



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment
and Planning

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024–25

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Environment and Planning

Approved for publication

Report 7
11th Assembly
May 2026

About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning on 26 June 2025, when it amended its 3 December 2024 resolution establishing the standing committees of the 11th Assembly.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Environment and climate change
- Heritage
- Water and energy policy and programs
- Emissions reductions
- Environment and ecological sustainability
- Commissioner for the Environment
- Environment Protection Agency
- Parks and Conservation
- City Renewal Authority
- Suburban Land Agency
- Planning
- Land management

You can read the full establishing resolution on our [website](#).

Committee members

Ms Jo Clay MLA, Chair

Ms Fiona Carrick MLA, Deputy Chair

Ms Caitlin Tough MLA

Mr Peter Cain MLA

Secretariat

Mr James Bunce, Committee Secretary

Ms Nicola Straker, Assistant Secretary

Ms Anna Hough, Assistant Secretary

Mr Justice-Noah Malfitano, Acting Assistant Secretary and Committee Support Officer (from 20 April 2026)

Ms Lydia Chung, Administrative Officer

Contact us

Mail Standing Committee on Environment and Planning
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Phone (02) 6207 5498

Email LACommitteeEnvironment@parliament.act.gov.au

Website parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees

About this inquiry

The 2024-2025 Annual Reports were presented in the Assembly on 21 October 2025. Clause 4 of the establishing resolution refers all calendar and financial year annual and financial reports to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report by 12 May of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Long form
CED	City and Environment Directorate
CRA	City Renewal Authority
DA	Development applications
EOI	Expression of interest
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
FOGO	Food and Garden Organics
HAFF	Housing Australia Future Fund
iCBR	Infrastructure Canberra
IRP	Indigenous Rangers Program
SLA	Suburban Land Agency
UGB	Urban Growth Boundary

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a mitigation plan where land release slippage occurs for public, community and affordable housing land releases due to planning, environmental and delivery capacity complexities.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a consolidated public reporting framework for public, community and affordable housing that:

- Tracks annual targets against delivery, including planned land releases, homes brought to market, and homes deferred (with reasons) and rolled over; and
- Provides forward modelling to 2030 for the delivery of 5,000 homes, including land release timings, suburb locations and milestones for delivery.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continues to provide clear public updates of enforcement action taken in relation to the Big Splash site.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish guidance for sites not being used for their required purpose for more than 12 months, and other controlled activities, where powers exist but are not being used or are inconsistently applied.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish annual statistics for complaints, investigations and enforcement outcomes across key regimes (lease compliance, land management agreements, controlled activities), including reasons for non-enforcement.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide an update to Canberra City Farm and, if suitable, publicly, in relation to the licence due to expire in October 2026.

Recommendation 7

That the ACT Government consult with Traditional Custodians and ACT First Nations communities and organisations on key land decisions including regarding the establishment of an urban growth boundary by June 2027, Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas and report back to the Assembly by the second-last sitting day in September on this consultation.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government tighten internal approvals to prevent unauthorised works on heritage sites.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a defined process for notifying the Heritage Council, documenting changes, and confirming corrective actions and timelines when heritage breaches occur.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a program of master plans for all town centres, followed by group centres, to guide both public and private sector investment.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government update the 2018 ACT Planning Strategy to ensure it remains aligned with community needs, environmental priorities and infrastructure planning objectives.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government release an end-to-end process map of the planning and development system, which highlights opportunities to streamline tasks and improve coordination across teams.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reduce the high first-time failure rate for development application completeness checks by:

- Supporting applicants with a clearer minimum documentation template;
- Publishing common reasons for failure; and
- Evaluating whether requirements can be simplified while maintaining planning integrity.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish details on the delivery of dwellings under the Commonwealth Housing Accord by year, dwelling type and district, and the forecast for dwellings using the same categories.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government progress inclusionary zoning that explicitly includes public and community housing in precinct-scale land redevelopment and publish the intended mix of incentives and requirements.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore partnerships with industry to increase Canberra's food and garden organics (FOGO) processing capacity before 2028, noting delays to the ACT Government's own FOGO processing facilities.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve transparency by stating what the Materials Recycling Facility will recycle.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver effective measures to avoid and recycle construction and demolition waste currently transported interstate, and report annually on:

- ACT and interstate waste flows and available reduction levers; and
- Progress against a program of continuous improvement for construction and demolition waste recovery, including performance against targets.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report on how much funding was sought for healthy waterways and water catchment programs in 2024-25 versus how much funding was provided.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government and the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment ensure that Yarralumla Creek is included in the next State of the Lakes and Waterways in the ACT report, and that Government respond to any recommendations.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and publish a plan for decommissioning of the gas network, with the plan explicitly considering medium-term options for network disconnection, including advice for the phased shutdown required between 2030-2040, giving certainty to industry and consumers.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government incorporate both nature-positive and climate adaptive outcomes in upcoming planning reforms, including tree retention and maintenance, habitat connectivity and water-sensitive use design.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a clear update on the review of the ACT environmental offsets policy including whether the ACT is meeting its obligations to the Commonwealth regarding environmental offsets and whether rural properties will be included in the environmental offsets policy.

Recommendation 24

Acknowledging that ground transport is the greatest contributor to ACT's emissions, the Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a plan to drive mode shift and create an integrated delivery plan to improve public transport, drive higher patronage, and reduce transport emissions, and that the area of Government responsible for delivering this plan should set timelines, resolve delivery challenges, and provide annual progress reports.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publicly release all Scope 3 emissions analysis work and expand and update the analysis to cover the entire ACT economy, in consultation with industry and the community.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the next climate change strategy has the ambition and funding to meet legislated climate targets and deals with key areas in climate policy including climate adaptation, waste (including food and organic waste), transport (including mode shift), and Scope 3 emissions tracking and reduction.

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a final report updating the Assembly on progress under the bushfire smoke and air quality strategy and advise if a new bushfire smoke and air quality strategy is required and if so, when it will be delivered.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a cross-directorate governance mechanism to drive climate action across the agencies with responsibility for climate, transport, planning, environmental protection and treasury.

Recommendation 29

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Legislative Assembly with a report by the end of the first sitting week of September 2026 detailing:

- Reasons why the public housing waitlist has continued to grow
- Actions the ACT Government is taking to eliminate the public housing waitlist, including through acquiring new public housing and the construction program, to deliver over 1,000 new public housing dwellings by 2030; and
- Annual targets the ACT Government has set for achieving the acquisition and construction of 1,000 new public housing dwellings by 2030.

Recommendation 30

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government should meet its targets for newly acquired and built public housing and should clearly report against any shortfall in annual reports, including setting out clear reasons for the shortfall.

Recommendation 31

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve coordination with the Commonwealth Government's Housing Australia Future Fund by having projects with approved development applications ready to apply when funding rounds are opened.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. All annual and financial reports for the territory were tabled on 21 October 2025. A collated list of annual and financial reports is available online.¹
- 1.2. During its inquiry the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning (the Committee) was required to examine all or part of the following annual and financial reports for 2024–25:
 - City Renewal Authority Annual Report 2024-25;
 - Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate Annual Report 2024-25;
 - Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate Annual Report 2024-25;
 - Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment Annual Report 2024-25;
 - Suburban Land Agency Annual Report 2024-25; and
 - Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate 2024-25.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.3. The Committee held public inquiries on 10, 12, 17 and 18 November 2025. At the hearings, the Committee heard from ACT Government Ministers, Directorate Officials, statutory authorities and statutory officers.
- 1.4. Witnesses who appeared before the Committee are listed at **Appendix A**. Transcripts and footage of the hearings are available on the Assembly website.²
- 1.5. Committees began collecting information on the gender of witnesses in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs of, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses. A table showing the distribution of witness gender is at **Appendix C**.
- 1.6. A total of 98 questions were lodged during the inquiry: 31 questions were taken on notice (QTONs) by Ministers, statutory authorities and statutory office holders during the hearings and 67 questions on notice (QONs) were submitted by Committee members and visiting Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) following the hearings.
- 1.7. A list of questions (by subject, submitter and recipient) is at **Appendix B**, and all published questions and answers available on the [inquiry webpage](#).

¹ ACT Government, Annual Reports, <https://www.act.gov.au/open/annual-reports> (accessed 22 April 2026).

² ACT Legislative Assembly, *Watch, read and listen*, <https://broadcast.parliament.act.gov.au/> (accessed 22 April 2026).

Machinery of Government changes

- 1.8. On 1 July 2025, several Machinery of Government changes came into effect to ‘better align the ACT Public Service to government priorities.’³ Of particular relevance to this inquiry was the formation of the City and Environment Directorate through the amalgamation of Access Canberra, the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.
- 1.9. The Machinery of Government changes were accompanied by new Administrative Arrangements,⁴ which included changes to some ministerial portfolios. Health and Community Services Directorate officials appeared alongside ministers to provide evidence in relation to the 2024–25 Community Services Directorate annual report.
- 1.10. This year the Committee held public hearings with iCBR officials and relevant ministers to examine the iCBR Annual Report. In previous years, iCBR officials have appeared alongside ministers and directorate officials to provide evidence of major projects related to specific directorates.⁵

Acknowledgements

- 1.11. The Committee thanks everyone who participated in, or otherwise assisted, this inquiry. This includes the ACT Government Ministers, directorate officials, statutory authorities and statutory officers. The Committee extends particular thanks to the Hansard and Broadcasting staff of the Legislative Assembly.

