



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY  
Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Ms Laura Nuttall MLA

# **Submission Cover sheet**

## **Inquiry into Unpaid Work**

Submission number: 11

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What are your personal experiences with unpaid work?:

All my work is unpaid, undervalued and often unrecognised. I have been a full-time carer for my two children and continue to part-time care for my pre-schooler. I am an unpaid advocate for the following: Chair of the Peoples Climate Assembly, ACF Community Canberra co-lead, Electrify Canberra Co-ordinator, Co-ordinator for the Inner North Pantries Network, run the volunteer team for the Ainslie Community Pantry, co-run the Buy Nothing Ainslie group, co-ordinate the Ainslie Parks Restoration Project - regularly volunteering with the Friends of Ainslie Volcanics Grasslands and convenor for the Fisher Place project. I am also a Director for Girls' Uniform Agenda and ACT rep. I advocate for better support to address food poverty and better management of food waste for street and community pantries; and period poverty through sustainable period products that are more empowering and cheaper in the mid to longer-term.

In your opinion, what could the ACT Government do to improve the situation of people performing regular unpaid work?:

Often volunteers give their time to attend Select Committee hearings and give evidence in their submissions and oral evidence that would practically benefit the work that they try to do. This is often completely overlooked in reports and recommendations. The unfair expectation that volunteers should apply for grants (unpaid) which they may not get (often the case) which are often accurately budgeted and to be awarded less money (often the case) so costs cannot be covered, and their work definitely not paid for, is depressing and demoralising. Follow-up on good work from projects is often non-existent and this is not motivating for the volunteer workforce. The occasional win, the occasional recognition of the valuable work of volunteers and passionate advocacy would be fabulous. An appreciation that affordable solutions from people deeply connected to their communities should be valued over the recommendations of larger, sometimes more disconnected organisations and charities. The lone volunteer working at the grassroots is saving you a ■■■ ton of money and a 'thanks' and not being completely ignored and dismissed would be nice. Not continually expecting volunteers to navigate the complicated bureaucracy to find out what is happening in urban parks, in food poverty, in period poverty, in sustainability, would be fabulous. We are literally not paid to do this ■■■ and the number of times I am the one doing the enquiries, doing the follow up action, writing the letter, doing the submission, giving evidence is bananas. It is lucky I am values and principles driven because no-one pays me for my labour and expects it to be given endlessly without any evidence of impact.

Is there anything else relating to unpaid work that you would like to tell the committee?:

Treat people doing unpaid labour as a vital part of the community. There is a great irony in the entire premise of this inquiry and asking volunteers to give more when everyone connected to the inquiry will be paid to 'come up' with easy, implementable, unimaginative recommendations. I would love to see the creative, progressive ideas that people give in evidence being taken forward just once.