

HEALTH

POLICY POSITION

STATEMENT



Delivering high quality health care for all Canberrans

ACT Labor will always deliver high quality healthcare when and where Canberrans need it, with more healthcare workers and the infrastructure we need for the future. Over the last decade, the ACT Labor Government has invested more than \$1 billion in healthcare infrastructure and doubled investment in frontline services.

From the innovative nurse led Walk-in Centres that Canberrans have embraced, to a specialist women and children's hospital, regional cancer centre and rehabilitation hospital, we've been building a health system that provides better care, closer to home for all Canberrans.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created both challenges and opportunities. Our health system's leaders, clinicians and non-government partners have worked together to innovate and change the way services are delivered. Over the next four years, we'll need to ensure our health system can continue to respond to COVID-19 while also meeting the needs of our growing city.

Using the lessons from COVID-19 and feedback from Canberrans, a re-elected Labor Government will develop community-based services that provide more convenient access to specialist advice and treatment.

What we've achieved this term

Over the past four years, the Labor Government has:

- Established a network of five free nurse-led Walk-In Centres across Canberra. In addition to the existing Walk-in Centres in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, we opened new Walk-in Centres in Gungahlin, Weston Creek and the Inner North.
- Opened the University of Canberra Hospital – a specialist rehabilitation hospital, offering quality healthcare through state-of-the-art technologies and innovative therapy spaces.
- Established Canberra Maternity Options to provide pregnant women with a streamlined, territory-wide service to help them find the maternity care that best suits them, refurbished Calvary's maternity ward and created a publicly funded home birth program.
- Delivered two new mobile dental clinics to ensure more Canberrans get better access to publicly funded dental services – including aged care residents and those doing it tough.
- Expanded Calvary Hospital's Emergency Department with 22 new treatment spaces – a 50 per cent increase for Calvary and a 20 per cent increase in ED spaces for the ACT.
- Expanded Hospital in the Home across Canberra and Calvary hospitals and invested in better acute care services in aged care to keep people out of hospital wherever possible.
- Delivered more elective surgeries than ever before, with more theatres, more beds and more doctors and nurses.
- Invested more than \$1 million in capital grants to boost bulk billing in Canberra's south, with new bulk billing practices in Tuggeranong and Molonglo.
- Supported specialist primary care providers to deliver more GP, psychology and allied health services for young people, refugees and asylum seekers, homeless Canberrans and vulnerable public housing tenants in the Inner North and Belconnen.
- Launched a new Healthy Canberra Plan to help keep Canberrans well throughout their lives and reduce demand on our hospitals.
- Enabled two trials of pill testing at music festivals and fully decriminalised the personal use of cannabis by adults to reduce the harm associated with illicit drug use.
- Worked to improve end-of-life care and lobbied for the ACT to have the right to make its own decisions on voluntary assisted dying.

What we will continue

ACT Labor will continue to invest in initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the ACT health system to meet the health and wellbeing needs of all Canberrans and to provide the critical infrastructure we need to bring that health care closer to home.

ACT Labor will:

- Continue to respond to COVID-19 based on expert public health advice and ensure our doctors, nurses, pathologists and other healthcare workers get the support they need for our health system to respond to and recover from the pandemic.
- Complete the Canberra Hospital Expansion – delivering the biggest healthcare infrastructure investment since self-government, with a new emergency, surgical and critical care facility to ensure we're meeting the acute care needs of residents in the ACT and surrounding region now and into the future.
- Deliver an expanded Centenary Hospital for Women and Children including an Adolescent Mental Health Unit, scheduled to open in 2022. Refurbishment of the 12-bed Paediatric High Care Unit will be completed shortly, and the full project includes a larger neonatal unit, more post-natal beds, a new gynaecology procedure suite and an Early Pregnancy Unit.
- Continue the planning and design work for a new northside hospital to provide efficient, high quality services for residents right across Canberra and the surrounding region, ready for construction to start by mid-decade.
- Deliver a world-class Digital Health Record for all ACT public health services to enable our healthcare workers to deliver better informed, more integrated care and to empower patients and carers with better access to their health information.

What we will deliver

More health care workers

A re-elected Labor Government will invest in an additional 400 frontline health workers for the ACT, providing better health services for our growing city and region.

Labor's plan for our health system, including more doctors, nurses and allied health workers, will deliver new and improved services to Canberrans when and where they need them and help ensure our community's healthcare needs are met into the future.

Labor recognises and appreciates our hard working, dedicated healthcare workers. The global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how critical these workers are in looking after the health and wellbeing of the entire Canberra community. Only a re-elected Labor Government will continue to support these essential workers.

