[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]

[ADDRESS LINE 1]

[SUBURB] [STATE] [POSTCODE]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

Minister [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME], MLA

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

DATE MONTH 2020

Dear Minister [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME], MLA

My name is [YOUR NAME], and I am constituent from the [YOUR ELECTORATE] electorate.

As the Minister for [MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIO], I am writing to you to draw attention to issues affecting women and girls in the ACT that are relevant to your portfolio.

Although the ACT is considered a leader in the space of inclusion and equality, there is still significant gendered inequality that needs to be addressed for women and girls to be able to participate equitably in our workforces and community.

**Safe, secure and affordable housing**

Housing is a human right, and COVID-19 has highlighted how shelter is a fundamental pillar of public health. Homelessness is not an intractable problem and a policy response of providing housing as a first step to holistic individual wellbeing is achievable.

To address this issue, I believe the next ACT Government needs to:

* invest in building capacity within the sector for appropriate services and supported housing to assist gender and sexually diverse persons escape family and domestic violence
* fund specialist and culturally-appropriate housing and homelessness services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women escaping domestic violence
* upgrade Canberra’s existing refuge housing stock to ensure access for women with disabilities who require crisis housing
* improve the diversity of housing stock by supporting community housing-led solutions to cater for people and families with a range of needs
* lift the supply of three- and four-bedroom dwellings available through the Affordable Home Purchase Program to better meet market demand, as recommended by the ACT Audit Office review of land supply and development.

**Preventing violence against women**

The current policy framework of responding to family violence is too late for some women and children. We need visionary and evidence-based primary prevention strategies that eliminate violence before it starts and creates a future without violence for Canberra girls.

We still see systemic issues of workplace sexual harassment which, when unaddressed, displaces capable women from their chosen profession across a range of industries.

To address this issue, I believe the next ACT Government needs to:

* collect and publicise anonymised data relating to workplace sexual harassment and develop annual reporting of sexual harassment in Canberra workplaces
* collect and publicise gender-disaggregated and intersectional data on perceptions of personal safety and harassment in public spaces in Canberra for women
* lobby the Australian Government to adopt the legislative reform recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission *Respect@Work* report on workplace sexual harassment
* include the prevention of sexual harassment in workplaces, educational and public settings as a priority area, with measurable outcomes, in the implementation of the ACT Women’s Plan and Fourth Action Plan
* amend the *Crimes Act (ACT 1900)* to include the concept of positive consent, as recommended by the corrigendum to the Inquiry into Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill
* establish the cross-government, cross-sector working group to advise on how prosecution outcomes for victims of sexual assault can be improved, as recommended by the Inquiry into the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill
* broaden the scope of the Family Safety Hub to respond to violence that occurs between intimate partners who do not constitute a family unit
* implement Respectful Relationships Education for students from P-12 and tertiary education, including students in special needs educational settings, in line with Our Watch’s recommended whole-of-school approach.

**Valuing early childhood education and promoting access**

Access to early childhood education and care provides children with the best start in life. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the value of early education services to the economy and families. However, there is a pressing need to recalibrate how policymakers conceive of early childhood education and care. Rather than being viewed as ‘babysitting’ or ‘childminding’, quality early childhood education and care is an investment in the future economy of our nation.

To address this issue, I believe the next ACT Government needs to:

* fund the extension of universal access to early childhood education and care to three-year-old children (in line with the Australian Government Child Care Subsidy maximum hourly fee cap for children below school age)
* lobby the federal government to support equal pay for educators
* create an ACT Early Childhood Educators Professional Development Fund to support ongoing professional development in the sector
* re-establish the Early Childhood Advisory Council to streamline sector insight and advice to the relevant Minister.

I look forward to your response outlining what steps will be taken to address these issues.

Yours sincerely,

[FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]