

## 2024 ACT ELECTION SCORECARD

In this ACT Election Scorecard, ANTAR together with our Affiliate organisation ANTaR ACT has provided a guide to the policies of the ACT Labor Party, the ACT Greens, and the Independents for Canberra in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

1. Community Control
2. Justice & Incarceration
3. Child Removals
4. Aboriginal Housing
5. Uluru Statement from the Heart

At the time this Election Scorecard was published, the [ACT Labor](#) and [Greens](#) parties, as well as the [Independents for Canberra](#) and other minor parties had provided responses to our request for their positions on the issues outlined above.

The Canberra Liberals advised they had not finalised their policy by the deadline, therefore with no publicly available policy positions on the issues, we could not include them in this Scorecard. We have substituted the Independents for Canberra as the only other party which responded with candidates in every electorate.

All the responses received can be read in full on [ANTaR ACT's website](#) including First Nation Party, Fiona Carrick Independent, Strong Independents, and Belco Party. The Canberra Liberal's response will also be published there when we receive it.

ANTAR/ANTaR ACT recommends close consideration of the policies of the parties contesting the 2024 ACT Election – and particularly the policies related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We believe that justice, rights, and respect for the First Nations people of the ACT must be a top priority for the next Legislative Assembly and government.

**DON'T  
FORGET  
TO** 

### COMMUNITY CONTROL

Properly resourced community-controlled organisations enable self-determination and result in better service outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### JUSTICE & INCARCERATION

The imprisonment ratio for First Nations people in the ACT is the highest in Australia. Jailing is failing with 90% of First Nations people who have been incarcerated reoffending and returning to jail.

### CHILD REMOVALS

The ACT has an above average rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removals in Australia.

### ABORIGINAL HOUSING

The current ACT Government housing strategy (2018) recommends culturally appropriate public and community housing accommodation options; there is also a need for an Aboriginal community-controlled housing organisation in the ACT.

### ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Following the 61% Yes vote in the 2023 Referendum in the ACT, how can the existing Voice be strengthened and Truth-telling and Treaty be progressed.

## COMMUNITY CONTROL

**Properly resourced community-controlled organisations enable self-determination and result in better service outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

Priority Reform 2 of the [Closing the Gap National Agreement](#) is to increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

ANTAR/ANTaR ACT asked what would the party do, if elected, to strengthen and expand the Aboriginal community-controlled sector in the ACT, including acting on these community priorities:

- Return Boomanulla Oval to community-control within 12 months;
- Transfer the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm to community-control within 12 months.

		
<p>Labor recognises that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are critical partners in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A fund to support the growth and capacity of ACCOs has been initiated this year and builds on the establishment last year of the Aboriginal Services Development Branch (ASD) to strengthen partnerships between the government and the ACCOs.</p> <p>Labor commits to working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) to establish an interim majority community management committee for Boomanulla Oval to identify sustainable mechanisms for community-control over the Oval but does not commit to a timeframe.</p> <p>Labor commits to work with the community to establish a community led governance body for Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm (NBHF) in the next 12 months in order to transition NBHF to residential service delivery and community-control.</p>	<p>Community-controlled organisations are critical for enabling self-determination and delivery of culturally appropriate and empowering First Nations-led programs and services.</p> <p>ACT Greens want to see growth in the number and strength of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).</p> <p>They will work with the First Nations community to build capacity of those ACCOs who have registered as community housing organisations and ensure that they are set up for success, including in seeking Government funding. They recognise the importance in the community of seeing both Boomanulla Oval and the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm under community-control and renew their commitment to collaborate with the community to identify viable models to ensure this occurs in 2025.</p> <p>They will establish a legislated Cultural Heritage Body to return power to traditional custodians to determine their own cultural heritage.</p>	<p>IFC supports self-determination and Indigenous-controlled decision making. First Nations organisations and the communities they represent are best placed to determine their futures as communities know what's best for them.</p> <p>On Boomanulla, we will work to ensure there is a date set, a time frame worked towards, and to keep community aware and updated on the journey back to Indigenous control.</p> <p>The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm has potential to provide services beyond what it is currently providing, including residential services. As with Boomanulla, an effective partnership between the Elected Body, representing the broader community, the ACT government, community and other stakeholders, will lead to better outcomes and ultimate community-control.</p>
 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b> However, more urgency is required.</p>	 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b></p>	 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b> More detail on timeframes is needed.</p>