³ ACT Government, *ACTPS 2025 Taskforce Report*, <https://www.act.gov.au/open/aboriginal-community-controlled-organisation-establishment-and-expansion-fund/actps-2025-taskforce-report> (accessed 22 April 2026).

⁴ *Administrative Arrangements 2025 (No 1)*, 25 June 2025.

⁵ For example, iCBR officials (previously Major Projects Canberra) appeared alongside Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate officials and the Minister for City and Government Services for the *Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–24* to provide evidence on waste management infrastructure projects.

2. Matters considered

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency

- 2.1. The City Renewal Authority⁶ (CRA) and the Suburban Land Agency⁷ (SLA) appeared before the Committee on 10 November 2025.
- 2.2. During the CRA and SLA appearance the following matters were considered:
- Affordable public and community housing targets;
 - Land release program carryover;
 - Turner Build-to-Rent;
 - SLA workforce and performance indicators;
 - CRA land sales;
 - Housing Australia Future Fund funding;
 - SLA modelling of housing delivery;
 - SLA disability priority housing;
 - Molonglo town centre and community needs assessments;
 - Indicative Land Release Program (ILRP);
 - CRA non-financial accountability indicators; and
 - Acton Waterfront neighbourhood.⁸

Planning and Sustainable Development and Heritage

- 2.3. Mr Chris Steel MLA appeared before the Committee in his capacity as Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development and Minister for Heritage on 12 November 2025.
- 2.4. During the Minister's appearance, the following matters were raised:
- Compliance and enforcement of land management agreements;
 - Woden town centre needs analysis;
 - Civic and Woden pools;
 - Development applications (DA) and dwelling approvals;
 - Canberra casino, and Convention Centre sites;

⁶ The City Renewal Authority (CRA) is a statutory Authority established under the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017 (CRASLA Act). The CRA is governed by an independent Board and Chief Executive Officer established under the CRASLA Act.

⁷ The Suburban Land Agency (SLA) is a statutory authority under the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017* (CRASLA Act). The SLA is governed by an independent Board established under the CRASLA Act with members appointed under section 48 of the CRASLA Act. See Suburban Land Agency [Annual Report 2024-25](#), p 9.

⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2025, pp 1–14.

- Missing Middle Housing Reform;
- Big Splash site;
- Construction sector productivity;
- Canberra City Farm;
- Land availability for housing targets;
- Inclusionary zoning and public housing;
- Community housing in priority projects;
- Thoroughbred Park;
- Loose-fill asbestos coordination;
- ACT Heritage Council advice and processing timeframes;
- Population projections;
- Private and publicly-funded building certifiers; and
- Urban growth boundary implementation.⁹

City and Government Services

2.5. Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for City and Government Services on 12 November 2025.

2.6. During the Minister's appearance, the following matters were raised:

- First Nation rangers and the Indigenous Rangers Program;
- Cultural advisers;
- Weed management;
- Environment Protection Authority (EPA) engagement programs;
- Lake Tuggeranong program;
- Gibraltar Falls re-opening;
- Rosenberg's monitors protection plans;
- Rabbit population control;
- Namadgi National Park plan of management 2010;
- Kosciuszko Huts;
- ACT Parks and Conservation park ranger employment;
- Banning of soft jaw traps; and

⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 15–52.

- Classification of dingoes as a native species.¹⁰

Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

2.7. Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water on 17 November 2025.

2.8. During the Minister's appearance the following matters were raised:

- Emissions reduction target;
- Transport emissions;
- Waste reduction and recycling initiatives;
- Healthy Waterways;
- Scope 3 emissions;
- Private stewardship payments;
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* obligations;
- Decommissioning of ACT natural gas network;
- Suburb Zero
- Community partners funding; and
- Climate change and energy accountability indicators.¹¹

Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs

2.9. Ms Yvette Berry MLA, appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs on 17 November 2025.

2.10. During the Minister's appearance the following matters were raised:

- Public housing waitlist;
- Accessing vacant housing stock;
- Support for Low-Income Earners and rental affordability;
- Affordable Housing fund and the build-to-rent projects;
- Secondary dwellings on rural leases;
- 30,000 homes target; and
- Housing Australia Future Fund.¹²

¹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 53–73.

¹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 74–103.

¹² *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 105–121.

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

- 2.11. The ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment,¹³ appeared before the Committee on 17 November 2025.
- 2.12. During the Commissioner’s appearance the following matters were raised:
- *Close to the edge* report
 - Offsets policies and legislation
 - Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon
 - Yarralumla Creek
 - Update to *State of the lakes and waterways in the ACT* report
 - Research on sustainable transport
 - Nature positive outcomes for the missing middle
 - Wood heaters
 - Climate targets
 - Green spaces on building rooftops and walls¹⁴

¹³ The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (the Commissioner) is appointed under the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993 (the Act) and is accountable to the Legislative Assembly through the Minister for the Environment. The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment is an independent statutory position, see Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, [Annual Report 2024-25](#), p 8.

¹⁴ Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, pp 123–134.

3. Key issues

City Renewal Agency and Suburban Land Agency

Public and affordable housing land release

- 3.1. In 2024-2025, the Suburban Land Agency (SLA) target for affordable, community and public housing land release was for 608 dwellings, comprising 136 affordable, 40 public and 432 community housing dwellings. The SLA told the Committee that it released 451 dwellings in the reporting period, a shortfall of 157 dwellings. When such shortfalls occur, the dwellings not released are carried over into the targets for the following financial year.¹⁵
- 3.2. According to the SLA, the shortfall was related to three sites:
- 52 affordable dwellings in Gungahlin
 - 40 public housing dwellings in Molonglo; and
 - 65 community dwellings in Molonglo.¹⁶
- 3.3. Officials stated that there are a range of reasons for such sites not going to market, including planning delays and site preparations.¹⁷
- 3.4. The SLA provided further details on the three sites. Specifically:
- The 52 affordable dwellings in Gungahlin were ‘deferred to allow additional time for Government to make sure a development of this nature is in the ideal spot’.
 - The Molonglo sites were part of a wider development in Molonglo Town Centre ‘to enable 700 new residential dwellings’, which was deferred due to the need to ‘work through multiple site complexities including preserving significant environmental values’.¹⁸

Committee comment

- 3.5. The Committee is cognisant that the dwellings not delivered in the 2024-2025 financial year are then included in future financial year targets. However, in light of the pressing need for more affordable housing, and the increasing waiting list for public housing, these delays have a real human impact that cannot be overlooked.
- 3.6. In this regard, the Committee sees value in developing plans to ensure that land release for affordable, community and public housing is able to meet targets in cases where slippage occurs.

¹⁵ Mr Nicholas Holt, Executive Group Manager, Suburban Land Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2025, p 2.

¹⁶ Mr Nicholas Holt, Executive Group Manager, Suburban Land Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2025, p 2.

¹⁷ Mr Nicholas Holt, Executive Group Manager and Adam Davey, CEO, Suburban Land Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2025, p 2.

¹⁸ Suburban Land Agency, *answer to QON 5*, 18 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), pp 1–2.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a mitigation plan where land release slippage occurs for public, community and affordable housing land releases due to planning, environmental and delivery capacity complexities.

- 3.7. The Committee also notes that this information has primarily become available due to the inquiry process and was not provided in the SLA Annual Report or elsewhere. In the Committee's view, transparency would be better served were this information to be made available in a more systematic, accessible way. Additionally, linking the information to the ACT Government's housing targets to 2030 would aid both scrutiny processes, and the housing sector more generally.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a consolidated public reporting framework for public, community and affordable housing that:

- Tracks annual targets against delivery, including planned land releases, homes brought to market, and homes deferred (with reasons) and rolled over; and
- Provides forward modelling to 2030 for the delivery of 5,000 homes, including land release timings, suburb locations and milestones for delivery.

Planning and Sustainable Development and Heritage

Big Splash and enforcement of regulatory regimes

- 3.8. The Committee questioned whether the ACT Government had received any approaches or had discussions about planning or development projects at the Big Splash site.¹⁹ Officials confirmed they had an early, discussion with Big Splash's planning advisers which they characterised as an early, informal meeting 'without any specific details', focused on the state of the site, understanding zoning constraints and seeking to understand the government's thoughts, requirements or ambitions for the site.²⁰
- 3.9. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development elaborated that the meeting in July 2025 was at the request of Purdon Planning and, rather than being site specific, was part of broader discussions that covered multiple projects and multiple sites.²¹ The Minister also noted that City and Environment Directorate officials 'regularly meet with proponents and

¹⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 26.

²⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 26.

