housing programs and homelessness services?

6. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Issues

- If re-elected, what is your commitment to fully implement of the phase 2 of the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028*?

- Can you clarify to our member what plans are in place to fund Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) to employ staff to deliver mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services?
- Can you clarify to our member what plans are in place to increase the level of cultural safety training provided for workers in mainstream services?

7. Sustainable Development & Climate Change

- If re-elected, what is your commitment to the full implementation of the *ACT Sustainable Energy Policy 2020-25* and the stage 3 of the *Bushfire Recovery Action Plan*?
- Can you clarify to our members what strategies are in place to engage with community peak bodies and ACCOs to co-design emergency management planning?

8. Youth Justice Reform

- If re-elected, will you support the legislation to raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility from 10 to at least 14 years of age?
- Could you clarify for our members what plans are in place to strengthen after-prison and youth diversionary programs?

Thank you for taking the time to consider our questions and I look forward to sharing your response with our members in the lead up to the election.

Yours sincerely,



Carolyn Minchin
ACT Branch President
Australian Association of Social Workers



Christine Craik
National President
Australian Association of Social Workers