## JUSTICE & INCARCERATION

**The imprisonment ratio for First Nations people in the ACT (in 2021-22), at 19.6 times the non-Indigenous rate, is the highest in Australia. One reason is the very high rate of recidivism in the ACT, also the highest in Australia. Jailing is failing with 90% of First Nations people who have been incarcerated reoffending and returning to jail.**

**The Closing the Gap** target 10 is: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%. The yearly cost of Indigenous imprisonment in the ACT is around \$19 million. Justice Reinvestment (JR) would direct some of these funds to programs likely to reduce imprisonment rates. Effective JR programs are community

led and reflect the aspirations of the community.<sup>1</sup> Current JR programs<sup>2</sup> should be expanded.

ANTAR/ANTaR ACT asked what would the party do, if elected, to support expanding justice reinvestment programs to reduce incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

		
<p>Labor is committed to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ACT prisons. It continues to build on and strengthen government investments in justice reinvestment programs, including those delivered by Winnunga Nimmityjah, Gugan Gulwan, Yeddung Murra, Worldview, NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services, and other Aboriginal-led programs.</p> <p>Labor has a budget of \$5.2 million for justice reinvestment 2024-2025. Labor acknowledges that there is more work to do in this space.</p> <p>Labor commissioned the Jumbunna Institute of Education and Research at the University of Technology Sydney to undertake an independent review into the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system. It commits to work in partnership with the community to implement its recommendations.</p>	<p>The ACT Greens consider the rate of incarceration and overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people unacceptable; their aim is parity with the non-Indigenous rate by 2031.</p> <p>Greens Attorney General instigated the Independent Review into the Overrepresentation of First Nations People in the ACT Criminal Justice System, being undertaken by the Jumbunna Institute and are committed to driving down incarceration rates by using its recommendations.</p> <p>They are committed to Justice Reinvestment and its practical application in the ACT and will maintain and boost a range of existing programs that reflect this approach, including: Yarrabi Bamirr, Expanded Justice Housing Program, Functional Family Therapy – Youth Justice, Programs to support people on bail including Ngurrumbai Bail Support Program, Drug and Alcohol Court.</p> <p>They will maintain the Galambany and Warrumbul Circle Sentencing courts.</p>	<p>IFC wants a justice system that reduces recidivism and that leads the country on its justice system, rather than lagging as the worst on most metrics.</p> <p>Indigenous Australians deserve to be strong in their identity and to have safety nets to catch young people on their journey to truly thriving.</p> <p>Our justice system erodes a person's identity and their rightful place, their future and their children's future.</p> <p>Bimberi Youth Detention Centre and Alexander Maconochie Centre need real change, and real concerted effort on Indigenous-based voices and solutions.</p>
 <p><b>MIXED BAG</b> Increased funding commitments are needed.</p>	 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b></p>	 <p><b>MIXED BAG</b> Need detailed commitments, including Justice Reinvestment.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Allison, F (2023) Design of the National Justice Reinvestment Program. Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, UTS

<sup>2</sup> These include the Ngurrumbai Bail Support program, a throughcare program for Aboriginal clients leaving jail, and Empowering Yarning Circles all run by Yeddung Mura Aboriginal organisation.

## CHILD REMOVALS

The ACT has an above average rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removals in Australia. 63.2 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children per 1,000 are removed in the ACT, compared to 5.5 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

**The Closing the Gap target** is: By 2031, reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0–17 years old) in out-of-home care by 45%.