²¹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QTON 7*, 12 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), p 2.

their advisors to clarify planning processes and identify the referral entities that should be involved in pre-application meetings.’²²

- 3.10. The Minister emphasised that the ACT Government had no intention of any ‘major plan amendment to change the zoning from PRZ2’ and that any proposal to do so would need to be assessed by the Territory Planning Authority against the planning and district strategies, and go through established statutory processes, including referral to a parliamentary committee and reversion back to him as Minister and then final decision by the Assembly.²³
- 3.11. The Committee considered the relevance of parliamentary agreement that the Big Splash site should be retained as a pool. The Minister explained that, regardless of previous Assembly decisions, any major plan amendment would still need to return to the Assembly under the Planning Act for members to make a final decision.²⁴
- 3.12. Finally, the Committee sought an update on the Government’s regulatory and enforcement actions in relation to the Big Splash site. Officials explained that the lease requires the site to be used as a pool, with associated recreation facilities and a family restaurant, and that it must be maintained to the satisfaction of the Territory.²⁵
- 3.13. Officials confirmed that there are ongoing regulatory concerns in two main areas: site maintenance, and site use, and that both matters are the subject of active regulatory investigations.²⁶ Officials indicated that directions issued to the lessee to carry out repairs and secure the site had yet to be complied with and that further enforcement action was under consideration.²⁷ The Committee was told that the Planning Act provides several enforcement options for non-compliance including, lease termination, a works direction order, or prosecution for contravention of a controlled activity order.²⁸
- 3.13. Officials noted that failure to use the site for its required purpose for more than 12 months means it may soon be classified as a ‘controlled activity’ under the Planning Act, enabling compliance action for non-use of the site. Officials confirmed they were currently considering this type of regulatory action that could require the lessee to use the site for the lease purposes.²⁹
- 3.14. The Minister for Planning confirmed that Access Canberra had not issued a controlled activity order under Schedule 4 of the Planning Act in relation to non-use of leased land for the purpose for which it was leased since the Act was passed in 2023. This was despite there being 928 complaints received in the 2024-2025 period, of which 752 (80%) related to lease compliance.³⁰

²² Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QTON 7*, 12 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), p 2.

²³ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 27.

²⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 27–28.

²⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 29.

²⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 28–29.

²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 28.

²⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 28.

²⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 29.

³⁰ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QON 21*, 12 November 2025, (received 25 November 2025), p 1.

- 3.15. The Minister explained that complaints may not lead to regulatory action if they are unsubstantiated, relate to duplicate reports, or can be resolved through engagement and education rather than formal enforcement. He noted that Access Canberra takes a risk-based approach that prioritises engagement, education and proportionate enforcement, focusing on the highest-risk or most harmful issues.³¹

Committee comment

- 3.16. The Committee notes the strong community attachment to Big Splash as a valued recreational asset, and the interest in its future. It considers it essential that the ACT Government provide clear, timely and transparent updates on regulatory actions, compliance decisions and any future planning considerations affecting the site. This will maintain public confidence and ensure decisions are well understood and consistent with statutory processes and the site's established recreational purpose.
- 3.17. The Committee notes the ACT Government's recent announcement in April 2026 that it will not pursue enforcement action against the operator at this time, citing repair works underway and the owner's commitment to open a 50-metre pool by 1 November 2026. By then, Big Splash will have been closed for nearly three years.
- 3.18. In light of previous unfulfilled assurances by the current owners, the Committee is not confident that the latest commitments will be met and is concerned by the Government's decision not to proceed with enforcement action. The Committee strongly recommends that the Government closely monitor progress at the site and take prompt enforcement action, where necessary to ensure full compliance with lease conditions.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continues to provide clear public updates of enforcement action taken in relation to the Big Splash site.

- 3.19. The Committee also notes that, despite a significant number of complaints regarding lease compliance, the use of available enforcement powers – particularly controlled activity orders – appears limited and lacking in transparency. The Committee considers that clear public guidance is needed to support consistent and effective application of these powers, particularly in cases of prolonged non-use of leased sites.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish guidance for sites not being used for their required purpose for more than 12 months, and other controlled activities, where powers exist but are not being used or are inconsistently applied.

³¹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QON 21*, 12 November 2025, (received 25 November 2025), p 2.

- 3.20. More broadly, the Committee considers that publishing annual, disaggregated data on complaints, investigations and enforcement outcomes across key regulatory regimes, including lease compliance, would enhance transparency, strengthen public confidence and enable better scrutiny of the application of regulatory powers.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish annual statistics for complaints, investigations and enforcement outcomes across key regimes (lease compliance, land management agreements, controlled activities), including reasons for non-enforcement.

Canberra City Farm

- 3.21. The Committee heard evidence related to Canberra City Farm’s occupation of Block 15, Section 38 in Fyshwick.³² The farm’s 10-year licence expired in 2025 and has been extended for a further one year, to October 2026. The ACT government was asked why the farm’s licence was only extended for a single year.³³
- 3.22. Officials advised that the extension provided short-term certainty while allowing time to determine future licensing arrangements through a ‘fair, open and transparent process’. They explained that an expression of interest (EOI) process is planned for early 2026 and will be accompanied by a stakeholder information session. Officials emphasised there are currently no proposals to rezone the site and that future use is expected to continue to align with the Canberra Local Food Strategy.³⁴
- 3.23. When asked about future licensing conditions, officials declined to speculate on whether the new licence would remain concessional, or be issued at a higher rate. They noted that the existing licence is over 10 years old and will require updating to ensure consistency with current licensing templates and legislative requirements. Officials explained that any revised licence will be developed following completion of the EOI process, with advice from the Government Solicitor, and would be advertised through Tenders ACT.³⁵
- 3.24. The Committee also heard that a ‘listening report’ has been prepared following a targeted consultation process and provided directly to the participants, including Canberra City Farm. Officials explained that although the report contained nothing sensitive, its distribution is a matter for the recipients.³⁶ In response to a question taken on notice, a de-identified Listening Report was prepared and made available to the Committee following the hearings.³⁷

³² *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 32–34.

³³ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 32.

³⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 32.

³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 33.

³⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 33.

³⁷ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *answer to QTON 9, Attachment A*, 12 November 2025 (received 21 November 2025), p 2.

- 3.25. Officials acknowledged that agricultural operations require long lead times and Canberra City Farm’s preference for at least six months’ notice of any licensing changes.³⁸ They advised that the EOI process is expected to conclude by June 2026, with timeframes for both the current licensee and any potential future licensee to be carefully managed, and adjusted if necessary, given the challenge of aligning this schedule with the October 2026 licence expiry.³⁹

Committee comment

- 3.26. The Committee recognises the need for certainty for Canberra City Farm and encourages the ACT Government to provide clear, timely updates as the EOI process progresses, ensuring sufficient notice of any licensing changes.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide an update to Canberra City Farm and, if suitable, publicly, in relation to the licence due to expire in October 2026.

Urban Growth Boundary

- 3.27. The Committee sought information on work underway in the City and Environment Directorate to establish an urban growth boundary (UGB), noting that the Government’s April 2026 commitment in the Assembly to establish an UGB was not mentioned in the Annual Report.⁴⁰
- 3.28. The Minister explained that work on an UGB will be progressed through several interconnected initiatives, including the newly released Statement of Planning Priorities, a refresh of the ACT Planning Strategy required under the Planning Act, and development of a Territory-wide landscape plan.⁴¹
- 3.29. The Committee heard that this work will be informed by further studies. The Minister explained that environmental studies, including in the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas are underway to ‘provide greater understanding of areas of environmental value and to help inform decisions of Government’.⁴²
- 3.30. The Minister also highlighted that the Government is adopting a regional approach rather than focusing solely on the ACT border. Officials noted the need to avoid ‘unsustainable development’ in surrounding New South Wales that could place pressure on ACT infrastructure, environmental assets, water security, transport networks and health services.

³⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 33–34.

³⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 33.

⁴⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 50–51.

⁴¹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 51.

⁴² Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QON 23*, 12 November 2025 (received 27 November 2025), p 1.

Therefore, engagement with neighbouring local governments and the NSW Government will also form part of the process.⁴³

- 3.31 The Committee sought greater clarity on the studies underpinning this work. Officials advised that some studies are publicly available, while others remain unpublished or ongoing, with further studies still to be identified.⁴⁴ Following the hearings the Minister provided a list of relevant studies relating to the western edge and eastern broadacre areas, including their status.⁴⁵
- 3.32. The Minister advised the Committee that half yearly statements on the urban growth boundary progress will begin with the first Assembly sittings in 2026.⁴⁶
- 3.33. The Committee also sought information on how the ACT Government is consulting Traditional Custodians and ACT First Nations communities about land management, planning and environmental matters.⁴⁷
- 3.34. The Committee asked whether the ACT Government had applied to participate in the Federal Indigenous Rangers program (IRP).⁴⁸ The Government confirmed it did not apply for funding, instead securing a Junior Rangers Grant with Birrigai School to support student pathways into Government and land management or tourism roles.⁴⁹
- 3.35. The Committee also heard that the Conserving Canberra initiative is still active and continuing effectively, with four Ngunnawal cultural advisers employed within CED integrating First Nations knowledge into conservation and land management.⁵⁰
- 3.36. Officials advised that the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee is currently 'paused' while a formal review is undertaken to assess how the committee might be reconstituted and strengthened, particularly in the context of the newly formed City and Environment Directorate. The review was reported to be progressing well, with a draft report expected in the next month to inform future decisions.⁵¹ In the interim, Ngunnawal input is being maintained through existing engagement mechanisms, including the Elected Body, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, registered Aboriginal organisations under the Heritage Act, and a dedicated traditional custodian engagement unit within the directorate.

