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ACT GREENS CANDIDATE WINS PHAA (ACT BRANCH) GREAT ELECTION PUBLIC HEALTH DEBATE

ACT Greens Senate candidate Lin Hatfield Dodds was declared the winner of last night's Public Health Association of Australia (ACT Branch) Great Election Public Health Debate. Gai Brodtmann, ACT Labor candidate for Canberra; Senator Gary Humphries from the Canberra Liberals; and Ms Hatfield Dodds went head-to-head on some of the key national public health issues in Canberra last night ahead of the federal election.

"The winner of last night's debate was decided by the audience of over 120 people from the health and community sectors. At the conclusion of the evening, the audience was asked to indicate their approval of each of the candidates by applause. Lin Hatfield Dodds received the loudest cheers, followed closely by Gai Brodtmann and then Gary Humphries. While Ms Hatfield Dodds was declared the winner, it really was quite a tight contest. Canberrans should be very pleased to have such a high calibre of candidates to choose from who can all demonstrate a clear vision for improving public health both in Canberra and at the national level," said Dr Ian White, PHAA's ACT Branch President.

"Mental health and policies addressing social disadvantage were a recurring theme of the debate, with each candidate articulating their party's approach to addressing these issues. There was also a strong focus on enhancing preventive health measures. Surprisingly, there was actually a lot of agreement between the candidates in terms of the key issues, the differences were in how each party intended to address these challenges," said Dr White.

"The three speakers were asked to answer a series of set questions on issues including: the impact of policies in other portfolios on health measures; key priorities for public health; funding for preventive health measures; implementation of Preventative Health Taskforce recommendations on alcohol, tobacco and obesity; improving health outcomes for disadvantaged groups; mental health and comorbidity; Indigenous health; oral health; and climate change policies. They then participated in a question and answer session with the audience that covered a broad range of additional public health and related issues such as ehealth and allied health," said Michael Moore, PHAA Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

"The audience indicated that it had been a very tight contest and attendees were particularly impressed that each candidate and party had considered key public health issues and developed policy and program responses aiming to address problems identified," said Mr Moore who was the facilitator for the evening.

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The Great Election Public Health Debate was hosted by the ACT Branch of the Public Health Association of Australia and supported by the Australian Health Promotion Association; the University of Canberra Centre for Research & Action in Public Health and The Hellenic Club of Canberra.