Many of these additional staff will work in our bigger, better Canberra Hospital. The Canberra Hospital Expansion is the largest healthcare infrastructure project since self-government and will deliver more operating theatres, more emergency treatment spaces, more intensive care beds and a better environment for patients and carers.

Our doctors, nurses and allied health workers will also help to deliver better healthcare closer to home through:

- Walk-in Centres' expanded scope of practice to treat more patients with more conditions and a new imaging service at Weston Creek Walk-in Centre.
- The development of new walk-in and appointment-based services in the Inner South, Tuggeranong, Molonglo, West Belconnen and north Gungahlin which will provide integrated primary and community care, maintain wellbeing for high risk populations and avoid unnecessary hospitalisation.
- Expansion of Hospital in the Home, including promoting direct referral where appropriate.
- More convenient access to specialist advice and treatment pathways, including through an Elective Surgery Centre in Canberra's north.

Labor will also progress, as a matter of priority, negotiations for the new enterprise agreement for nurses and midwives, including the implementation of mandated nurse/midwife to patient ratios.

Even better Walk-in Centres and more care in the community

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to build on the success of nurse led Walk-in Centres and work with local communities in South Tuggeranong, the Inner South, West Belconnen, North Gungahlin and Molonglo to deliver more health services closer to home.

Canberrans love nurse led Walk-in Centres because they provide great care, close to home, led by our skilled nurses – every day of the year with no appointment needed.

In 2019, 67,000 patients received professional and compassionate care from our advance practice nurses, nurse practitioners and allied health staff across the Walk-in Centres in Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Gungahlin.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the newly opened Weston Creek Walk-In Centre has been a vital part of the response – and thanks to the foresight of our health planners, it was designed with managing an infectious disease outbreak front-of-mind.

In August, the Labor Government opened the Inner North Walk-in Centre in Dickson.

Our nurses and allied health workers already provide excellent care for injuries and illness including common illnesses like colds and flu, sprains and strains, skin conditions and rashes, and minor wounds and infections. The data also tells us Walk-In Centres are working to take pressure off our busy emergency departments, with fewer non-urgent presentations.

But we know our nurses and allied health workers can do even more to offer care close to home.

That's why a re-elected Labor Government will:

- Employ five more nurse practitioners across the Walk-in Centre network to ensure patients are able to receive a simple prescription at all centres, all of the time.
- Expand the services available at Walk-in Centres to safely treat a wider range of injuries and illness within the scope of practice for advanced practice nurses.
- Establish an outpatient focused imaging service at Weston Creek Walk-in Centre (including CT, ultrasound and Xray).
- Work with General Practitioners and other primary health care providers to provide more integrated care and share the lessons across the sector.

A Walk-in Centre based imaging service will provide outpatients with easier access to the most common types of medical imaging in a location away from the busy Canberra Hospital campus. It will also offer an additional site to train medical imaging trainees, fulfilling a professional college requirement to take part in training across a range of settings.

Walk-in Centres are an innovation in health services we can all be proud of. The response to COVID-19 has driven even more innovation and shown us there are new ways to deliver health services that are better for consumers and work for clinicians.

Growing the network

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will build on our successful nurse-led Walk-in Centres and Community Health Centres with five new local walk-in health centres offering accessible public health care across Canberra's suburbs.

The expanded network of local health services reflects ACT Labor's ongoing commitment to deliver better healthcare, where and when Canberrans need it. Having access to free, high quality public healthcare is part of what makes Canberra a great place to live, and ACT Labor will keep it that way as our city grows.

Walk-in health centres will have a focus on prevention, early intervention and coordinated care for people with chronic illness. Nurse-led multidisciplinary teams will work closely with consumers, carers and general practitioners to help keep Canberrans out of hospital and take pressure off our emergency departments.

The centres will complement the existing nurse-led Walk-in Centres, providing access to immediate care as well as appointment-based services that meet the needs of local communities.

The local walk-in health centres will be delivered in areas of future growth and need outside our town centres: South Tuggeranong, West Belconnen, the Inner South and North Gungahlin.

To test a model of integration with general practice and free up space at the Weston Creek Walk-In Centre for a new medical imaging service, we'll also establish a centre in Molonglo – co-located with National Health Coop in Coombs – with a focus on maternal and child health services to support Molonglo's growing population and young families.

A re-elected Labor Government will work with local communities to ensure each local walk-in health centre caters to the needs of our diverse regions and neighborhoods. The centres will be rolled out progressively between 2021-22 and the middle of the decade.

While the Canberra Liberals will never support Walk-in Centres, ACT Labor will continue to invest and grow nurse led care in the community because it's the best way for Canberrans to easily and conveniently receive the care they need.