⁴³ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 51.

⁴⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 51–52.

⁴⁵ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QTON 14*, 12 November 2025 (received 26 November 2025), pp 3–5.

⁴⁶ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *answer to QON 23*, 12 November 2025 (received 27 November 2025), p 2.

⁴⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 53–57.

⁴⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 53–54.

⁴⁹ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for City and Government Services, *answer to question taken on notice 15*, 12 November 2025, received 25 November 2025, p 2.

⁵⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 54–55.

⁵¹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp 55–56.

Recommendation 7

That the ACT Government consult with Traditional Custodians and ACT First Nations communities and organisations on key land decisions including regarding the establishment of an urban growth boundary by June 2027, cross-border development, Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas and report back to the Assembly by the second-last sitting day in September on this consultation.

Heritage compliance

- 3.37. The Committee examined processes relating to the ACT Heritage Council, including how applications and notifications under the Heritage Act are managed.
- 3.38. Evidence to the Committee indicated that there have been improvements in the timeliness of advice and processing by the ACT Heritage Council:
- I think what we have seen is a really significant improvement in the timeframes of response on behalf of the Heritage Council. A couple of years ago, it was down in the 60s and we have seen it climb into the 80s. Further investment by government in resourcing and, following a number of reviews in the past, some process changes in particular have absolutely lifted those target timeframes. They are very pleasing results, which are reported there in the annual report.⁵²
- 3.39. Further evidence highlighted that efforts have also been made to improve internal processes, including how different referrals are managed and risk assessed, and ‘working with the Territory Planning Authority in terms of referral processes as a referral entity and a number of mechanics, including attracting good people to ACT Heritage.’ Officials further clarified that this includes defining the roles and responsibilities of both ACT Heritage and the Heritage Council.⁵³
- 3.40. The Committee also inquired into works undertaken on a heritage-listed site without prior consultation with the ACT Heritage Council. In relation to Griffith Oval No. 1, it was confirmed in a response to a question on notice that ‘the white picket fence around Griffith Oval has been removed’ and that ‘the fence was removed by CED and without consultation of the ACT Heritage Council (the Council).’ The Minister further advised that responsibility for obtaining approvals rests with the relevant owner or property manager, and that ‘the responsible area within CED will review their internal processes to ensure that heritage, or any other statutory approvals, are obtained before works commencement.’⁵⁴
- 3.41. The Committee also heard that, following the removal, ACT Heritage requested further information regarding the works, and that ‘upon receipt of this information, formal

⁵² Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks Group, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 47.

⁵³ Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks Group, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 47.

⁵⁴ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Heritage, response to QON 13, 12 November 2025 (received 20 November 2025).

Heritage Council advice will be issued in relation to the matter and any action required to ensure that the significance of Griffith Oval No. 1 is retained.⁵⁵

Committee comment

- 3.42. While the Committee acknowledges that these improvements demonstrate progress in efficiency and internal coordination, gaps remain in approval and notification processes. The unauthorised removal of elements from a registered heritage place without consultation with the Heritage Council highlights weaknesses in internal approval mechanisms and a lack of clear, defined processes for notifying the Council, documenting changes, and confirming corrective actions. The Committee is of the view that more structured and enforceable procedures are required to ensure consistent compliance with heritage requirements.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government tighten internal approvals to prevent unauthorised works on heritage sites.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a defined process for notifying the Heritage Council, documenting changes, and confirming corrective actions and timelines when heritage breaches occur.

Town centres

- 3.43. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development told the Committee that development scenarios had been undertaken and completed for Belconnen, the Inner North and Inner South. The intent of these scenarios was to 'enable subsequent district wide engineering infrastructure capacity studies' and build on both the District Strategies and 'assumptions about future development sites and growth'.⁵⁶
- 3.44. According to the Minister, CED is also undertaking a district infrastructure capacity study for Belconnen, which will 'inform the implementation of the district strategy and any subsequent revisions'.⁵⁷
- 3.45. Similarly, SGS Economics and Consulting was engaged to undertake an audit of community, recreation and sport facility needs across the ACT except the Molonglo Valley, subject to a separate study, and East Canberra. This process incorporated two aspects:
- A Social Infrastructure Audit, which identified 'assets delivered by government, community and private providers, as well as future facilities with confirmed funding; and

⁵⁵ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Heritage, response to QON 13, 12 November 2025 (received 20 November 2025).

⁵⁶ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 24*, 20 November 2025 (received 26 November 2025), p 1.

⁵⁷ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 24*, 20 November 2025 (received 26 November 2025), p 1.

- A Needs and Gap Assessment, which sought to assess population growth and ‘identify potential opportunities for the provision of community, recreation and sports facilities to 2051.’⁵⁸

3.46. Furthermore, the Minister noted a number of studies underway, expected to be completed in mid-2026, on the demand for, and supply of, community facilities in Belconnen Town Centre. The Minister told the Committee that these technical studies ‘will be made available to the public as part of any future planning changes’ for the district.⁵⁹

Committee comment

3.47. Taken together, the Committee notes that this suite of studies could provide a useful guide to future development in some of Canberra’s key districts. In the Committee’s view, bringing this work together into a single, overarching document for each group and town centre to guide future investment would be an important step in shaping the development of Canberra.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a program of master plans for all town centres, followed by group centres, to guide both public and private sector investment.

Planning system

3.48. In its *Report of the Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023-24*, the Committee examined the need to update the 2018 ACT Planning Strategy, noting that it had not been updated since the establishment of the new planning system in 2023. The Committee recommended that it be updated in 2025.⁶⁰

3.49. In its response, the ACT Government noted the ‘the importance of maintaining a contemporary and responsive planning framework’ and the ‘strong foundation for guiding sustainable growth and development’ the Planning Strategy provides. According to the ACT Government, the *Planning Act 2023* provides for a review of the Planning Strategy ‘by or before 2028’, and the update process involves a considerable effort of data analysis, coordination and consultation. As such, consideration of the scope, timing and resources need for the statutory review was under consideration.⁶¹

3.50. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development told the Committee that the statutory review of the Planning Strategy can be linked to other Government

⁵⁸ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 26*, 20 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), pp 1–2.

⁵⁹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 16*, 20 November 2025 (received 27 November 2025), pp 1–2.

⁶⁰ Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services, *Report of the Inquiry into Annual and Financial Report 2023-24*, May 2025, p 13.

⁶¹ ACT Government, *Government Response: Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services Report 2 – Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023-24*, September 2025, p 6.

commitments, including developing a landscape plan, consideration of urban growth boundaries, and the identification of areas of environmental value.⁶²

- 3.51. Similarly, the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water noted that the Planning Strategy update includes consideration of cross-portfolio matters such as integrating transport, environment and planning strategy to include consideration of matters such as ‘multimodal transport networks’ and climate change.⁶³

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government update the 2018 ACT Planning Strategy to ensure it remains aligned with community needs, environmental priorities and infrastructure planning objectives.

- 3.52. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development told the Committee that the City and Environment Directorate is currently undertaking a ‘process evaluation, focusing on how the planning system is operating in practice’. This evaluation includes:

End-to-end process mapping of the planning and development system, which has highlighted opportunities to streamline tasks and improve coordination across teams.⁶⁴

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government release an end-to-end process map of the planning and development system, which highlights opportunities to streamline tasks and improve coordination across teams.

- 3.53. According to the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate’s 2024-25 Annual Report, the first-time failure rate for development application completeness checks is 81 per cent.⁶⁵
- 3.54. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development noted that these completeness checks offers the Territory Planning Authority the opportunity to request further information from applicants in order to accept development applications. He noted the availability of information on documentation is available on the Territory Planning Authority website, and that the DA Gateway Team is able to provide advice on the required documentation.⁶⁶
- 3.55. While the first-time failure rate for completeness checks had reduced by three per cent from the previous year, the Minister further noted that the Territory Planning Authority is ‘currently looking at the structure and content of information available to applicants’,

⁶² Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 51.

⁶³ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 79.

⁶⁴ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 31*, 20 November 2025 (received 2 December 2025), pp 1–2.

⁶⁵ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *2024-25 Annual Report*, October 2025, p 356.

⁶⁶ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 25*, 20 November 2025 (received 1 December 2025), pp 1–2.

including the ‘detail and formatting of information’ provided and ways to refine or reduce the minimum documentation requirements for development applications.⁶⁷

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reduce the high first-time failure rate for development application completeness checks by:

- Supporting applicants with clearer minimum documentation template;
- Publishing common reasons for failure; and
- Evaluating whether requirements can be simplified while maintaining planning integrity.

