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MEDIA RELEASE: Canberra Community Law welcomes ACT Greens Right to Housing Bill

Canberra Community Law welcomes the ACT Greens' proposal to introduce a right to housing into the ACT *Human Rights Act*. Canberra Community Law has been calling for a right to housing for the ACT for a long time.

Executive Director/Principal Solicitor, Genevieve Bolton said, *"Many aspects of the right to housing are already protected under ACT law. A right to adequate housing is not a great leap for the ACT, but it is a vital next step."*

Protecting the right to housing has economic and social benefits for the whole ACT community, including reducing the burden on the healthcare system. There is a growing body of research that shows that stable and secure housing is fundamentally important to health and wellbeing.

The right to housing is also fundamental to the realisation of all other rights in the ACT *Human Rights Act*. When people do not have adequate housing, they also lose access to other basic human rights such as health, education, and safety.

Our clients tell us that having inadequate housing is frightening and dangerous. It affects their mental and physical health and causes them severe emotional and financial distress.

Ms Bolton continued, *"Our clients have been on the frontline as the housing and homelessness crisis has developed over decades. Legislating a right to housing will not solve the crisis overnight. It will set a benchmark to ensure that housing in the ACT gets better, not worse."*

Addressing the housing and homelessness crisis will involve a long-term, whole-of-Government, Housing First approach. This approach must respect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination and to free, prior and informed consent, and must include active consultation with and involvement of people with disability. It must also address the threat of climate change to adequate housing in the ACT.

Introducing a right to housing is a meaningful step in the right direction.

We want to see a future where all people in the ACT have secure, appropriate and affordable housing. This reform is an opportunity for the Government to pioneer a human rights-based approach to housing in Australia and commit to real change that will improve lives.

For more information, please contact Genevieve Bolton, Executive Director/Principal Solicitor:

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Canberra Community Law acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work in the ACT and surrounding region and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past, present, and future for they hold the stories, traditions, and the cultures of their people. We are grateful that we share this land and express our sorrow for the costs of this sharing to Australia's First Peoples. We will continue to acknowledge the legacy of our history and strive in our goals to empower our community through social justice. We hope that our efforts will contribute to a realisation of equity, justice and partnership with Traditional Custodians of this land.

More about Canberra Community Law (CCL): Canberra Community Law runs the only specialist public housing and homelessness legal services in the ACT. We provide legal assistance to people experiencing homelessness, community housing tenants and people with occupancy agreements, including people who live in caravan parks, crisis accommodation, and supported accommodation. CCL has substantial legal practice experience and expertise in homelessness, housing and tenancy law, and ACT human rights law, as well as social security and discrimination law. CCL has developed this expertise through the provision of specialist legal advice, assistance and representation services to people in the ACT on low incomes.

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