Boosting elective surgery and outpatient support on the Northside

Labor has a strong track record of investment that improves our health services so all Canberrans can access the health services they need, when and where they need them.

Calvary Public Hospital Bruce is a valued provider of emergency care and elective surgery in Canberra's north. A re-elected Labor Government will complete the work to plan for a new Northside Hospital that will provide more elective surgery capacity to support our growing city.

Construction of a new Northside Hospital would be expected to begin by mid-decade, following detailed design and service development in partnership with consumers, carers, clinicians and Calvary Health Care, informed by the Territory Wide Health Services Plan that will be completed in 2021.

During the next term of government, we will also invest around \$21 million to establish an Elective Surgery Centre on the University of Canberra campus.

The response to COVID-19 has created new opportunities to move care out of hospital into the community, through community-based centres, telehealth and hospital in the home. This has reduced barriers to care and empowered patients to take greater control of their own health care.

There are many elective surgeries that can be performed without overnight hospital admission either prior to or following the procedure.

The Elective Surgery Centre will improve health outcomes for residents in Canberra's north by providing greater access to elective day surgery closer to home and supporting pre- and post-care according to the patient's needs.

Canberra Health Services' Elective Surgery Centre will take pressure off our two main hospitals by providing a wide variety of procedures that are currently performed as day surgery, including:

- Ear, nose and throat
- Gynaecological
- Orthopaedic
- Endoscopy
- Plastic Surgery
- Ophthalmology
- Dental
- Urology

The Elective Surgery Centre will be patient friendly and maximise efficiency for the surgical team, with post-surgery care supported in the community. Nurse practitioners covering these specialties would be able to triage, diagnose and prescribe – easing the load on outpatient services on the Canberra Hospital.

As planning for these northside infrastructure projects proceeds, a re-elected ACT Labor Government will invest an additional \$31.4 million to deliver around 60,000 elective surgeries over the next four years. This means approximately 6,000 more elective surgeries will be performed over the next four years compared with the four years to 2019.

In 2018-19, our public health system delivered a record 14,015 elective surgeries, and we were on track to increase that to 14,250 in 2019-20 prior to COVID-19. Now we're boosting elective surgeries to more than 16,000 in 2020-21 to catch up on the backlog and ensure more Canberrans get the surgery they need in a timely way.

ACT Labor will also inject \$16 million over three years to upgrade and expand existing endoscopy facilities at the Canberra Hospital. This investment will deliver an additional 5,000 endoscopy procedures each year from 2023, meeting the growing need for diagnosis and detection of many conditions, including some cancers.

Boosting maternity options and support

In 2019, the Government launched Canberra Maternity Options, creating a single access point for Territory-wide public maternity services.

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to build a Territory-wide public maternity system that is more person-centred and baby-centred, with access to continuity of care and carer model when that is the family's preference.

With the refurbishment of Calvary Public Hospital's maternity ward, women across Canberra have access to comfortable, modern maternity facilities at both public hospitals – and we are continuing to invest in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to make it even better.

A three-year trial of public home birth has enabled women in Canberra's south who had low-risk pregnancies and were not having their first child to access this option. Following the successful trial, a re-elected Labor Government will work with Calvary Public Hospital to expand access to publicly funded home birth in north Canberra and extend the eligibility criteria.

We will also continue the work currently underway to enable women who have excess breast milk to donate to a breast milk bank, in partnership with an established service in NSW.

We've heard there is more to do to support parents during pregnancy and after the birth of a child.

That's why we will:

- Work with public maternity service providers and consumers to review access to and eligibility for continuity of care programs, including birth centres, to determine future expansion and improvements to these models of care.
- Develop a feedback tool so parents can reflect on their experiences six months after the birth to help our public maternity services continue to improve.
- Continuing to invest in breastfeeding programs and initiatives, including lactation clinics.
- Deliver a First 1000 Days strategy to give Canberra's children the best start in life.
- Review the current service system for mental health care for pregnant women and the mother baby family unit, including considering the appropriateness of establishing a dedicated residential facility.
- Work to improve the cultural safety of maternity services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Sadly, we know that some pregnancies end with miscarriage, stillbirth or newborn death.

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to improve supports and care through the maternity continuum for those experiencing terrible loss at a time that should be one of joy.

This will include establishing an Early Pregnancy Unit in the expanded Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to support all complications relating to early pregnancy, including early pregnancy loss. It will also see the incorporation of bereavement care into planning, design and delivery of maternity care, bereavement training for health professionals and increased bereavement care and emotional support and information for families.