Housing Accord

- 3.56. Under the National Housing Accord, which ‘included an initial target to deliver one million new, well-located homes across Australia over five years from mid-2024’ which was later increased to 1.2 million new homes, the ACT’s portion amounted to 21,057 new dwellings.⁶⁸
- 3.57. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development told the Committee that this target, which equates to an average of 4,211 new dwellings per year, was not met in the first year of the Accord, with the ACT falling 102 dwellings short of its implied annual target. The Minister also noted that all jurisdictions are ‘behind on their targets’, and that ‘the ACT outperformed all other Australian jurisdictions in terms of new dwelling completions’.⁶⁹
- 3.58. In terms of meeting the Accord targets, the Minister highlighted the potential role of the missing middle housing reforms. Specifically, he noted that zoning reform offers ‘transit-oriented development opportunities for more well-located homes close to services, close to shops and close to transport hubs’.⁷⁰

Committee comment

- 3.59. The Committee notes the perceived intersection between increasing the ACT’s supply of housing, densification and the missing middle reforms. This intersection has the potential to increase housing stock, however it also raises a need to closely monitor the types of dwellings being constructed so as to ensure that these dwellings serve the needs of the community.
- 3.60. Additionally, the Committee commends the ACT Government and housing sector for its work to date in most closely meeting the targets implied by the Housing Accord. It is important that this momentum be retained. Public reporting on progress towards meeting

⁶⁷ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 25*, 20 November 2025 (received 1 December 2025), p 2.

⁶⁸ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QTON 10*, 12 November 2025 (received 21 November 2025), p 3.

⁶⁹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QTON 10*, 12 November 2025 (received 21 November 2025), p 3.

⁷⁰ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 36.

these targets, which includes details on the types of dwellings being constructed, will help to ensure that this momentum is continued and that it is meeting the needs of Canberrans.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish details on the delivery of dwellings under the Commonwealth Housing Accord by year, dwelling type and district, and the forecast for dwellings using the same categories.

Inclusionary zoning

- 3.61. The Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development told the Committee that the development of an inclusionary zoning policy for the ACT formed a part of his recent statement of planning priorities. According to the Minister, requirements and incentives supporting the delivery of more affordable housing on leased land, particularly in light of ‘future large precinct-scale developments coming forward’, presents an opportunity to help in meeting the 15 per cent target of land releases going to public, community and affordable housing.⁷¹
- 3.62. The Minister further stated that:
- Unless we have requirements in place through a zoning policy for the Territory Planning Authority to use in their decision-making and assessment of those applications, it will mean that there would be very little lever for the government to require a certain number of homes for that purpose. We would be relying on the lessee’s goodwill to provide those homes.⁷²
- 3.63. In relation to precinct-scale developments, the Minister noted a risk ‘that, unless it is required’ some of these new suburb-sized developments will not have affordable housing available. This sits at odds with the ACT Government’s view that every Canberra suburb should include public housing.⁷³
- 3.64. The Minister outlined a range of steps being taken to supplement to consideration of inclusionary zonings. These include ‘legislative and policy changes to potentially incentivise or require’ more affordable housing, the automatic classification of public housing at Territory Priority Projects in the *Planning Act 2023*, and zoning amendments to the Territory Plan ‘such as affordable housing density bonuses or requirements in precinct-scale developments’.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 37.

⁷² Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 37.

⁷³ Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p 37.

⁷⁴ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 15*, 12 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), pp 1–2.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government progress inclusionary zoning that explicitly includes public and community housing in precinct-scale land redevelopment and publish the intended mix of incentives and requirements.

City and Government Services

Waste and recycling

- 3.65. Recycling rates in the ACT have ‘largely plateaued’ in recent years.⁷⁵
- 3.66. The Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, advised that ‘legacy admissions’ such as ‘emissions from landfill’ will ‘increasingly become more significant’ into the future.⁷⁶ However, an expansion of the ACT’s food and garden organics (FOGO) processing capacity has been delayed by five years, from 2023 until 2028.⁷⁷

Committee comment

- 3.67. Organic waste that is sent to landfill continues to produce emissions for a further twenty years.⁷⁸ The Committee is concerned that the delay in increasing the ACT’s capacity to process FOGO material from 2023 to 2028 will lead to an increase in future emissions from landfill. In a climate crisis, the Committee recommends the ACT’s processing capacity should be increased before 2028.⁷⁹

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore partnerships with industry to increase Canberra’s food and garden organics (FOGO) processing capacity before 2028, noting delays to the ACT Government’s own FOGO processing facilities.

- 3.68. The City and Environment Directorate (CED) stated that the products that are recovered through the ACT’s new Material Recovery Facility ‘are based on the recoverability and commerciality of the items.’⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 80.

⁷⁶ Ms Suzanne Orr, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy, and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 75.

⁷⁷ Ms Jo Clay MLA, Chair, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 76.

⁷⁸ Ms Jo Clay MLA, Chair, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 76.

⁷⁹ Ms Jo Clay MLA, Chair, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 76.

⁸⁰ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for City and Government Services, Response to Question on Notice No. 37, 30 November 2026, p 1.

- 3.69. CED advised the Committee that ACT NoWaste engages in a range of public engagement activities to address community questions relating to recycling.⁸¹
- 3.70. However, it remains unclear exactly which products will be recycled at the ACT's new Material Recycling Facility.⁸²

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve transparency by stating what the Materials Recycling Facility will recycle and what it will not recycle.

- 3.71. Commercial and demolition waste is a major source of waste material in the ACT.⁸³ The CED described this type of waste as 'a huge stream of material that is now coming through our waste system.'⁸⁴
- 3.72. The amount of construction and demolition waste in the ACT has increased by 53 per cent since the last audit was conducted in 2022.⁸⁵ The CED advised that the increase may be partially a result of more accurate capturing of waste data under the new waste reporting system.⁸⁶
- 3.73. The ACT's Circular Economy Strategy discusses the adaptive reuse of buildings in order to limit construction and demolition waste.⁸⁷

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver effective measures to avoid and recycle construction and demolition waste currently transported interstate, and report annually on:

- ACT and interstate waste flows and available reduction levers
- Progress against a program of continuous improvement for construction and demolition waste recovery, including performance against targets

⁸¹ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for City and Government Services, Response to Question on Notice No. 37, 30 November 2026, pp 1–2.

⁸² See: Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for City and Government Services, Response to Question on Notice No. 37, 30 November 2026, p 1.

⁸³ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 80.

⁸⁴ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 80.

⁸⁵ Ms Jo Clay MLA, Chair, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 84.

⁸⁶ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 84.

⁸⁷ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 84.

Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

Water and energy policies and programs

Healthy Waterways program

- 3.74. Since 2021 the ACT Government has invested approximately \$30 million in the Healthy Waterways program.⁸⁸ The City and Environment Directorate (CED) has eight people working in its Healthy Waterways team.⁸⁹
- 3.75. The CED told the Committee that Healthy Waterways water quality assets that were part of Stage 2 of the program ‘were built in a priority order, with the aim of building as many assets as possible with the capital funding granted to the project.’⁹⁰ By late 2023, six projects had been built with enough funds remaining to build at least one additional project, and possibly two.⁹¹ However, it is unclear to the Committee how much funding was sought and how much funding was provided for healthy waterways and water catchment programs in the 2024-25 financial year.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report on how much funding was sought for healthy waterways and water catchment programs in 2024-25 versus how much funding was provided.

- 3.76. The Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment was asked about future proofing Yarralumla Creek and restoring it back to nature. Dr Maxine Cooper, advised that in 2022 they released a State of the Lakes and Waterways in the ACT report and that they are going to update it. Unfortunately, Yarralumla Creek was not included in the report due to a lack of accurate sampling data.⁹²

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government and the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment ensure that Yarralumla Creek is included in the next State of the Lakes and Waterways in the ACT report, and that Government respond to any recommendations.

⁸⁸ Mr Kieran Lawton, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2026, p 83.

⁸⁹ Mr Kieran Lawton, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2026, p 83.

⁹⁰ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Energy and Water, Response to Question Taken on Notice No. 23, 28 November 2025.

⁹¹ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Energy and Water, Response to Question Taken on Notice No. 23, 28 November 2025.

⁹² *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, pp 127–128.

Decommissioning of the gas network

- 3.77. The ACT's 2024-2030 integrated energy plan states that by 2030 no new connections to the fossil gas network will be occurring in most areas, specifically residential or commercial areas.⁹³ However, new gas connections will continue to be permitted in areas that are zoned for industrial use.⁹⁴
- 3.78. The ACT Government has committed to completely decommission the ACT's natural gas network by 2045.⁹⁵ The CED will continue to work with Evoenergy, the ACT's gas distribution authority, to plan for the transition leading up to 2045.⁹⁶ Technological and scientific improvements over the next two decades are likely to have an impact of that plan as it develops.⁹⁷

Committee comment

- 3.79. The Committee believes it would be beneficial if the ACT Government provided further detail and clarity to the community regarding the processes involved in decommissioning the ACT's gas network.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and publish a plan for decommissioning of the gas network, with the plan explicitly considering medium-term options for network disconnection, including advice for the phased shutdown required between 2030-2040, giving certainty to industry and consumers.

Nature-positive planning and climate adaptation

- 3.80. The Committee heard evidence from the Commissioner for Sustainability and Development regarding emerging expectations for environmental outcomes within urban development and planning reform.⁹⁸ In this context, the Commissioner noted that there is increasing public expectation for both development and stronger environmental protection, stating:

...we should be I would hope, asking for nature positive outcomes and environmental outcomes in that, as much as any of the economic... we have gone beyond the time of saying, minimise the environmental consequences, to now saying, how do we regenerate?⁹⁹

⁹³ Ms Fiona Wright, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 94.

⁹⁴ Ms Fiona Wright, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 94.

⁹⁵ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 93.

⁹⁶ Ms Fiona Wright, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 93–94.

