

# A Plan for ACT Women

ACT Labor's commitment to women has focused on representation, good health and wellbeing, responsive housing, safe and inclusive communities, economic security and independence and flexible education and training.

Women make up nearly 51% of the ACT population. Grandmothers, mothers, sisters, children, friends – women have many and varied roles across our community. ACT Labor's policy response for supporting women in the community goes across all of our commitments whether it be in health, education, community services or community safety.

ACT Labor has implemented programs to ensure that women's voices are heard at every level of government. We established the first Office for Women in the ACT. This Office was created to provide direct advice to the Minister and the Government on issues affecting women in our community. ACT labor also established a target for women to hold 50% of all board and committee appointments.

At the highest level of government all cabinet submissions have to be considered for their impact on women and all cabinet appointments have to be referred to the Office for Women prior to Cabinets consideration of them.

Over the next term we will build on the work already done to continue to support a community where women are well represented, have good access to health services, are able to undertake education and training opportunities and live in a safe and supportive environment.

**Jon Stanhope**  
Chief Minister

**Katy Gallagher**  
Deputy Chief Minister and  
Minister for Women

### **Achievements to date**

ACT Labor has delivered:

- The ACT Women's Plan – a five year plan providing a framework for achieving and supporting the government's vision for women and girls in the ACT;
- Return to Work Grants Program providing grants of up to \$1,000 for women to return to the workforce. The grants have supported women by enabling them to attend short courses and pay for childcare to attend interviews and more formal training and education;
- \$60,000 per annum Audrey Fagan Scholarship Program providing Canberra women with opportunities to further their study and professional development in leadership positions in law enforcement, care and protection or professional support services, for women who are victims of violence. Provided for through three separate grants rounds:
  - Churchill Fellowship Grant up to \$30,000
  - Post Graduate Scholarship of \$20,000
  - Five enrichment grants for young women of \$2,000 each
- \$100,000 per annum for the ACT Women's Grants Program to improve the status of women and strengthen capacity of organisations to provide services to women;
- Participated in issues of national interest such as the Federal Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave, and the CEDAW 2008 process through the Federal Office for Women;
- Ministerial Advisory Council on Women (MACW) established by the ACT Labor Government in 2001. This year a new 14 member Council has been appointed to provide advice on issues relating to women in the ACT;
- Held the first ACT Women's Summit and number of roundtable meetings since that time on Health and Housing;
- Established the Domestic Violence Christmas Program Initiative which has run annually since 2005-2006 and provides housing for women exiting crisis accommodation over the Christmas/New Year period;
- Established the Transitional Housing Program by providing the equivalent of \$6 million of capital funding into homelessness service provision;
- Provided four leadership scholarships every year to develop the skills and knowledge of women who are currently in, or who aspire to be in, high level decision making roles and to increase their leadership capacity;
- Developed the ACT Women's Honor Roll;
- Published the ACT Women's Budget Statement providing a comprehensive audit of the ACT Government spending relating to women;
- Expanded the Women's Register which seeks to place women on Boards and Committees in the ACT, including community organisation boards;
- Increased paid primary care giver leave to ACT public servants from 12 – 14 weeks;
- Provided a payroll tax exemption to private employers who give 14 weeks' primary care giver leave to their employees following the birth or adoption of a child;

- An appointments consultation process to ensure that the government can achieve a 50% representation of women on its boards and committees;

### **What ACT Labor will do over the next four years.**

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will deliver:

#### **\$120,000 over four years for a micro-credit program to support women in small business**

The Micro-credit program will be targeted at women who want to set up a business or need help to grow their business. The program will assist women on low incomes by providing a \$3,000 low interest loan and will also ensure access to a mentoring and e-learning service through Canberra BusinessPoint. This existing web-based service provides a free, innovative, end-to-end advisory service for start-up businesses, young businesses, entrepreneurs, exporters and established enterprises.

#### **\$120,000 for the development of a promotional campaign 'Respect and Responsibility to support women's safety at major events**

The ACT hosts a range of large and small community events each and every year and it is important that women and girls feel confident to participate, freely and safely. The ACT Government will oversee the development of a public information campaign about "women's safety in the community, at public events and in sport". This campaign will draw on the successful work that has already been developed in Victoria by the AFL Respect and Responsibility initiative. The public information campaign will involve a series of advertising and conscience raising initiatives to enforce Respect and Responsibility for all Canberrans.

### **Women and Leadership initiatives program**

The gender wage gap is less pronounced in businesses where there are significant numbers of women on Boards of Directors. The ACT Government has a policy that 50% of boards should be occupied by Canberra women. To enable this to occur, and to ensure that women who wish to be on boards are being called upon when the opportunity arises, it is important that the processes are automated and user friendly.

This initiative will:

- o Simplify and automate the "women's register" to ensure that appropriate women can be found at the touch of a button;
- o Provide a full audit, and automation of government boards and committees so that statistics of female representation can be monitored and remedied as required; and
- o Draw together women's leadership programs so that ACT Women can easily find and access these programs.

### **\$320,000 over four years for Investment in Transitional Housing for Families**

The Transitional Housing Program (THP) has been a success story for those Canberrans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This model provides transitional accommodation for those moving out of crisis to long-term, settled living.

ACT labor will allocate a further four properties for women and children escaping domestic violence

Transitional houses, provided by ACT Housing, will be matched with \$80,000 per year to provide outreach support from the non-government sector.

### **The ACT Women's Summit & ACT Women's Plan**

This commitment builds on the 2006 inaugural Women's Summit and provides an avenue for feedback on "where are we now and where do we need to be for the second century". The next summit will look at issues of 'safety – a whole of community responsibility'. This second ACT wide women's summit will assist in the development of the new ACT Women's Plan which will be developed and implemented across the ACT for the next five years. The "Plan" will include a statistical snapshot of how women in the ACT are currently fairing.