The first 1000 days – giving Canberra’s children the best start in life

The first 1000 days of a child’s life, from conception to two years old, are a time of both enormous opportunities to shape a child’s future and significant vulnerability to adverse experiences that can have life-long impacts.

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to work with experts from across government and the community to develop a First 1000 Days strategy that draws on the lived experience of families and targets investment towards early support for children, parents and carers.

This work will complement the Early Childhood Strategy, which sets Canberra up for a future where all children have access to high quality early childhood education. Under the Early Childhood Strategy, ACT Labor has made a nation-leading commitment to transition to universal access to preschool for three-year-old children, starting with targeted access for families most in need.

Key initiatives under the First 1000 Days strategy will include:

- Hearing parents’ voices and putting them at the centre of policy development and the delivery of peer-led and directed services.
- Making evidence-based parenting programs such as ‘Relaxing into Parenting + Baby Makes Three’ more widely available to parents preparing for the arrival of their first child.
- Expanding the Parenting Enhancement Program and sustained nurse home visiting programs for families who need extra support in the first year of a child’s life.
- Increasing access to nutrition and oral health awareness and services.
- Increasing access to early intervention for children with disability or developmental delay.
- Establishing an integrated child and family network with a mix of physical centres, outreach, in-home services and online engagement, enabling families to access to a continuum of support, from universal programs for new parents through to intensive case management for families at risk of engagement with statutory services.
- Supporting the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child and family organisation to support families with babies and young children.
- Developing a shared practice framework across government and non-government health and community services that prioritises cultural safety and recognises the impact of trauma and disadvantage on parents and their children.

Through the First 1000 Days strategy, we will continue our work to make Canberra a child-friendly city with a focus on the wellbeing of all children and their families.

Better care for very sick children and their families

While Canberra is growing fast, our city isn't large enough for some specialist services, including for children who have serious long-term or life-threatening illnesses. Many of these children are treated through The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network or in Melbourne.

The Government has been undertaking detailed work to develop a Child and Adolescent Health Services Plan and a Paediatric Clinical Services Plan to consider what additional services can and should be safely delivered in the ACT – reducing the need for children and their families to travel to Sydney or Melbourne for care. This work will be completed early next term.

While we work to expand services, it's also vital that we better support children and their families accessing care interstate. In 2019, the Health Care Consumers' Association sat down with families whose children have, or have had, serious long-term or life-threatening illnesses and have required care interstate as part of the Kids Interstate Shared Care Project.

What parents and carers told us is that simplifying and better coordinating the health system for them will reduce the financial and emotional strain on families from having a very sick child.

To improve coordination of care for children and their families in this situation, a re-elected Labor Government will:

- Introduce a Paediatric Nurse Liaison Service to help coordinate care within the health system and Patient and Family Navigators to help families navigate the complexities of shared care.
- Improve continuity of care across hospital services (in the ACT and interstate) and provide access to diagnostic imaging for interstate patients.
- Work with the Capital Health Network to strengthen the role of GPs in shared care arrangements.
- Expand multidisciplinary rehabilitation and disability related services and improve referral pathways from interstate hospitals.
- Upskill local paediatric and emergency department staff and improve processes to deliver coordinated patient- and family-centred care.
- Review the model of care in paediatric palliative care.
- Increase and better coordinate support services for patients and their families (including financial counselling, psychological and social support and support for schooling).

Work to develop the Paediatric Nurse Liaison Service will be completed in 2021 to ensure it is well placed to coordinate care delivered by interstate hospitals, the ACT public health system and community-based services, including the family's general practitioner.

Patient and Family Navigators for our sickest kids and their families will be one of the first services delivered through the new Patient Navigation Service, empowering families and giving them a single point of contact when they need support.

A focus on youth mental health

A re-elected Labor Government will invest \$15 million in more mental health support for Canberra's young people, increasing co-ordination, access and timeliness of care, leveraging new technologies and providing more support for the most vulnerable children and young people in our community.

Half of all mental health conditions arise before the age of 14 and three quarters are apparent by 25, while suicide is the leading cause of death for people aged between 15-44. We know that early intervention and prevention reduces the burden on young people and families and provides the best opportunity for them to live their best life.

Initiatives will focus on two key challenges identified by the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing in its review of mental health services for children and young people – access to support for young people with early to moderate mental health concerns; and the need for more services for young people under 18 who experience moderate to severe mental health challenges.

Improving access to support services and reducing fragmentation

We've heard from children, young people and their parents that they are concerned about the growing prevalence of anxiety among young people, including the impacts of social media on anxiety and resilience. This concern has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to periods of increased social isolation for many.