⁹⁷ Ms Fiona Wright, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 94.

⁹⁸ Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, pp 129–134.

⁹⁹ Dr Maxime Cooper, Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, p 130.

3.81. The Commissioner expanded on nature-positive approaches by highlighting the importance of environmental design considerations in planning:

...for instance, the type of vegetation you plant. You know, it can be as simple as that. It could also be as simple as thinking about connectivity. Even sort of if you have got connectivity between blocks.¹⁰⁰

3.82. This theme was reinforced where the Commissioner emphasised the benefits of larger-scale, coordinated development in enabling more meaningful vegetation outcomes and improved urban design:

...if you are doing a development, which involves multiple blocks, there is more opportunities for meaningful vegetation than if you have the same blocks but each is being developed separately. So that sort of more bigger picture planning that allows things like big trees to be put back in which you would not necessarily have on a block with a townhouse complex on.¹⁰¹

3.83. The importance of water-sensitive design was also highlighted during the hearing and is further reflected in the Commissioner for Sustainability and Development Annual Report 2024-25.¹⁰² In Recommendation 32 of the Report, the Commissioner identified the need to develop integrated water cycle management (as well as water-sensitive urban design) across new and existing urban areas, capturing and using stormwater and creating biodiversity habitat.¹⁰³

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government incorporate both nature-positive and climate adaptive outcomes in upcoming planning reforms, including tree retention and maintenance, habitat connectivity and water-sensitive use design.

ACT Offsets policy

3.84. The Committee sought clarification on the status of the ACT environmental offsets policy, noting that it has been under consideration for an extended period and remains subject to ongoing review.

3.85. The Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water advised that work on the offsets policy is occurring within the broader context of Nature Conservation Strategy reform, with further policy development expected to align with that broader framework:

The first step...is certainly the broader reform in the Nature Conservation Strategy and where we land with that. I think it is fair to say we will continue to inform where we go with more specific tranches of work that would sit within that broader one.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Dr Maxime Cooper, Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, p 130.

¹⁰¹ Mrs Miranda Gardner, Director, Complaints and Investigations, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, p 130.

¹⁰² Mr Sean Grimes, Director, Sustainability, Environment Assessments and Reporting, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, p 131.

¹⁰³ Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, *Annual Report 2024-25*, p 20.

¹⁰⁴ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 92.

3.86. Officials confirmed that there is active work underway on offsets policy, including governance and decision-making arrangements. They advised that reforms have been made to strengthen offsets processes and whole-of-government coordination, as well as a ‘a detailed review of the operations and arrangements within the offsets team...how best we can service them, and the outlook moving forward.’¹⁰⁵

3.87. The Committee also heard that a broader review of the offsets policy is being considered, with alignment to Commonwealth environmental law identified as a relevant factor in future reform directions:

We are reviewing options to progress a refresh of the offsets policy...seeing where the commonwealth goes under their environmental legislation... is a useful signal to how the ACT might then want to align its future offsets policy.¹⁰⁶

3.88. The timing and direction of ACT offsets reform remains dependent, in part, on developments at the Commonwealth level. In relation to these obligations, officials advised that there are ongoing challenges in meeting offset commitments, including invasive species, natural disasters and climate change impacts. The Minister also noted that climate change is affecting the effectiveness of existing offset arrangements.¹⁰⁷

3.89. The Committee also heard from the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment regarding the progression of recommendations, including those relating to offsets policy. The Commissioner advised that their office reports on agency actions in its annual report, but that they had ‘not even got to that part of the process yet’, noting that it proceeds ‘until they respond...if in fact they will.’ Further consideration and tracking of offsets-related recommendations remains contingent on government response processes.¹⁰⁸

3.90. The Committee also sought clarification on whether rural properties may be used for environmental offset purposes, particularly where there is an active rural lease. Officials advised that responsibility for this matter rests with the Territory Planning Authority and did not provide a definitive position on the policy settings or eligibility of rural land within the offsets framework:

I would defer that question to the Territory Planning Authority. That is their area. There are a number of areas where offset land has overlaid with rural lessees, but I think it is more appropriate that the Territory Planning Authority is the responsible entity to provide advice on that one.¹⁰⁹

3.91. Therefore, while rural land may intersect with offset arrangements in practice, its formal inclusion within the policy framework remains unclear.

¹⁰⁵ Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 92.

¹⁰⁶ Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 92.

¹⁰⁷ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 93.

¹⁰⁸ Dr Maxime Cooper, Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2025, pp 125–126.

¹⁰⁹ Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 93.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a clear update on the review of the ACT environmental offsets policy including whether the ACT is meeting its obligations to the Commonwealth regarding environmental offsets and whether rural properties will be included in the environmental offsets policy.

Transport emissions

3.92. The Committee examined the role of transport emissions, noting that transport accounts for a significant proportion of the ACT's overall emissions, with a large share attributable to private vehicle use.¹¹⁰

3.93. In response to questions about encouraging mode shift, officials stated:

Part of the reorganisation of the directorates—to bring the planning directorate, the transport directorate and the municipal services directorate together— was to do exactly that: make sure that, as we contemplate new developments, they are co-located with public-orientated transport to incentivise the use of public transport. We will pursue other opportunities such as that as part of the new directorate. Some of the changes are already starting to be applied. As we know, there is further work happening with the light rail corridor to incentivise additional patronage on the light rail corridor. We are always looking at our bus network to see how it can be better— how it can better respond to the needs of the community. With all of those elements, we are looking at how we can best also reduce emissions by incentivising through a better public transport system.¹¹¹

3.94. The Minister also noted that there has been a focus on shifting people to non-polluting vehicles, including EVs, and that this forms part of broader collaboration across the transport portfolio, including ongoing work with Transport Canberra to reduce emissions through a range of measures. The Minister further stated:

...reducing transport emissions is important from the portfolio's perspective, as is wanting to reduce our overall emissions. As I said, it is one that officials will continue to work with Transport Canberra on, pressing the point that this is an area we need to reduce. It is not just about mode shift; there are other parts as well. But mode shift is increasingly an area we can push into a bit more.¹¹²

3.95. This focus on zero-emissions vehicles is also reflected in a responses to a question on notice, which identified key policy frameworks including the Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra, outlining the approach to a zero-emissions bus fleet by 2040, and

¹¹⁰ Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 74–104.

¹¹¹ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 78.

¹¹² Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 79.

the ACT's Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy, outlining the transition of the government's passenger fleet to zero-emissions vehicles.¹¹³

- 3.96. However, when asked whether a specific report had been commissioned by Transport Canberra to assess how the transport network could drive mode shift, the Minister responded:

I have not specifically asked for a report. I would not necessarily focus on a report, because I think these conversations would still be happening and these topics would still be canvassed, even if they are not presented in a single document.¹¹⁴

- 3.97. The Committee notes that while a range of initiatives are underway to reduce transport emissions and support mode shift, these are being progressed across multiple areas of government rather than through a single integrated delivery plan with defined timelines and consolidated reporting.

Recommendation 24

Acknowledging that ground transport is the greatest contributor to ACT's emissions, the Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a plan to drive mode shift and create an integrated delivery plan to improve public transport, drive higher patronage, and reduce transport emissions, and that the area of Government responsible for delivering this plan should set timelines, resolve delivery challenges, and provide annual progress reports.

Climate Change Strategy

- 3.98. The Committee examined the development of the next Climate Change Strategy, noting that the current strategy is concluding and that consultation on the new framework has commenced.¹¹⁵
- 3.99. In a response to a question on notice, the Minister noted that ACT Government continues to be committed to zero emissions from government operations by 2040 and that the new ACT Climate Change Strategy will reiterate this commitment.¹¹⁶
- 3.100. As discussed above, the Committee heard that transport emissions reduction is a central focus of the new Climate Change Strategy, with officials noting that 'transport is obviously one of the main areas of interest in how we further reduce emissions, given it is such a large part of our emissions trajectory going forward.' The Committee was informed that this includes a range of measures such as supporting the uptake of low-emissions vehicles,

¹¹³ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, response to QON 56, 17 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), pp 1–2.

¹¹⁴ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 79.

¹¹⁵ Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 74–104.

¹¹⁶ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, response to QON 56, 17 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025), pp 1–2.

increasing active travel, electrifying public transport, and integrating transport-oriented development within the planning system.¹¹⁷

- 3.101. In relation to legacy emissions, the Committee raised concerns around the lack of any new Government policy to divert or organise waste from landfill. The Minister advised that ‘we will continue to look at how we can reduce our future emissions and current emissions,’ but the ‘approach needed for abatement of legacy emissions is a bit different.’¹¹⁸
- 3.102. In terms of current waste policy, officials advised that recycling and recovery rates have plateaued at around 70 per cent, below the previous target of close to 90 per cent, with particular challenges emerging in commercial and demolition waste streams. Officials noted:

Our biggest areas of concern at the moment are in commercial and demolition waste, which is a huge stream of material that is now coming through our waste system. The other thing I would note is that, in the original waste strategy, we had proposed the opportunity to use energy from waste as the final element of the recovery process, which is to capture the residual waste that is not fit for recycling. That is not a position that we are pursuing. That is not a government-supported position, to generate energy from waste.¹¹⁹

- 3.103. The Committee also heard that construction and demolition waste to landfill has increased significantly since the 2022 audit by 53 per cent. Officials advised that improved data collection may partly explain this increase, stating that ‘we are now capturing data that we otherwise may have missed before’ and that ‘we are getting a much more accurate picture as to what construction and demolition material is actually flowing through.’ In relation to policy responses, officials indicated that the primary mechanism is the Circular Economy Strategy, which ‘talks to adaptive reuse of buildings in which to limit construction and demolition waste, rather than seeking to recover it.’¹²⁰
- 3.104. The Committee also notes that, in response to a question on notice, the Minister advised that initial scoping work is underway on potential product stewardship legislation aimed at reducing problematic waste streams, including items such as batteries and solar panels, although the scope, approach and timing of any such measures remain subject to future government decision-making.¹²¹
- 3.105. The Committee also examined Scope 3 emissions tracking and reduction. Officials advised that work is underway focusing on government operations and supply chains:

The work we have been doing with respect to scope 3 emissions has been focused on the government’s own, and supply chains. We have done a study; we have had a report come in with some advice on opportunities for how we can reduce scope 3 emissions

¹¹⁷ Ms Fiona Wright, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 80.

