

Member Communiqué: ACT Election 2024

3 October 2024

Dear member,

Campaigning for the 2024 ACT Election is well underway. Postal voting opened on 30 September 2024, early polling booths will be open from 8 October 2024, and polling day is 19 October 2024. For more information on voting please visit the Elections ACT website <https://www.elections.act.gov.au/for-voters>.

Thank you to everyone who provided input to our election campaign key messaging and election asks. You can get involved with and support the call to action by liking and sharing our social media posts and talking to candidates at forums and street stalls about VolunteeringACT priorities for action and investment.

Our call to action to all candidates is for them to commit to implementing the ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034 and invest in strengthening and sustaining volunteering in 2024-2028.

Our key message is:

When volunteering is thriving, our community becomes stronger, safer, more connected, more active and better equipped to care for one another, our environment, and the animals in our city.

[VolunteeringACT priorities for action and investment for the ACT Government \(2024-2028\)](#) can be found on our website and provides more information about our campaign and key messages.

Our election advocacy and key election asks:

Between July-September 2024 we met with representatives of ACT Labor, Canberra Liberals, ACT Greens, the Strong Independents, Independents for Canberra and Fiona Carrick Independent, to explain our election asks and seek their commitment to:

1. Provide \$9.11m to mobilise more volunteers so essential services Canberrans value can continue to be provided in our community.
2. Provide \$3.61m to ensure volunteering is safe, affordable, and inclusive for all people who want to volunteer and to cover the full costs of volunteering and volunteer management.
3. Provide \$773k to build evidence and awareness of the impact and value of volunteering and the return on investment in strengthening volunteering by improving data governance, collection, sharing, analysis, and reporting.
4. Provide \$386k to streamline administration by creating an ACT Volunteering Passport and working with VolunteeringACT to administer grant funds to volunteer-involving organisations.

When meeting with candidates and MLAs, we outlined the importance of:

- sustainably funding the whole community sector, including volunteer involving organisations
- urgently increasing funding to fill substantial gaps in ongoing essential volunteer roles in existing services valued by communities and relied upon by the ACT Government
- renewing the whole-of-government commitment to implement the ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034 and Action Plan 2024-2027
- investing in building sector capacity to improve how volunteering data is collected and used to demonstrate its contribution to positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

Following these meetings, we wrote to the three major parties and independents standing in this election and requested they provide us with their election commitments to strengthen and sustain volunteering during the 2024-2028 term of government. Below is a summary of their responses.

While we endeavoured to connect with all candidates, the late finalising of candidates limited our ability to canvas all standing for re/election in time for this Member Communique. Please see [Candidate Statements](#) on the Election ACT website or official Party websites for more information about individual candidate and/or Party election priorities.

I trust this information is useful as you consider how you will vote in the 2024 ACT Election.

Yours sincerely,



Jean Giese
CEO
VolunteeringACT

Party/ Candidate	Unedited Party/ Candidate Response
ACT Labor	<p>If elected ACT Labor will continue to work collaboratively with VolunteeringACT and your members to support the realisation and implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan.</p> <p>As part of the Action Plan several commitments have been made by the ACT Government to improve data governance, collection, sharing, analysis and reporting. These include the ACT Government improving the way the ACT Working with Vulnerable People Scheme is administered as well looking at more ways volunteering impacts can be included within relevant ACT data collections. ACT Labor if elected will continue to support these actions.</p> <p>The Action Plan also contains a commitment to investigate what volunteers and Volunteer Organisations may need from a future volunteer passport with VolunteeringACT as the lead on this.</p> <p>ACT Labor recognises the potential of a passport and if elected will support volunteering in our community by prioritising the investigation of a volunteering passport in collaboration with VolunteeringACT. We will work with VolunteeringACT to explore options for the develop a volunteering passport to make it easier and quicker for volunteers to sign up to volunteering activities and ensure that volunteering organisations can provide the best support they can to volunteers.</p> <p>Labor's priority at present is supporting the implementation of the Strategy and the Plan. I note some of the election commitments put forward by VolunteeringACT fall outside the agreed actions in the Action Plan. While ACT Labor will be prioritising the realisation and implementation of agreed actions, we are open to considering additional commitments as part of any future action plans to support and realise the Strategy.</p> <p>ACT Labor is finalising their broader election commitments including those relating to the ACT for Community Campaign.</p>
ACT Greens	<p>The ACT Greens recognise and value the significant role that volunteers play in the life of Canberra. The ACT Greens recognise that without volunteers, many things in life that we enjoy would not be possible.</p> <p>The ACT Greens support for the role that volunteers play was underlined by Emma Davidson MLA's work to progress and finalise</p>