A re-elected Labor Government will develop a child and youth anxiety and resilience strategy to better understand this growing problem and determine how we can tackle it as a community.

We will move quickly to deliver an online youth navigation portal to provide young people with options for online and phone support, face-to-face sessions, navigation assistance and online resources to develop better mental health literacy.

Orygen's MOST platform is an evidence-based online service that enables personalised therapy for young people and supplements face-to-face treatment. We'll work with Orygen to implement the platform in conjunction with existing mental health services to improve access for young people and reduce demand for acute services and emergency department presentations.

Peer support makes an enormous difference for mental health consumers. Labor will boost the availability of youth peer support and integrate this with clinician support and the online portal.

Improving care for vulnerable young people

A re-elected Labor Government will increase the availability of existing services supporting young people under the age of 18 who have moderate to severe mental illness to ensure 24/7 access.

As part of this, we'll deliver an Intensive Family Support service prior to the completion of the Adolescent Mental Health Unit and continue this as an outpatient service when the unit opens.

Young people who experience mental health challenges alongside the impacts of childhood trauma, disability and/or drug and alcohol abuse are too often referred between services within the system because there is no clear starting point for support. A re-elected Labor Government will establish a multidisciplinary service specifically to support young people who have complex mental health needs co-occurring with trauma, disability and/or drug and alcohol abuse.

For young people engaged with the justice system, the integrated service will work with young people on community-based orders, in detention at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and post-release,

collaborating with Child and Youth Protection Services and community partners including Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and Ted Noffs Foundation.

We will also establish an intensive trauma service for adolescents built on the successful Melaleuca Place model to support recovery and positive behaviour for 13 to 17-year-olds who have experienced childhood trauma, including abuse or neglect.

Better support for older Canberrans and end of life care

A re-elected Labor Government will establish a Centre of Excellence in Caring for Older People to strengthen the capacity of the ACT health system to meet the health and wellbeing needs of older Canberrans with complex health needs.

Labor understands that increasing complexity and co-morbidity among older patients is placing pressure on our hospitals, including emergency departments. Providing innovative models of care outside the hospital will deliver better outcomes for older people, while taking pressure off acute hospital services and creating safer environments for both patients and staff.

Labor will establish the Centre of Excellence at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, expanding its inpatient capacity in addition to outreach. Calvary is a nation leader in developing innovative responses to the needs of older people, including the GRACE program delivering acute care evaluation and palliative care needs rounds and case conferences in aged care facilities.

While the expansion of GRACE across the ACT will lead to fewer unnecessary hospital admissions for nursing home residents, and a smoother path through the Emergency Department if they need hospital treatment, many frail older Canberrans don't live in residential aged care. That's why ACT Labor will trial geriatric streaming at Canberra Hospital and work with Calvary to implement this model across both Emergency Departments.

Labor will also improve dementia care and responses across the Territory-wide public hospital system and beyond. Dementia is a growing challenge for health and aged care services. It is Australia's second leading cause of death, including being the highest cause of death for women and the highest cause of disability and death for Australians over 65. Currently more than 6,000 Canberrans are estimated to have dementia (10 per cent of those over 65) and it is expected that this number will triple over the next 40 years.

A re-elected Labor Government will create dementia friendly ACT Libraries and Government Service Centres, as well as piloting other designated dementia-friendly spaces, including hosting dementia-friendly events. We will provide dementia friendly spaces at major events across Canberra and partner with the community and businesses to create a dementia-friendly framework for ACT businesses.

While considerable work has been done and investment made in improving end of life care in the ACT, there is more to be done. We know that most people want to die at home, but they and their carers need more support. This does not just affect older people – it affects anyone who is suffering a life-ending illness and their families and friends.

A re-elected Labor Government will partner with Palliative Care ACT to establish a respite hub for people with life-limiting illness who wish to die at home, and for their families and loved ones. This flexible model will enable people to spend a few hours to a few days in a home-like environment while their carers get the rest they need and the time to manage their other responsibilities. The hub will also provide a place for families and carers to access resources and support.

For those people who die in hospital, our system strives to provide excellent, sensitive care. However, we have heard that there is room to improve the experience at Canberra Hospital with a dedicated palliative care ward. A re-elected Labor Government will include the development of a dedicated ward in the ongoing modernisation and expansion of Canberra Hospital.

Empowering patients for better healthcare

Chronic conditions currently account for half of all preventable hospital admissions in the ACT.

A re-elected Labor Government will invest \$7 million to introduce a new model of patient navigation to better coordinate care across the health system for people with chronic and complex conditions.

Patient navigation services have demonstrated better patient experiences and health outcomes by ensuring that consumers with chronic or complex health needs can access the care they need, when and where they need it.