¹¹⁸ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 76–77.

¹¹⁹ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 80.

¹²⁰ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 84.

¹²¹ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, response to QON 41, 17 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025), p 1.

through the government's own operations, supporting industry and providing leadership. We are digesting that report. We have spoken further to other agencies about how we might embed some of those recommendations and practices into their operations. We will complete those discussions and provide some advice to the minister about the next steps. That is also forming part of the work on the development of the new climate change strategy. We are incorporating that and doing that together.¹²²

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publicly release all Scope 3 emissions analysis work and expand and update the analysis to cover the entire ACT economy, in consultation with industry and the community.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the next climate change strategy has the ambition and funding to meet legislated climate targets and deals with key areas in climate policy including climate adaptation, waste (including food and organic waste), transport (including mode shift), and Scope 3 emissions tracking and reduction.

- 3.106. Further to updates on strategies, the Committee inquired into the Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy, including whether a new strategy or updated action plan would be developed. Officials advised that advice has been prepared for the Minister and 'is under consideration', and that 'that matter will be considered by the government very soon.'¹²³
- 3.107. The Minister noted the complexity in determining the future approach, including whether to develop a new standalone strategy or embed actions within existing processes, stating that there is a question about 'what further work would be needed, as opposed to what work we needed to do to embed our practices within our business as usual.' The Minister also noted that there is 'national work that we align with on this, as well,' raising the question as to whether 'we would necessarily need to do our own work or whether we would be best placed to be in alignment.'¹²⁴
- 3.108. In relation to reporting on the current strategy, the Minister confirmed that decisions about providing a final update to the Assembly remain unresolved, stating: 'Those decisions are all part of the consideration that is going on.'¹²⁵

¹²² Ms Bethel Sendaba, Executive Branch Manager, Climate Change and Energy Policy, CED, *Committee Hansard*, pp 88–89.

¹²³ Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks, CED, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 89.

¹²⁴ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 89.

¹²⁵ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 90.

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a final report updating the Assembly on progress under the bushfire smoke and air quality strategy and advise if a new bushfire smoke and air quality strategy is required and if so, when it will be delivered.

- 3.109. Throughout the public hearing with the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, the Committee heard about how responsibilities for climate action are managed and coordinated across directorates. The Committee observes that, while coordination is occurring, particularly in areas such as transport emissions, this work often relies on collaboration between specific directorates rather than a formalised whole-of-government mechanism.
- 3.110. Alongside governance and coordination arrangements, the Committee also examined reporting arrangements for emissions reduction across ACT Government directorates. In response to a question on notice, the Minister advised that Section B15 of the Annual Report Directions sets out the required format for emissions reporting, including year-on-year emissions data, but that ‘reporting of additional information and relevant achievements beyond this table may vary between Directorates.’ The Minister also noted that, under the Zero Emissions Government Framework, ‘Directorates prepare internal annual emission reduction plan updates on progress against the interim target,’ while whole-of-government progress is reported through the Minister’s Annual Report under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*.¹²⁶

Committee Comment

- 3.111. The Committee considers that a clearly defined, cross-directorate governance mechanism is required to ensure coordinated delivery of climate action, consistent oversight, and clear accountability across agencies with responsibility for climate, transport, planning, environmental protection and treasury.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a cross-directorate governance mechanism to drive climate action across the agencies with responsibility for climate, transport, planning, environmental protection and treasury.

¹²⁶ Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, response to QON 55, 17 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025).

Homes Homelessness and New Suburbs

Public and Affordable Housing

- 3.112. In 2024-2025, the public housing waitlist registered a steady increase. In November 2024, it was reported as comprising 2,975 households, increasing to 3,402 households by the end of the annual reporting period in June 2025.¹²⁷ By the end of March 2026, 3,551 approved applicants were on the public housing waiting list, with those requiring non-priority standing housing facing a wait of just over five years.¹²⁸
- 3.113. The Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs noted that the growth of public housing waiting lists is a national phenomenon, being driven by a range of crises, and that ‘there is no doubt that everybody across the country is playing catch-up’.¹²⁹
- 3.114. Nonetheless, the Minister told the Committee that the ACT is ‘in a unique position’ due to ‘partnerships with a range of different organisations, including the federal government’. These partnerships, particularly the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF), are ‘providing opportunities to build even more affordable homes and public housing’.¹³⁰
- 3.115. According to the Minister, even with these partnerships in place, there have still been delays in delivering the required housing. In addition to delays in HAFF funding, the Minister highlighted construction workforce, the supply of materials, ‘the long tail of COVID’, and weather as factors influencing delays.¹³¹
- 3.116. The Minister noted that construction times had reduced and that ‘house builds are occurring more quickly’. Despite this, the waiting list has continued to increase because the ‘number of people who are applying for public homes is increasing’ both ‘across the country and here in the ACT’.¹³²

Committee comment

- 3.117. The Committee notes that despite public housing being constructed at a faster rate, the waiting list for public housing has continued to grow. Anyone applying for public housing now can expect to wait until after the ACT Government goal to deliver an additional 5,000 public, community and affordable homes by 2030.
- 3.118. As it stands now, some of the 3,551 households on the waiting list are clearly not going to be served by the ACT Government’s current goals and plans for the construction and

¹²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 105.

¹²⁸ ACT Government website, *Waiting lists for public housing*, <https://www.act.gov.au/housing-planning-and-property/public-housing/waiting-lists-for-public-housing>, accessed 5 May 2026.

¹²⁹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 105.

¹³⁰ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 105.

¹³¹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, pp 105–106.

¹³² Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2025, p 106.

acquisition of new public homes. This is likely to worsen if current application increase rates continue at their current pace.

- 3.119. As a result, the Committee sees value in more detailed public reporting on the reasons behind the public housing waiting list, and steps being taken to bring the number of households on the waiting list down. This reporting can help to both inform effective legislative oversight of executive government action in this area, as well as better inform providers of affordable and community housing of their role in filling the shortfall of housing left by public housing growth.

Recommendation 29

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Legislative Assembly with a report by the end of the first sitting week of September 2026 detailing:

- Reasons why the public housing waitlist has continued to grow
- Actions the ACT Government is taking to eliminate the public housing waitlist, including through acquiring new public housing and the construction program, to deliver over 1,000 new public housing dwellings by 2030; and
- Annual targets the ACT Government has set for achieving the acquisition and construction of 1,000 new public housing dwellings by 2030.

- 3.120. Similarly, given the increasing level of housing stress demonstrated by the growing public housing waiting list, the Committee notes that any delays in acquiring additional public housing dwellings carries serious consequences for the households subject to the five year wait time.
- 3.121. As such, it is vital both that the targets for growing public housing stock be met, and that the plans to grow public housing stock be as transparent as possible. In this way, public understanding of the challenges faced in growing the number of dwellings available for public housing can help to better inform ACT residents of the success or otherwise of the program to address the housing crisis as it affects the ACT's most vulnerable residents.

Recommendation 30

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government should meet its targets for newly acquired and built public housing and should clearly report against any shortfall in annual reports, including setting out clear reasons for the shortfall.

- 3.122. Noting the delays in availability of HAFF funding, the Committee sees value in developing an approach whereby affordable housing projects are ready to commence construction as soon as tranches of HAFF funding are available.

Recommendation 31

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve coordination with the Commonwealth Government’s Housing Australia Future Fund by having projects with approved development applications ready to apply when funding rounds are opened.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The Committee would like to thank the Ministers, statutory officers and directorate staff who participated in this inquiry.
- 4.2. The Committee makes 31 recommendations.