ANTAR/ANTaR ACT asked what would the party do, if elected, to support the full implementation (28 recommendations) of the [Our Booris, Our Way Report](#) (OBOW) recommendations<sup>3</sup> to reduce the rate of child removals.

		
<p>Labor commits to fully implement the recommendations of the OBOW Report under the guidance and scrutiny of the OBOW Aboriginal Implementation Oversight Committee. Six monthly reports are released by the government into progress made on each of the recommendations.</p> <p>In the last term an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner was recruited and a First Nations Family Support team was established.</p> <p>The Government will continue to modernise the Children and Young People ACT 2008 which will see the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle embedded in legislation, policy and practice.</p> <p>Labor is committed to expanding diversions from the statutory systems. Functional Family Therapy will be continued and additional funding has been allocated in the recent budget for ACCO-led Family Group Conferencing.</p>	<p>ACT Greens consider the real power of the Our Booris, Our Way report was that it was authored by members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and as such represents a clear guide to government and community agencies on the steps needed to make a real impact in supporting First Nations people and families.</p> <p>They affirm their commitment to the recommendations in the report. They commit to appropriately resourcing the Community Services Directorate, ACCOs and other non-government organisations to enable them to implement the recommendations in full.</p>	<p>IFC was founded on the values of no voice unheard and that no one would get left behind. Children are a priority.</p> <p>The IFC is pleased to see the responsibility for delivery of the recommendations of Our Booris, Our Way moved to the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) - National Voice for our Children.</p> <p>SNAICC is Indigenous-led and has a proven history of working closely with others to drive change.</p> <p>Closing of the gap starts with changing the trajectory of the youngest. IFC want the right support at the right time for the children, for those in the justice system, for those experiencing lack of safety at home. The right supports now to arrest the current trajectory and build a better future.</p>
 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b> Again, more urgency is needed around implementing these policies.</p>	 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b></p>	 <p><b>MIXED BAG</b> ANTAR notes that the Government remains responsible for the implementation of OBOW.</p>




<sup>3</sup> Total 28 recommendations further broken down to 36 recommendations. The latest report on implementation of recommendations rated them in four categories: Progressing 11/36, Significant progress 9/36, Close to monitoring 8/36 and Monitoring and evaluation 8/36.

## ABORIGINAL HOUSING

The current [ACT Government housing strategy \(2018\)](#) recommends culturally appropriate public and community housing accommodation options; there is also a need for an Aboriginal community-controlled housing organisation in the ACT.

[The Closing the Gap](#) outcome 9 is: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need.

ANTAR/ANTaR ACT asked what would the party do, if elected, to provide more Aboriginal housing in the ACT and support the development of a community-controlled Aboriginal housing organisation.

		
<p>Labor states that it will continue to champion new and expanded housing options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.</p> <p>This will include providing opportunities, through the Indicative Land Release Program and Affordable Housing Project Fund, for ACCOs registered as community housing providers to develop supported, social or affordable rental properties, and expanding headlease opportunities.</p>	<p>The ACT Greens believe that housing is a human right. They will continue current work led by the Community Services Directorate (CSD) to support Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing Organisations that have been recently established and have successfully registered as community housing organisations.</p> <p>The Greens Minister for Homelessness, has secured funding for specialist homelessness services for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The commissioning for this service is currently being finalised having been co-designed in consultation with the sector. The announcement of the successful provider is expected shortly.</p>	<p>IFC wants a future where Indigenous people have the same housing choices as everyone else, rather than being consigned to social and community housing.</p> <p>Solving the current crisis will take clever consideration of different models: rent to buy, tiny apartments, programs to reduce rent and the like.</p> <p>Indigenous people need to be able to choose from the full suite of options, acknowledging that much will need to change in individuals' lives to achieve that choice.</p>
 <p><b>MIXED BAG</b> More is needed in this critically important area.</p>	 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b></p>	 <p><b>MIXED BAG</b> More actual policy detail is required.</p>









## ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

The ACT voted 61% Yes in the Referendum to establish the Voice to Parliament. To see the fruition of the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) in the ACT, steps to Truth-telling and Treaty are needed.