The highly regarded Obesity Management Service is a great example of the benefits of well-coordinated multidisciplinary care. Canberra Hospital's Chronic Care Program also provides clinical care coordination for a range of patients, but the program focuses on a small number of conditions.

The new patient navigation service will work across Canberra Hospital, University of Canberra Hospital, Calvary Public Hospital, general practice and community-based services to provide a unified service across Canberra for people with chronic or complex health needs who find it difficult to navigate the system without support.

The service will be established with a four-year implementation plan to ensure there is flexibility to innovate and adapt. It will be integrated into the network of community health centres, existing Walk-In Centres and new walk-in health centres as the model of care is implemented across the ACT.

An early priority will be establishing the Patient and Family Navigation Service for children with long-term or life-threatening illness who are receiving treatment interstate.

It is envisaged that the service would expand in its second year to 100 patients with chronic disease such as diabetes who are identified as being at high risk of adverse health outcomes and unnecessary hospitalisation due to poorly coordinated care.

This early cohort of consumers will include mental health patients with co-morbid physical health conditions, as well as consumers in priority groups where we know poor health outcomes are more likely, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with disability.

Further work will also be done within our hospitals to facilitate smoother transitions between hospital and the community. This will include more peer support services for people who have acquired a disability as a result of injury or illness and are moving home from hospital-based rehabilitation.

For people with conditions like arthritis and chronic pain, hydrotherapy can make an enormous difference to mobility and quality of life. A re-elected Labor Government will build a public hydrotherapy pool in Canberra's south.

After extensive consultation and market sounding, Labor's preferred site for a southside hydrotherapy pool is a co-location with the current Lakeside Leisure Centre facility in the Tuggeranong town centre. A co-location with the Erindale pool will also be explored as part of the business case process, which will be developed in collaboration with the community and potential pool users before starting the construction of the facility.

We'll also continue to expand access to physiotherapy led care for people with chronic pain, orthopaedic and osteoarthritic conditions that can be better managed in the community. This will include establishing a public non-surgical program for knee osteoarthritis using the Good Living with Arthritis: Denmark (GLA:D) model of care.

For people under 40 who are diagnosed with cancer and don't have more than one biological child, a re-elected Labor Government will offer a single point of contact to access fertility preservation. We will work with existing providers to deliver appropriate fertility preservation services for individual patients according to their needs.

These initiatives will complement other ongoing projects and new commitments to deliver more coordinated care closer to home. This includes the Digital Health Record, which will be operational next term, and enable better information sharing and more patient control over health information.

The implementation of an easy-to-use telehealth platform also means that if patients don't need to be seen face-to-face, there's another option. A re-elected Labor Government will continue to improve access to telehealth and support this with nurse-led services and integration with General Practice, other primary care providers and non-government partners.

A re-elected Labor Government will also continue our strong relationship with the Stroke Foundation and boost training for our health centres to prevent and reduce the impact of stroke on Canberrans.

The ACT Labor Government has funded the Stroke Foundation's StrokeConnect Follow-Up program and participation in the Australian Stroke Clinical Registry. These programs have delivered better and safer treatment and recovery for people who have suffered a stroke. A re-elected Labor Government will continue to invest beyond July 2021 to implement the Stroke Foundation's Specialist F.A.S.T education program.

The F.A.S.T program will be implemented as part of our increased scope of services at our Walk-in Centre network, delivering stroke health checks, resources and support to help prevent stroke and improve access to stroke treatment among the most vulnerable in our community. This commitment will ensure that our Walk-in Centres and new walk-in health centres will be able to identify the signs of stroke early, delivering improved outcomes and saving Canberrans lives.

This commitment will also fund our ongoing support for the StrokeConnect Follow-Up Program and participation in the Australian Stroke Clinical Registry to 2023-24.

World-class medical research and training at Canberra Hospital

Canberra Hospital is the only tertiary trauma hospital between Melbourne and Sydney and supports the complex acute care needs of surrounding NSW as well as ACT residents. It continues to grow in importance as a teaching hospital and location for health and medical research.

Canberra is also home to world-class universities, including the Australian National University (ANU) and University of Canberra (UC) that train our future and current healthcare workforce and undertake cutting-edge research.

In May 2019, the ACT Government and ANU committed to work together to develop an advanced research and training facility to complement the Canberra Hospital expansion. The Government has also been working on a master plan for the Canberra Hospital campus to consider how the hospital will need to develop to meet the region's needs over the next 20 years.

The future of Canberra Hospital under a Labor Government will include a world-class multidisciplinary education precinct with state of the art facilities, including simulation, tele-education, and clinical education for medical professionals, nurses and midwifery, allied health professionals, and health managers, and for all levels from undergraduate through postgraduate training to continuing professional development.