Jo Clay MLA

Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning

11 May 2026

Appendix A: Witnesses

Monday, 10 November 2025

City Renewal Authority

- **Mr Craig Gillman**, Chief Executive Officer
- **Ms Lucy Wilson**, Executive General Manager, Urbanisation and Renewal

Suburban Land Agency

- **Mr Adam Davey**, Chief Executive Officer
- **Mr Joey Lee**, Executive Group Manager, Place Delivery
- **Mr Tom Gordon**, Executive Group Manager
- **Mr Nicholas Holt**, Mr Nicholas, Executive Group Manager, Thriving Communities Group

Wednesday, 12 November 2025

Mr Chris Steel MLA, Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport City and Environment Directorate

Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

- **Mr Dave Peffer**, Director-General
- **Mr Nick Lhuede**, Executive Branch Manager, Construction and Planning Regulation, Access Canberra
- **Mr Bren Burkevics**, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks Group,
- **Mr Ben Green**, Executive Group Manager, Planning and Urban Policy
- **Mr George Cilliers**, Executive Group Manager, Statutory Planning, and Chief Planner
- **Mr James Bennett**, Executive Branch Manager, Building, Design and Projects Branch
- **Mr Sam Engele**, Deputy Director-General, Planning and Sustainable Development
- **Ms Sanzida Akhter**, Acting Executive Group Manager, Development and Implementation
- **Dr Mary Clare Swete Kelly**, Senior Director, ACT Heritage

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy

City and Environment Directorate

- **Mr Dave Peffer**, Director-General
- **Mr Bren Burkevics**, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks Group
- **Ms Michaela Watts**, Acting Executive Branch Manager, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

- **Mr Matthew Kamarul**, Executive Branch Manager, Environment, Land and Technical Regulations
- **Ms Melissa Tetley**, Chief Finance Officer

Monday, 17 November 2025

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans

City and Environment Directorate

- **Mr Sam Engele**, Deputy Director-General
- **Mr Bruce Fitzgerald**, Deputy Director-General
- **Ms Fiona Wright**, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water
- **Mr Bren Burkevics**, Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks
- **Mr Kieran Lawton**, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change Energy and Water
- **Ms Ros Malouf**, Executive Branch Manager, Climate Change and Energy Programs
- **Ms Bethel Sendaba**, Executive Branch Manager, Climate Change and Energy Policy

Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation

Health and Community Services Directorate

- **Ms Anne Maree Sabellico**, Acting Deputy Director-General, Community Services
- **Ms Penny Shields**, Acting Executive Group Manager, Housing Assistance

Tuesday, 18 November 2025

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

- **Dr Maxine Cooper**, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
- **Mrs Miranda Gardner**, Director, Complaints and Investigations
- **Mr Sean Grimes**, Director, Sustainability, Environmental Assessments and Reporting

Appendix B: Questions on notice and Questions taken on notice

Questions on Notice

No.	Asked Date	Addressed To Minister	Subject	Date Answer Received
1	13/11/2025	Suburban Land Agency	Build-To-Rent – Turner	25/11/2025
2	13/11/2025	Suburban Land Agency	Build-To-Rent – Gungahlin	25/11/2025
3	13/11/2025	Chief Minister (Redirection)	Masterplan for section 72 Dickson	28/11/2025
4	13/11/2025	Suburban Land Agency	Housing in North Wright	25/11/2025
5	13/11/2025	Suburban Land Agency	Affordable, community and public housing targets	25/11/2025
6	14/11/2025	Chief Minister (CRA)	Dickson Upgrades	25/11/2025
7	14/11/2025	Chief Minister (CRA)	Dickson Shops Working Group	25/11/2025
8	14/11/2025	Chief Minister (CRA)	Acton Waterfront Development	25/11/2025
9	14/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Air Pollution	27/11/2025
10	14/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Murrumbidgee Weeding	15/12/2025
11	18/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Soft Jaw traps	27/11/2025
12	18/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Conserving Canberra initiative	27/11/2025
13	14/11/2025	Minister for Heritage	Griffith Oval Heritage	2/12/2025
14	17/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Erindale Group Centre	27/11/2025
15	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and	Inclusionary Zoning	26/11/2025

No.	Asked Date	Addressed To Minister	Subject	Date Answer Received
		Sustainable Development		
16	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Studies to determine suitability of land for development	28/11/2025
17	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Sale of land to Housing ACT	26/11/2025
18	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Environment and Planning Forum	2/12/2025
19	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Western Edge	27/11/2025
20	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Shop-top housing	27/11/2025
21	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Crown lease compliance	26/11/2025
22	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Sale of land to Woolworths at Hawker shops	Not yet received
23	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Urban Growth Boundary	27/11/2025
24	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Future development scenarios	26/11/2025
25	18/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Completeness checks for Development Applications	1/12/2025
26	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	SGS Economics Audit	26/11/2025

No.	Asked Date	Addressed To Minister	Subject	Date Answer Received
27	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Offsets	26/11/2025
28	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Land Management Agreements	1/12/2025
29	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	National Capital Design Review Panel	26/11/2025
30	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	ACT Sustainable Building Pathways	26/11/2025
31	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Planning system Evaluation Framework	2/12/2025
32	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Community Engagement	28/11/2025
33	19/11/2025	Treasurer (Redirected)	Operation of Lease Variation Charge	20/01/2026
34	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	ACT Sustainable Building Pathways	26/11/2025
35	19/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Lease Variation Charge Review	26/11/2025
36	19/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Goodies Junction	27/11/2025
37	19/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Community Consultation (Materials Recycling Facility)	1/12/2025
38	19/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Bulky Waste Collection	1/12/2025
39	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change,	Threatened Species - EHP	1/12/2025

No.	Asked Date	Addressed To Minister	Subject	Date Answer Received
		Environment, Energy and Water		
40	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	First Nations environment engagement	11/12/2025
41	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	TCCS report p.24 – Waste Legislation	2/12/2025
42	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Nature Repair Market	8/12/2025
43	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Ecosystem Condition	1/12/2025
44	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Wombat management	3/12/2025
45	17/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Climate change policy	1/12/2025
46	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	H5N1	5/12/2025
47	21/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Tuggeranong Creek	1/12/2025
48	23/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services (Redirected)	Yarralumla Nursery plant support for community environmental groups	15/12/2025
49	23/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Environment Protection policy	4/12/2025
50	23/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Net zero target	1/12/2025

No.	Asked Date	Addressed To Minister	Subject	Date Answer Received
51	22/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Gas disconnection modelling vs. actual numbers	2/12/2025
52	21/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Environmental Conservation – Wombats	2/12/2025
53	21/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Polyphagous shot-hole borer	28/11/2025
54	22/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Zero Emissions Vehicles – global factors	28/11/2025
55	22/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Reporting on ACTPS entities targets for emissions reduction	2/12/2025
56	22/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Zero Emissions Government Framework for 2025-26	1/12/2025
57	24/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Construction and Demolition Waste	3/12/2025
58	24/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Coombs Peninsula	4/12/2025
59	21/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Close to the Edge report response	3/12/2025
60	21/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Callum Brae	2/12/2025
61	24/11/2025	Attorney-General (Redirected)	Strata commissions	16/12/2025
62	18/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Release of land for affordable, community and public housing	5/12/2025

No.	Asked Date	Addressed To Minister	Subject	Date Answer Received
63	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Social housing	5/12/2025
64	23/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Homelessness crisis services	5/12/2025
65	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Services and Needs	5/12/2025
66	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Community cohesion program	5/12/2025
67	18/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	30 by 30 Programs	8/12/2025

Questions Taken on Notice

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
1	10/11/2025	Suburban Land Agency	Land sales - Accessible housing	Not yet received
2	10/11/2025	Suburban Land Agency	Land sales - Community-zoned land in Whitlam	Not yet received
3	10/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development (Redirected)	Molonglo Town Centre and Community needs assessment	26/11/2025
4	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Land Management Agreements compliance	26/11/2025
5	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Canberra Casino site	27/11/2025

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
6	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Convention Centre site (National Capital Design Review Panel)	Question withdrawn
7	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Big Splash Development	26/11/2025
8	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Lease enforcement actions and timelines	24/11/2025
9	12/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (Redirected)	Canberra City Farm listening report	24/11/2025
10	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	National housing target data	24/11/2025
11	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Territory Plan amendments	24/11/2025
12	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Mr Fluffy class action advice	24/11/2025
13	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Population projection methodology	26/11/2025
14	12/11/2025	Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development	Urban edge studies	26/11/2025
15	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Federal funding for Indigenous rangers	25/11/2025
16	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Indigenous rangers employment trends	1/12/2025

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
17	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Cultural advisor positions funding	25/11/2025
18	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Namadgi National Park plan timelines	25/11/2025
19	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Stromlo to Cotter track tourism	25/11/2025
20	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Capital injection drawdown delays	1/12/2025
21	12/11/2025	Minister for City and Government Services	Soft jaw traps data	25/11/2025
22	17/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Leaf litter bags	27/11/2025
23	17/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Tuggeranong Creek naturalisation	28/11/2025
24	17/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	UTS work on stewardship barriers	27/11/2025
25	17/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Commercial gas connections	28/11/2025
26	17/11/2025	Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water	Unsuccessful electrification funding bids	1/12/2025

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
27	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Public housing pipeline	28/11/2025
28	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Proportion of housing owned by government	28/11/2025
29	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Housing targets - Governance group terms of reference	Not yet received
30	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	Land release target reporting to Cabinet	5/12/2025
31	17/11/2025	Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs	CSIRO Ginninderra site negotiations	5/12/2025

Appendix C: Gender distribution of witnesses

Beginning in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Committees are collecting information on the gender of witnesses. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.

Gender indication	Total
Female	15
Male	21
Non-binary	N/A
Gender neutral	N/A
No data	N/A