

2026

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

Gender Sensitive Urban Design (GSUD) Guidelines – Implementation

**Presented by
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA
Minister for Women
February 2026**

Page intentionally left blank.

Gender Sensitive Urban Design (GSUD) Guidelines – Implementation – Tabling Document

Purpose

On 25 June 2025, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion calling on the ACT Government to:

- implement the Gender Sensitive Urban Design (GSUD) Guidelines across the ACT, and
- table a comprehensive implementation plan and timeline during the first Sitting Week of 2026.

The GSUD are implemented and embedded as business as usual (BAU) in ACT Government design and construction standards. GSUD is not a separate program of works.

Background

The GSUD Framework and Toolkit were developed under the ACT Women’s Plan 2016-26, specifically the Second Action Plan 2020-22, which identified the need to build a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate. GSUD was piloted from July 2023 and, following successful integration, transitioned to BAU in 2024. It now complements the Municipal Infrastructure Standards and applies to all new and upgraded public assets.

The GSUD Framework and Toolkit

The GSUD Framework and Toolkit are evidence-based resources designed to guide best-practice urban design outcomes through a gender lens. They were developed through:

Framework

- A strategic document setting out principles for gender-sensitive urban places.
- Provides a roadmap for embedding gender equity across planning, procurement, design, delivery and evaluation.

Toolkit

- A practical guide addressing common gender-related inequalities in public spaces.
- Offers actionable recommendations for lighting, sightlines, connectivity, activation and inclusive amenities.
- Designed for use by government, developers and urban design professionals.

GSUD Principles

The GSUD Guidelines are underpinned by 6 principles that guide design and delivery:

Principle	Description
Feeling safe and being safe	Perceived safety matters as much as actual safety. Design should improve lighting, visibility and comfort.
Beyond design	Gender sensitivity is integrated across the project lifecycle - planning, procurement, delivery, activation and evaluation.
Being heard	Women’s and gender diverse voices inform design decisions through

	consultation and co-design.
Place-specific	Recognises that every place and its community have unique attributes and challenges that need to be responded to.
Scale matters	Urban design decisions made at all scales has an impact on gender from the macro-scale right down to the human scale.
Right to the city	Everyone should feel welcome and able to participate in public life. Spaces should foster belonging and legitimacy.

How GSUD Is Implemented

GSUD is integrated into ACT Government design and construction standards. It applies to all new and upgraded public assets and is implemented incrementally as assets are renewed or constructed. It is not retrospective.

GSUD is implemented through:

- integration into ACT Government standards and processes
- application during planning, design and delivery of new and upgraded assets
- ongoing collaboration across agencies to ensure consistency
- incremental improvements aligned with asset lifecycle renewals.

Implementation to Date

Project type	Locations	Scope of works	Status	Investment
Shopping centres	Evatt, Narrabundah, Monash, Macquarie local shops; Calwell and Lanyon Group Centres	Upgraded paving, lighting, seating, landscaping; improved sightlines and accessibility	Completed 2024-25	\$6.7 million (combined)
City precinct works	City Walk and Petrie Plaza	Lighting infill, paving renewal, improved sightlines, activation spaces	Completed 2024	\$3.2 million
Park renewal	Haig Park	New lighting and pathways, activation program (120+ events), community centre and nature play	Completed 2024	\$2.8 million

Forward Implementation (2025–26 Budget)

Project type	Locations	Scope of works	Timing	Investment
Shopping centres	Charnwood, Mawson, Erindale, Palmerston, Griffith	Comprehensive upgrades: paving, lighting, landscaping, accessibility improvements	2025-26 to 2028-29	\$9.65 million (combined)
Active travel	Tuggeranong, Woden,	Path renewal and infill,	2025-26	\$38.2 million

	Weston, Belconnen, Inner North and South	missing links, lighting upgrades	to 2028-29	
City precinct	City centre revitalisation	Lighting, paving, activation spaces, improved connectivity	2025-27	\$20.7 million
Sportsgrounds	15 locations	Female-friendly change rooms	2025-26 to 2028-29	\$1.995 million

Case Study: Haig Park

Haig Park was historically perceived as unsafe and underutilised. Community feedback described it as dark and dangerous. The ACT Government, through the City Renewal Authority, implemented a series of interventions guided by GSUD principles:

- **Lighting and pathways:** Improved visibility and accessibility, addressing perceived and actual safety.
- **Activation:** More than 120 community-led events, including markets and family activities, increased foot traffic and passive surveillance.
- **Placemaking:** Installation of a community centre and nature play areas fostered inclusion and social connection.

These changes transformed Haig Park into a vibrant, welcoming space. Surveys show increased visitation and improved perceptions of safety, demonstrating the effectiveness of GSUD principles in practice.

Conclusion

GSUD is not a separate program. It is embedded as business as usual in ACT Government design and construction standards. Every new and upgraded public asset applies GSUD principles, ensuring gender-sensitive design is mainstreamed across planning and infrastructure. This approach meets the intent of the motion by confirming GSUD is fully implemented and will continue to guide future works across the ACT.