	<p>the ACT's Volunteering Strategy (2024-34), which was codesigned between the ACT Government and Volunteering ACT. The strategy was published in August 2024 and sets out a strategic framework, designed to sustain high levels of volunteering into the future.</p> <p>Alongside the Strategy, an Action Plan was also published, setting out tangible steps as to how the Strategy will be implemented. The ACT Greens reiterate our support for (this work [change to "for progressing the ACT Volunteering Strategy and first Action Plan]) and fully recognise that to implement this meaningfully, additional resources will be required.</p> <p>Separately the Greens have supported environmental volunteer groups to address chronic underfunding. Rebecca Vassarotti as Environment Minister secured a 60% increase in grants for environmental volunteering and the first four year funding agreements for critical organisations such as the catchment groups. We have also responded to the Assembly Inquiry into environmental volunteerism and recommendations from the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment by making clear commitments to continue this uplifting of funding.</p> <p>Of course, community sector organisations are also vital in providing volunteering opportunities and supporting volunteers to do so, productively and safely. The ACT Greens have published a comprehensive platform for the community sector (see website), which outlines how the community sector would be supported. This addresses significant funding uplifts and outlines a reimagined partnership between Government and the sector.</p> <p>The ACT Greens, depending upon the ACT Election outcomes, look forward to continuing to work with Volunteering ACT, to support volunteers and advocate for increased funding in the future.</p>
Canberra Liberals	<p>The Canberra Liberals want the ACT to be a community in which volunteers are valued, respected and considered, and most importantly a community in which Canberrans are willing and able to give back as volunteers.</p> <p>We have heard from countless stakeholders in the community sector that operating a non-profit in Canberra is a struggle at the moment – a situation which has been deteriorating for a number of years.</p>

	<p>We understand that this is due to numerous concerns, including a worsening cost-of-living crisis and a lack of support for community groups from this government, both of which make it very difficult for organisations relying on volunteers to continue operating at their normal capacity.</p> <p>These factors have of course been considered during our policy development. We will be in touch again upon the announcement of the Canberra Liberals’ policies regarding community services and volunteers in the ACT.</p>
Independents for Canberra	<p>The ACT Volunteer Strategy 2024-2034 is a significant initiative aimed at fostering a strong, sustainable and inclusive volunteer sector in the ACT. The Independents for Canberra have a group of candidates contesting this year's election that would get behind this strategy as we all agree that volunteers are the backbone of the community. Supporting community services was the first of our election commitments and there is a heavy reliance on volunteers in the community space. By advocating for better funding and structural support for these organisations, the Independents for Canberra hope to help ensure that volunteering opportunities remain sustainable. By implementing this long-term volunteering strategy, the ACT government can make a commitment to ensuring that volunteering remains accessible, valued and well-supported over the next decade.</p> <p>One of the key elements of the ACT Volunteer Strategy most aligned with Independents for Canberra is the emphasis on inclusivity and diversity. This strategy should strengthen the community by promoting increased engagement and participation in volunteer activities across diverse groups, ensuring that every individual can contribute to a more connected society. The plan recognises that volunteering opportunities should be available to everyone, regardless of age, background, or ability. This approach aligns with one of the core principles of the Independents for Canberra for social equity, which includes ensuring that marginalised groups have equal access to opportunities. Our policies supporting affordable housing, health services and education are designed with the social goals of equity and inclusion, helping to break down barriers to participation for traditionally underrepresented groups such as young people, culturally diverse communities, and people with disability. By focusing on creating more accessible and flexible</p>

	<p>opportunities, volunteering becomes an enriching experience for all, helping to build a more resilient and cohesive community.</p> <p>We recognise the important role of volunteering for building social cohesion, personal empowerment and providing essential services. Volunteering is an essential component of a vibrant and inclusive community, and we pledge our wholehearted support to the Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034 if elected.</p>
<p>Strong Independents</p>	<p>We endorse all your priorities as eminently necessary. They are modest financial requests compared to what volunteers give back to the community and to the economy in time and in-kind value.</p> <p>We will also be working with all community groups to develop more comprehensive support in the removal of unnecessary complexity in dealing with government and in support for the interaction between the groups, as there is often cross-over between volunteers and, for example, carers.</p> <p>We are one jurisdiction made up of many communities and there must be an increase in transparency of process and support for those most in need – including community organisations</p>
<p>Fiona Carrick Independents</p>	<p>As a volunteer I understand the importance of investing in the community sector and supporting volunteers to continue to provide their important services.</p> <p>I commit to advocating for the volunteers, reviewing the implementation of the ACT Volunteering Strategy and improving data collection to inform decisions.</p>