

The ACT Greens in the Legislative Assembly

Delivering better outcomes for the Canberra community

February 2011

Dynamic democracy – has minority government improved outcomes for the Canberra community?

Balance for the Parliament, Benefits for the Community

When no one party has absolute power, the community benefits. From greater consultation as controversial laws are debated more thoroughly, to movement on issues long ignored, minority government can deliver differences in more than just the Parliament.

Negotiation and scrutiny of ideas from all parties in a Parliament stops the dominance of Cabinet over all law-making. Private Members sitting days become the new forum for innovation in public policy.

A key outcome of a minority government, which relies on another party to form government, is the opportunity to create compacts, or agreements.

The ACT ALP–Greens Parliamentary Agreement

In 2008 the ACT ALP and the ACT Greens formed a Parliamentary Agreement, outlining a range of parliamentary reform initiatives and a policy program. Now that we are halfway through this electoral term, the agreement items are clearly being worked through. Below is a summary of achievements thus far as a result of the Agreement.

Parliamentary Reform – Appendix 1

- Independent Arbiter appointed to determine whether Orders for Papers should be delivered.
- Bills are not tabled and debated in same sitting period, so as to allow sufficient time for community consultation on all sides.
- One sitting evening per week, to allow the public to view debates.
- Triple Bottom Line reporting required in Annual Reports
- Question Time improvements: ensuring answers are directly relevant, (non-Agreement: allowing supplementary questions from other parties)
- Government to respond to Committee reports within 3 months
- Cross bench has equal speaking time to Opposition and Government on bills and motions.
- Better reporting on interstate agreements

Policy Program – Appendix 2

Energy

- Climate change reduction targets of 40% by 2020, and 80% by 2050.
- Government facilitation of the development of large scale solar.
- Increased Government renewable energy purchase
- Review of solar access provisions in planning instruments
- Feed In Tariff introduced more quickly.
- Extra funding for energy efficiency.

Transport

- Substantially increased funding for cycling and walking paths
- Consultation on 40kmh speed limits around shops and community amenities
- Adopting goal of increased bus frequency, and introduction of Redex
- New Park and Rides at Mawson, Erindale and Mitchell. One promised for Weston at onset of Molonglo.

Waste

- Plastic bag ban – to commence mid 2011
- Commercial waste management program introduced

Water

- Free home tune-ups by plumber when accessing ToiletSmart rebates.
- Accelerating the urban creek renewal program – starting with Sullivan's Creek, including O'Connor, Dickson and Lyneham Wetlands.

Planning

- 6 star EER housing required for all new residential dwellings from July 2010
- Master Plans for Erindale, Tharwa and Hall
- Child-friendly planning requirements
- Improved sustainable design for Molonglo Valley development, including better solar access, 6 star housing, community gardens, and a good cycle network.

Housing

- Increased requirements for Universal Design
- Significant increases in public housing stock, towards 10% of total housing stock

Small Business

- Small Business Roundtables inaugurated.
- All Government bills paid to businesses within 30 days.

Justice

- Resourcing for Forensic Mental Health Team
- Free legal service for homeless people

Education

- Investigation of programs designed to close the achievement gap
- All preschools and playgroups to be guaranteed accommodation
- Increased funding for school children to attend swimming classes

Health

- Recurrent funding for mental health training for emergency services workers and teachers.
- Increased mental health funding
- Options for homebirth midwives being explored

Other

- Community Engagement Unit re-established in Chief Minister's Department
- Kingston Library established
- Ecological carrying capacity inquiry for ACT and Region underway
- Aircraft noise residential impacts monitoring
- Green economy strategy development
- An alternative site for the data centre found at Hume.

In the Assembly

Legislation introduced by the ACT Greens

Bill tabled	Key aims	Actual outcomes
<i>Education Act Amendment 2008</i>	A new process if a school closure is proposed.	Mandatory community consultation and a clear and transparent decision making process for all school closures.
<i>Water and Sewerage (Energy Efficient Hot-Water Systems) Amendment Bill 2009</i>	Phase in the use of environmentally friendly hot water systems.	All new houses require environmentally friendly hot water systems; also phases in water efficient shower heads.
<i>Eggs (Cage Systems) Legislation Amendment Bill 2009</i>	Ban battery cage egg production; also require signage on eggs for sale.	All supermarkets to display shelf signage stating how eggs produced.
<i>Associations Amendment Bill 2009</i>	Ensure office holders of Incorporated Associations are not required to include personal details on the public register.	Bill passed with support from all parties and some minor amendments.
<i>Planning and Development (Notifications and Review) Amendment Bill 2009</i>	Third party planning appeals; improved notification and review processes.	Bill not passed, but Government introduced own Bill rectifying same notification issue soon after.
<i>Civil Partnerships Amendment Act 2009</i>	Provide the opportunity for couples entering a civil partnership to do so by way of a legally binding ceremony.	Bill passed with support of the ALP.
<i>Radiation Protection (Tanning Units) Amendment Bill 2010</i>	Ensure consumers are aware of the health risks when they go to use a solarium; ban use for people under the age of 18 or with fair skin.	Government refused to debate the Greens legislation, but did introduce its own regulations to achieve outcome.
<i>Gaming Machine (Problem Gambling Assistance) Amendment Act 2010</i>	Increase assistance to problem gamblers.	Created Problem Gambling Assistance Fund which will generate about \$1 million PA to help problem gamblers.
<i>Trolleys - Litter (Shopping Trolleys) Amendment Act 2010</i>	Address the problem of abandoned trolleys in the Canberra landscape.	New laws will begin in March 2011 to help contain trolleys, and ensure that strays are recovered quickly.
<i>Financial Management (Ethical Investment) Legislation Amendment Bill 2010</i>	Ensure that Government investments are consistent with community values and promote investment in sustainable and socially conscious investments.	Will be debated this year.
<i>Children and Young People (Death Review) Amendment Bill 2010</i>	Create an organisational body to review child deaths.	Will be debated in the first sitting of the Assembly this year.