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to work with the ANU to deliver on this vision. Creating the region's leading professional health education and leadership training facility will help the ACT to attract the best and brightest to our city and strengthen our local health workforce.

Growing research partnerships will also be a vital part of Canberra Hospital's future, with a focus on translating research into better healthcare for patients. This includes building genetic and genomic medicine into a core clinical service and creating a true Comprehensive Cancer Centre that will enable Canberra Hospital's patients to get better access to clinical trials and advanced treatments.

A health system for all Canberrans

This progressive, experienced Labor Government has a track record of building a more inclusive city for all Canberrans. But we know that some Canberrans find it challenging to access the care they need in a timely way. For others, the lack of a specific service or financial barriers to access can cause unnecessary hardship.

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to act to build an inclusive health system that meets the needs of all Canberrans.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans experience poorer health outcomes than other Canberrans, reflecting the national gap in health and life expectancy.

The Labor Government signed the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028* with the Elected Body in February 2019, identifying the creation of a culturally proficient ACT health system as a priority.

A re-elected Labor Government will work continue to deliver on the priorities identified by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including:

- Working with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services to finalise the major new health facility committed to by Labor in 2016 and to deliver a culturally appropriate residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation service for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Ensuring all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have timely access to ear, nose and throat outpatient appointments and elective surgery.
- Working with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm Advisory Board to finalise the Healing Framework and deliver residential programs.
- Boosting the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare workers across our public hospital and community health system.
- Drawing on the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers to help build culturally aware health services across the ACT.

These initiatives and our ongoing work will contribute to meeting the ACT's commitments under the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap, including closing the gap in life expectancy and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies are born at a healthy weight.

More accessible services for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Canberrans

The ACT is proudly multicultural and this includes our health services. But we know that some people, particularly refugees and new migrants, face challenges accessing health services.

That is why we support Companion House to provide free health and counselling services for refugees and asylum seekers who are survivors of trauma and torture – and have recently provided additional funding to expand this service.

In 2019, the ACT Health Language Services Plan was developed, with a focus on equity of access and ensuring the ACT Government is well positioned to tailor health information to meet community needs and requirements. This has never been more important than during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Government has been working with the community to provide translated resources and disseminate information through community leaders and networks.

The implementation of telehealth has also moved forward rapidly during the pandemic and Canberra Health Services has ensured that its interpreter services can accommodate telehealth capabilities. A re-elected Labor Government will ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse Canberrans are engaged, including through the Multicultural Advisory Council, as new services and technologies are implemented across the public health system.

Disability access and inclusion

A re-elected Labor Government will develop a comprehensive Disability Health Strategy informed by the lived experience of people with disability.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has made clear both the very real barriers faced by people with disability in accessing health services and the importance of people with disability having confidence that health services are underpinned by a commitment to human rights and an understanding of the inherent value of people with disability.

Under Labor, Canberra Health Services has started work to develop its Disability Action Plan as part of the broader Disability Health Strategy. Two areas of early focus will be ensuring people with autism are better supported in accessing the Emergency Department and mental health services.

Under Labor, the ACT was the first state or territory to transition all eligible participants to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Since 2016, however, it has become clear that the NDIS is unable to support some activity previously funded by the ACT Government.

This includes previously funded sexual health education, training and awareness programs for people with disability. This has created a gap in access to sexual health education and related health services, as well as gaps in availability of sexual health training and awareness for disability support workers. A re-elected Labor Government will fund Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT to address these identified service gaps through:

- Supporting sexual health education for students with disability in ACT schools through the adaptation of mainstream learning for the needs of students with disability.
- Sector development for disability service providers, including provision of information and referral services for people with disability related to sexual and reproductive health issues and induction level training and networking in sexual and reproductive health for carers and staff who support people with a disability.

Women's health

ACT Labor in Government has led the way in abortion law reform by making abortion a health matter and introducing exclusion zones around medical facilities providing abortion services to protect people from being harassed or targeted when attending such facilities.

Under Labor, abortion is safe and legal, and we'll always support a woman's right to choose.

In 2019, the ACT took another step forward in removing the barriers to safe abortion, by enabling a person seeking a medical abortion to go to a local general practitioner or telehealth provider and to choose where they take the prescribed medication.

Surgical abortions, however, continue to attract a large out-of-pocket cost for women accessing this service through the ACT's only approved medical facility, Marie Stopes.

A re-elected Labor Government will significantly reduce the upfront cost of surgical abortion in the ACT, eliminating the cost difference between a medical or surgical abortion. This means young

women will be able to make difficult choices about their health care based solely on what is best for them and their body.