ANTAR/ANTaR ACT asked what would the party do, if elected, to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (Voice), and the impact of Aboriginal people in decision making about policies and programs that affect them; and

How would they progress Truth-telling and a pathway to Treaty and agreement-making within the ACT.

		
<p>Following the Voice to Parliament Referendum, Labor strengthened the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body through increased paid time for members and provision of an independent secretariat. An independent First Nations-led review of the Elected Body model will occur in this term of government. Labor will work with the community to implement its recommendations.</p> <p>Labor will work in partnership with the community to understand what truth telling looks like in the ACT and develop a framework for this to occur. There is more to be done to understand what Treaty means for the ACT, including what it may constitute, and how and with whom it would be negotiated. As the identification of Traditional Custodians is a contested space in the ACT, Labor cannot progress Treaty discussions until a definitive determination is made under the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>.</p>	<p>The ACT Greens are committed to Truth, Treaty and Voice as called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We share the sense of grief that comes from the referendum result.</p> <p>They will work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to raise its profile and improve its impact. They will work to strengthen its connection to Government Ministers and the Assembly, and to consider how to increase voter participation in future elections to strengthen the Elected Body in the eyes of the community.</p> <p>The ACT Greens will also explore opportunities for truth telling in the work of government and will continue work to support Traditional Custodians in their pursuit of native title and to work towards a Treaty process.</p>	<p>IFC is determined to see the Statement implemented in full in the spirit in which it was written. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was written after listening to hundreds of voices. IFC respects the process and the outcome.</p>
 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b> A timeframe is required to commence a Truth-telling framework.</p>	 <p><b>THUMBS UP</b> A timeframe is required to commence Truth-telling within Government.</p>	 <p><b>MIXED BAG</b> Detail is required as to how this can be implemented in the ACT.</p>

# ABOUT ANTAR

**ANTAR is a national advocacy organisation working for Justice, Rights and Respect for Australia's First Nations Peoples. We do this primarily through campaigns, advocacy and public education.**

ANTAR campaigns for the principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to oversee national agreement-making and truth-telling processes, as well as for the self-determination of First Nations Peoples. We actively support state and territory-based voice, treaty and truth-telling.

ANTAR engages in national advocacy across various policy and social justice issues affecting First Nations communities, including cultural heritage protection; justice reinvestment, over-incarceration and raising the age of criminal responsibility; child safety, development and wellbeing; anti-racism campaigns, native title and land rights, and closing the life equality gap.

ANTAR is a foundational member of both the Close the Gap Campaign and Change the Record Campaign Steering Committee, and an organisational and executive committee member of Just Reinvest NSW. ANTAR has been working with First Nations communities, organisations and leaders on rights and reconciliation issues since 1997. ANTAR is a non-government, not-for-profit, independently funded and community-based organisation.

ANTaR ACT is an active voluntary group in the ACT which is affiliated with ANTAR (National). In recent years it has focussed locally on reducing First Nations incarceration and raising the age of criminal responsibility, reducing the number of First Nations children in out of home care, support for expanding and strengthening Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the ACT, and seeing the elders' vision for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm come to fruition. ANTaR ACT also supported the Yes campaign for the 2023 Referendum. ANTaR ACT has prepared this Election Scorecard in collaboration with ANTAR.



## CONTACT

Blake Cansdale  
National Director

[hello@antar.org.au](mailto:hello@antar.org.au)

(02) 9280 0060

PO Box 77  
Strawberry Hills  
NSW 2012

Janet Hunt  
ANTaR ACT

[info@antaract.org.au](mailto:info@antaract.org.au)

[antaract.org.au](http://antaract.org.au)

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ANTAR is proud to acknowledge and pay our respects to First Nations Peoples as the traditional owners of the lands on which we work across the continent.