<i>Workplace Privacy Bill 2010</i>	Rights to privacy in regard to workplace surveillance	Employers must notify staff to conduct surveillance, and cannot conduct covert surveillance without Magistrate approval to investigate unlawful behaviour.
<i>Animal Welfare Amendment Bill 2010 - Exposure Draft</i>	Addresses animal welfare issues such as abandonment, cruelty, trading, unethical breeding, and factory farming.	Bill is currently open for consultation and is intended for debate this year.

ACT Greens motions passed in the Assembly

Motion topic	Key aims	Actual outcomes
International Women's Day	Equal pay for women	Pay equity audit of the ACT public service
Energy Efficiency Ratings auditing	Ensuring that people can trust the EER ratings on their houses	Improved ACTPLA and JACS auditing; and a new licensing scheme for auditors
Rewrite and improve ACT Government Mental Health Policy	Improved Government mental health policy to better reflect best practice and include targets for achievement	Government rewrote the policy delivering significant improvements in direction of mental health policy
Live Music	Supporting live music and events in Canberra	Planning Committee inquiry, leading to report and recommendations to improve live music and events in the ACT.
Community Sector funding quarantine	Protect community sector from the Government's budget efficiency dividend	Community sector funding maintained
Reduce wood-smoke in Tuggeranong Valley	Increase community education programs, wood heater replacement payments, improve and enforce regulations.	Increased community education programs and eligibility for wood heater replacement payments.
Urban Trees	Ensuring best practice in the management of Canberra's urban trees.	Inquiry and report from Commissioner for the Environment into urban tree management (due early Feb 2011)
Active Transport	Ensuring priority for 'active transport' planning in Canberra.	Signing of International Charter of Walking; new benchmarking of walking and cycling; investigations and commitments from Government into new walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and planning processes.
Sexualisation of Children	Raise awareness of the issue and develop strategies to address the problem	Government engagement with retailers on the issues; education initiatives for ACT students.
ACT Public Service Employment framework for people with a	Increased Government employment rate of people with a disability, and provide	Government is currently reviewing its ACT Public Service Employment framework for

Disability	more flexible and supportive employment conditions for people with chronic or episodic illnesses	people with a disability, will work towards these outcomes and consult on how to achieve this
Safe and Vibrant Canberra Nightlife	Ensure timely, evidence based policies are adopted to tackle alcohol related violence, eg better late night transport	Government commitment to a timeframe for introduction of its Liquor Reform Bill
Master plans	Improved master planning, including Erindale, Hall and Tharwa Master plans	Erindale master planning currently underway
Greater recognition of Self Government	Identify problems with the <i>Self Government Act</i> and achieve a commitment to reform	A level of consensus about the deficiencies of the <i>Self Government Act</i> but still no commitment to a way forward.
Forced removal of babies – apology for past practices	A national inquiry into what happened and an apology to those who suffered	A government commitment to apologise and a call for a national inquiry which is now underway.
Unmet legal need	Ensure all lawyers working at Community Legal Centres have a desk	Government commitment to evaluate accommodation options for Community Legal Centres

Outside the Chamber

Submissions made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft multicultural strategy 2009/2012 • Green(Clean) Economy • ACT House Energy Rating Scheme and reforms to the regulation of building energy assessors • West Macgregor Technical Amendment • Bonner Development Application • Cycling and pedestrian Network review • Majura Parkway • Bunda Street Development • Habitable suites • Outdoor cafes • Food labelling • Tuggeranong Cemetery proposal • Greater Canberra City Plan • Territory Plan Draft Variations 301 & 303 • Arts review • Festivals review • Eastern Broadacre Planning Study • Feed In Tariff • Draft Sustainable Energy Policy • Boardinghouse regulations
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Discussion Papers released	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • Transitioning out of care • Molonglo development • Active Transport Plan • Alcohol related violence • 5 Point Plan to Close the Gap on Unmet Legal Need
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<i>Other Achievements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiations on 2009 ACT Stimulus Package Projects to improve outcomes• Referral to the ICRC on the cost of the Extended Cotter Dam project.• Ensured new legislation regarding the registration of health professionals used a consumer based complaint system which places the consumer rather than the health professional first.• Ensured human rights and rehabilitation factors are considered when examining the Alexander Maconachie Centre• Traffic safety measures added to the Greater Civic Plan• Restoration of urban tree funding• Government commitment to natural burial ground• Government commitment to Renewing Canberra's CBD• Independent Monitoring of the impact of orienteering event on Namadgi• Funding for a three month trial of an expanded Nightrider Late Night Bus Service
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For more information about our legislation, discussion papers or submissions please contact us on 02 6205 0106 or Hunter@parliament.act.gov.au