

ACT Election 2016: Where do our political parties stand on animal protection?

The Animal Defenders Office is calling for animal protection to be put on the ACT agenda as the Territory heads towards an election. We contacted the major political parties and sought their positions on four key ACT animal protection issues.¹

To make your vote count for animals, see where the major political players stand on these initiatives:

1. Banning greyhound racing in the ACT
2. Strengthening animal cruelty and neglect penalties
3. Suspending kangaroo kills on public land while science is reviewed and alternatives assessed
4. Acknowledging animals' sentience in ACT animal welfare legislation

PARTIES (in alphabetical order)	Supports a ban on greyhound racing in the ACT	Supports strengthening animal cruelty and neglect penalties	Supports suspension of killing kangaroos on ACT public land	Supports acknowledging animals' sentience in ACT legislation
Animal Justice Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Labor Party (ACT Branch)	TBC*	✓	✗	No policy
Australian Sex Party ACT	✓	✓**	✓	✓
Liberal Democratic Party	✗	✗	No policy	No policy
Liberal Party of Australia (ACT Division)	✗	No policy	✗	No policy
Like Canberra	✗	No policy	No policy	No policy
Sustainable Australia (ACT)	No policy	✓	✓	No policy
The ACT Greens	✓	✓	✗	✓
The Community Alliance Party (ACT)	✓	✓	✓	✓

* ACT Labor will stop Government funding of greyhound racing in the ACT (currently \$1 million / year). The Party is waiting to see the effect of the Baird Government's back-down on its greyhound racing ban in NSW before ACT Labor will confirm its policy on a ban in the ACT.

** The Australian Sex Party ACT proposes a mandatory life-time ban on owning an animal for people found guilty of acts of animal cruelty.

TAKE ACTION

If you want to make animal protection a 2016 ACT Election issue, please tell the leaders of the political parties how important animal welfare issues are to you as a voter, and ask them to commit to each of the above initiatives if elected.

¹ The Animal Defenders Office is not affiliated with any political party. This guide is provided on an information only basis and was compiled on 29 September 2016 and updated on 12 October 2016. The parties are listed alphabetically. Where parties did not respond, we have determined the position based on publicly available statements. If no responses or statements were available the parties have not been included in the table eg Canberra Community Voters, The Flux Party – ACT and VoteCanberra.

ACT Election 2016: The animal protection issues

In September 2016 the Animal Defenders Office wrote to all 12 political parties² contesting the 2016 ACT Election. We asked each party about the following initiatives:

<p>Greyhound racing ban in the ACT</p> <p>On 24 August 2016 the NSW Government passed the <i>Greyhound Racing Prohibition Act 2016</i> to phase out greyhound racing in NSW by 1 July 2017.</p> <p><u>Question:</u> Does your party support a legislative ban on greyhound racing in the ACT?</p>	<p>Increasing animal cruelty and neglect penalties</p> <p>The ACT has the lowest or second lowest financial and imprisonment penalties for animal cruelty and neglect offences compared to the other Australian States and Territory.</p> <p><u>Question:</u> Does your party support strengthening maximum penalties for animal cruelty and neglect offences in the ACT?</p>
<p>Suspending kangaroo kills on public land</p> <p>For the past several years the ACT Government has killed thousands of healthy kangaroos in ACT nature reserves and on other public land. In <i>Animal Liberation ACT v Conservator of Flora and Fauna</i>³ it was established that these kills have serious negative animal welfare outcomes, particularly for the hundreds of orphaned joeys who die a slow death after being separated from their mother (and primary source of food).</p> <p><u>Question:</u> Does your party support a moratorium on killing kangaroos on ACT public land while the need for the kills in conservation terms is re-assessed and non-lethal measures explored?</p>	<p>Legislative recognition of the sentience of animals</p> <p>In 2015 a number of overseas jurisdictions explicitly acknowledged in legislation that animals are sentient beings rather than 'things'.⁴</p> <p>By contrast, no Australian animal welfare law refers to animals as sentient. The ACT should be the first Australian jurisdiction to recognise in law what science and our community have accepted long ago.</p> <p><u>Question:</u> Does your party support acknowledging in ACT animal welfare law that animals are sentient?⁵</p>

² There are a number of Independent candidates running in the ACT Election. Some of these Independents may have progressive animal welfare policies. If you have an Independent running in your electorate, you may wish to contact them directly to ask where they stand on these key animal welfare issues.

³ [2014] ACAT 35.

⁴ For example on 5 May 2015 the New Zealand Parliament passed the *Animal Welfare Amendment Act (No 2) 2015* which recognises 'that animals are sentient' (subparagraph (a)(i)).

⁵ This could be done by amending the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (ACT) by inserting a new provision, amending section 4A 'Objects of Act', or amending the long title of the Act.