2016 ACT Election CAPaD Candidate Statements: analysis at a glance

In 2016 CAPaD invited the candidates for the ACT election to introduce themselves to the electorate and to say why they felt they were suitable for the job of representing us in the Legislative Assembly. We hope you find this summary of the responses by those who were elected, about their perceived relationship with voters, informative.

Conclusion

In brief our MLAs understandably take a very traditional view of their representative relationship with voters. They are very much about being available for one-on-one interactions out and about on the hustings and by standard correspondence or email. There was some interest in social media but little interest in traditional media. Structured opportunities to meet constituents were also favoured. MLA initiated methods scored low. Interest in promoting or engaging through deliberative and participatory methods was mentioned by six of the MLAs. More detail follows.

Response rates

Overall: 62 of the 141 (44%) candidates submitted statements

By success in being elected

14/25 (56%) of successful and 48/116 (41%) of the unsuccessful candidates

By being elected by Party affiliation

ALP: 25 candidates, 13 (52%) submitted statements; 7 (28% of all candidates and 54% of those who submitted statements) elected
Liberal Party, 25 candidates, 10 (48%) submitted statements; 5 (20% of all candidates and 50% of those who submitted statements) elected
The Greens, 15 candidates 13 (67%) submitted statements; of those 2 (13% of all candidates and 15% of those who submitted statements) elected

Focus on the 14 successful candidates' statements

By electorate:

2/5 in Yarrabi: Fitzharris and Orr (both Labour):
3/5 in Murrumbidgee: Steel, (Labour), Hanson, (Liberal) and LeCouteur, (Greens)
4/5 in Kurrajong: Barr and Stephen-Smith (Labor) Lee (Liberal) and Rattenbury (Greens)
3/5 in Ginninderra: Cheyne and Ramsay (Labor) Dunne (Liberal)
2/5 in Brindabella: Lawder and Parton (both Liberal)

By Party affiliation:

Of the 25 elected MLAs:
ALP: 7/12 (58%) submitted statements;
Liberals: 5/11= 45% submitted statements;
Greens: 2/2 =100% submitted statements.

Minor party & Independent statements (none elected)

Independents:	17 candidates,	8 (47%) submitted statements
Animal Justice Party:	7 candidates,	none submitted statements
Australian Sex Party:	5 candidates,	none submitted statements
Canberra Community Voters Party:	8 candidates,	2 (25%) submitted statements
Community Alliance:	2 candidates,	none submitted statements
Like Canberra Party:	10 candidates,	3 (30%) submitted statements
Sustainable Australia:	10 candidates,	none submitted statements

Candidate Statements elements

Candidates were asked to provide a statement across four areas. A collective summary analysis of each section is given. Individual candidate statements are available at https://canberra-alliance.org.au/act-2016-election/.

1. These are my principal qualifications for being a parliamentarian (up to 200 words)
Each of the 14 statements provides a helpful personal summary of the reason the candidates were putting themselves forward and reveals some of their training, experience, passions and predisposition. Those seeking re-election were able to draw on recent experience and significant accomplishments in that role. All come across as genuine people, keen to make a difference. Voters received useful comparative data about people who were otherwise simply names.

2. If elected, these are the issues that are seen as the most important for the long-term benefits of all my constituents and towards which I will be working on their behalf. (up to 200 words)
A broad range of issues were raised and no clear differentiating themes emerged.

3. If elected, this is how I plan to represent my constituents. I.e. how I will engage with, consult and report to the electorate during my term in office. (Up to 200 words)

This is the section that speaks more directly to CAPaD's core agenda.

Table 1 summarises the overall range of responses that concerned engaging with and consulting constituents, by candidate and party (key to column headings below).

MLAs	Self	Conv	Corr	TradM	SocM	Strc/F	MLA	Parcip	UnSpec
Andrew Barr	1	1	1	1	1	1			
Tara Cheyne		1	1		1				
Vicki Dunne									1
Meegan Fitzharris		1	1		1			1	
Jeremy Hanson		1						1	
Nicole Lawder		1				1			
Caroline LeCouteur			1			1	1	1	
Elizabeth Lee		1	1		1	1			
Suzanne Orr		1							
Mark Parton		1							
Gordon Ramsay	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	
Shane Rattenbury		1						1	
Chris Steel		1							1
Rachel Steven-Smith		1			1			1	
Totals	2	12	6	1	6	5	2	6	2
ALP	2	7	4	1	5	3	1	3	1
Gre		1	1			1	1	2	
Lib		4	1		1	2		1	1
	Self	Conv	Corr	TradM	SocM	Strc/F	MLA	Parcip	UnSpec

Table 2 Key to column headings in Table 1	
Self	Self-promotion / information sharing eg newsletters
Conv	Conversation – opportunistic eg at shopping centres, door knocking, events
Corr	Correspondence eg letters, emails.
TradM	Traditional media eg newspapers, radio,
SocM	Social media eg Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Web-based
Strc/F	Structured / formal occasions eg mobile offices
MLA	MLA initiated formal input eg surveys, inquiries, consultations
Parcip	Participatory / deliberative methods
UnSpec	Unspecified

In terms of specific reference to participatory and deliberative techniques, a more focused summary is given:

Six candidates mentioned participatory or deliberative democracy techniques specifically beyond engagement. They were:
- Megan Fitzharris (thinks deliberative democracy processes have huge potential; and keen to explore their potential),
- Jeremy Hanson (investigate some deliberative democracy processes),
- Caroline Le Couteur (instigate some deliberative processes),
- Gordon Ramsay (operate with a deliberative openness),
- Shane Rattenbury (use of deliberative democracy mechanisms in the budget process and at specific decision making points),
- Rachel Stephen-Smith (Canberra has serious expertise in participatory democracy, and I'm keen to … use a range of consultation mechanisms – from "kitchen table" conversation to citizens' juries).

4. I will abide by the CAPaD *Charter of Democratic Commitments* [and six statements that covered: truth telling, disclosure of funding, seeking a fair go for all, promoting and supporting participatory and deliberative methods, placing interest of the community and the integrity of the environment ahead of personal interests and never abusing or misusing allowances.

All candidates agreed without amendment.

Charter of Democratic Commitments 2016
I will abide by the CAPaD Charter of Democratic Commitments as follows:

(NB If you are uncomfortable with the wording in any these statements, please amend them and show any amendments in italics and underline them)

1. I will at all times tell the truth to the citizens and voters of Canberra and be honest in all aspects of my work as an elected representative of the Australian people.

2. I will fully disclose and make public the sources and value of all political funding donations, contributions, gifts public and private in line with legal requirements.

3. I undertake to be fair, ethical, compassionate and diligent in serving my electorate and the nation at all times, and to uphold the Australian value of "a fair go for all".

4. I will promote and support participatory and deliberative methods for policy, planning and legislative decisions, as appropriate and practical. This should include better use of new technology.

5. I will place the public interest ahead of personal interests.

6. I will never abuse or misuse the allowances, subsidies, concessions and privileges accorded to me by the people of the the ACT and the ACT Legislative Assembly in my role as an elected representative.