We will also work with Marie Stopes to identify a new fit-for-purpose location to provide a more appropriate facility for the range of important services Marie Stopes provides for the community.

More LGBTIQ+ inclusive health services

The Labor Government is committed to Canberra being the most LGBTIQ+ welcoming and inclusive city in Australia and outlined actions to meet this commitment with the *Capital of Equality* strategy. As part of our Capital of Equality strategy, a LGBTIQ+ health survey was undertaken to better understand the barriers faced accessing health care.

Labor recognises that LGBTIQ+ people can experience stigma, stereotyping, discrimination, harassment, exclusion and other barriers to accessing health services. There are also specific health issues that can occur for LGBTIQ+ people.

A re-elected Labor Government will work with the LGBTIQ+ community to:

- Deliver increased access to psychosocial and peer support by working with Meridian and A Gender Agenda, including increasing support for the Friday Centre.
- Support the development and delivery of family therapy and support services to respond to the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ families.
- Improve availability of specialist clinical services required by the transgender, non-binary and gender diverse Canberrans, including investigating the feasibility of establishing a gender clinic.
- Ensure that our public health services are safe and inclusive for all LGBTIQ+ Canberrans.
- Work with the community to progress recommendations from the LGBTIQ+ health survey.

Sexual health

The Labor Government has been working with the health and community experts to address sexual health outcomes in the ACT as part of a holistic approach to improving health.

Our *Healthy Canberra: ACT Preventive Health Plan 2020-2025*, released in December 2019, includes specific actions to address sexually transmissible infections (STI) and blood-borne virus (BBV) prevalence. Labor has established the STI/BBV Health Advisory Committee (HAC) with representation from key community partners and development of its workplan.

Labor recognises reducing STI and BBV prevalence continues to present challenges across Australia, particularly for vulnerable communities including culturally and linguistically diverse people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ identifying people, men who have sex with men, and young people.

A re-elected Labor Government would continue to be guided by our local community health experts through the HAC to address STI/BBV prevalence by:

- Continuing to sustainably fund Hepatitis ACT, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT and Meridian to deliver sexual health services in the community.
- Investing in increased testing options in community settings using peer-based strategies.
- Investigating the introduction of new testing options to increase access for hard to reach populations.
- Supporting innovative models to increase hepatitis prevention, identification and treatment in hard to reach populations.
- Continuing to develop new education and communication approaches targeting at risk cohorts, particularly young Canberrans.

Alcohol and other drug services

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to take a harm minimisation approach to drug and alcohol policy, treating drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal matter. This is the key value underpinning the *ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021*, which a re-elected Labor Government will continue to implement.

That is why we legislated to fully decriminalise small-scale possession and use of marijuana, so that people can access health support without stigma or fear of being caught in the criminal justice system.

In line with our commitment to harm minimisation and following the success of pill testing trials at Groovin the Moo in 2018 and 2019, we will explore the establishment of a pill testing pilot in the city entertainment area during the busy summer period.

A re-elected Labor Government will also investigate the feasibility of a simple offence notice for some drugs of dependence to ascertain the legal, social and health impacts.

Non-government organisations are vital providers of residential drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation. A re-elected Labor Government will work with providers such as Ted Noffs, Karralika and Directions to consider ways to renew their residential rehabilitation infrastructure.

We have been working with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services to finalise the framework for the construction and operation of an Aboriginal specific drug and alcohol residential facility. A re-elected Labor Government will fast track this vital project to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans have access to a culturally safe residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation service.

We will also continue to support Karralika's innovative non-residential rehabilitation service and consider expansion of intensive non-residential rehabilitation supports.

We know that too often people with co-occurring mental health, trauma and drug and alcohol challenges have difficulty receiving coordinated support. That's why we will work to better integrate the programs provided by Canberra Health Services and our community partners and to break down the silos between mental health and drug and alcohol services.

The ACT Labor Government has already committed more than \$3 million over four years to increase the availability of opioid replacement treatment in the north of Canberra. The new public Opioid Treatment Service (OTS) at the Belconnen Community Health Centre is an expansion of the existing service provided at Canberra Hospital.

The Northside OTS will address barriers of access into treatment for people with complex opioid addiction who require a 'Tier 1' service. It will provide care closer to home for half of those who access Opioid Maintenance Treatment (OMT) through the public clinic who reside in Canberra's north and are currently required to Canberra Hospital daily to receive their medication.

A re-elected Labor Government will continue to work with primary care providers and consumers who access opioid replacement to improve access to support in the community.