

2016

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

REPORT TO THE ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

THE FIRST 12 MONTHS OF OPERATION OF ACCESS CANBERRA

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Report to the ACT Legislative Assembly

The first 12 months of Operation of

Access Canberra

Access Canberra was established on 16 December 2014 to better support and connect ACT Government services with the community and with business. Access Canberra aims to provide a “no wrong door” approach to its services and to make it easier for businesses, community groups and individuals to get their business done in the ACT. Access Canberra aims to achieve this while ensuring the community safety provided by regulations and licences is preserved.

Access Canberra brought together 7 existing agencies; Canberra Connect; Office of Regulatory Services; Environment Protection Agency; Construction and Client Services; Health Protection Services (food services); Gambling and Racing; and Public Unleased Land Permits. Each agency came with a unique range of functions, processes and support structures.

During 2015 the Select Committee on Estimates recommended that Access Canberra report to the Assembly on progress.

The first 12 months of operation

Access Canberra is at the forefront of the government’s program of regulatory reform and drives red tape reduction. Bringing together shopfronts, call handling, online services and regulatory functions is a significant shift in the way services are delivered to the people of Canberra.

Establishing Access Canberra has provided a great opportunity to trial new service delivery models and a “no wrong door” approach to help make it as easy as possible for Canberrans to interact with government.

Our Vision

Access Canberra will be a leader in the provision of customer and regulatory services and will contribute to an accessible government that fosters economic growth and a safe, sustainable, vibrant community.

Innovation

Early in the life of the organisation Access Canberra began introducing ways to lessen complexity and reduce costs for people and businesses interacting with government.

Initiatives introduced during the first year have included streamlining approval processes for liquor permits for pop-up bars and other low risk events, introducing joint licensing and compliance

inspections and moving more services on line. Other initiatives have included the establishment of the first Access Canberra service centre at Gungahlin and the founding of the Events Approval Team.

Gungahlin Service Centre

The first Access Canberra Service Centre was opened in Gungahlin in May 2015 and has been a great success with customers rating their satisfaction with the service at 97.6%. The centre features touch screen terminals to quickly complete a range of transactions online. The centre brings together a large number of services that were previously provided at separate locations (e.g. births, deaths and marriages transactions), reducing the number of trips people need to multiple locations to get their business done.

Tuggeranong Shopfront has been remodelled and will offer more services. Other remodelled service centres will be rolled out across Canberra during 2016, using the lessons from the Gungahlin Service Centre.

Events Approvals

The introduction of the Access Canberra events approval team has meant that organisers are getting help with gaining the approvals they need to get their event up and running. This team assisted with 320 events over the peak event season from 1 September 2015 to 29 March 2016. Some examples of the events were the Design Canberra Festival and Christmas in the City. Each of these 320 events adds to the life and colour of the city and attract both locals and people from interstate and overseas. Access Canberra has successfully reduced the complexity of getting an event up and running.

Engagement with Customers

In 2015 we achieved



Community awareness and satisfaction levels

Access Canberra undertook a customer satisfaction survey between February and March 2016. 602 individuals and 346 businesses were surveyed. The results revealed that following a full year of operation of the new organisation:

- 51% of survey respondents were aware of Access Canberra (up from 20% in 2015);
- 87% of customers are happy with our customer service (steady with 2015 result); and
- 91% of people said it is easy to do business with Access Canberra. This was a 6% improvement from 2015, indicating that Access Canberra is making it easier to do business with government.

Business and Industry

Access Canberra seeks regular feedback from external parties. Industry feedback indicates that Access Canberra is regulating and serving well. Industry has also indicated that the amount of

change has been just right and has delivered benefits to their businesses such as reduced time dealing with government.

Access Canberra continues to be proactive in supporting business growth and development. To make things easier for businesses Access Canberra is developing simple, streamlined information for businesses about compliance, recognising that small business operators in the Territory are time restricted.

Access Canberra is reducing the cost of doing business in the ACT through:

- streamlining approval processes;
- simplifying regulation and reducing duplication of processes wherever possible; and
- implementing three years licensing for a range of sectors such as security guards and agents.

When measuring these innovations in 2015 Access Canberra found that 96% of the 78,000 businesses and individuals inspected were compliant with the law. These compliance rates are a key indicator of keeping the community safe and providing a level playing field for business.

Service Delivery

Progress continues on moving more services online, so that businesses can transact with government anytime, anywhere at their convenience. Access Canberra is simplifying forms and making them more accessible, and allowing forms to be completed and submitted online. Examples include payroll tax forms, and outdoor cafe permits.

Service delivery initiatives over the last year focused on:

- more accessible customer entry points including call handling and complaints processes as well as a service charter;
- administration and regulation including coordinated approval of licences, permits and applications and harmonised compliance enforcement approach; and
- service planning and improvement including customer survey, services audit and service strategy.

Governance

Accountability Commitment

Whilst focusing on businesses and customers Access Canberra has also ensured that its governance is effective. The Access Canberra Accountability Commitment (the Commitment) which incorporates a risk-based compliance framework, customer service charter and complaints procedure was developed. The Commitment is a foundational document supporting Access Canberra's outcomes based, helpful and risk based approach to regulation. The Commitment is accompanied by a number of complementary, sector specific compliance frameworks which assist in addressing the different harms and treatments needed by the various industries Access Canberra regulates.

The Commitment lets Access Canberra customers know the way the new organisation will provide customer service, handle complaints and regulate activities. It can be found on the Access Canberra website.

Two examples of how the risk based compliance framework is already changing the way Access Canberra undertakes regulatory activity are:

- shifting the focus of operations from responding to complaints in the building industry, which may have previously resulted in the development of a legal case (with all of the costs this involves), towards acting as a mediator to assist both parties to identify solutions; and
- undertaking more proactive inspections and seeking to identify potential issues before they became a source of concern.

Access Canberra Implementation

A plan for implementing the new organisation was finalised soon after the Chief Minister announced Access Canberra at the end of 2014. Phase 1 of the implementation commenced in April 2015 bringing together business units with significant crossover of service-type or client. Business units retained their existing identity and work processes, but were encouraged to develop ways of working together in their new divisions.

For Phase 2 which began in August 2015, regulatory activities were organised into four functional streams of regulatory compliance, licensing, customer co-ordination and support services. This change linked inspectors and staff undertaking compliance activities with others doing similar work, delivering greater functional alignment and providing support for the customer centric approach of the organisation.

Rotation of Executives to new positions with oversight and control of an activity across a number of business units was completed. This has resulted in joining up the work of business units and streamlining services.

The functional alignment of teams resulted in changes to operating procedures, internal communications, and required the development of streamlined and integrated processes. Staff have embraced the need to communicate and collaborate across their own and other divisions.

All teams were operating according to their new structure by December 2015.

The Access Canberra business plan, Access Canberra Business Continuity Plan, and Phase 2 Risk Register were all finalised during the year. In addition clear measures of success were identified and lines of responsibility across the organisation and appropriate delegations and appointments were put in place.

Accommodation

Access Canberra brought approximately 700 staff from 15 locations together. Some consolidation of teams has occurred including accommodating support staff together in Woden.

Further consolidation is planned with the aim to have a north and south hub so inspectors can be based close to their customer base. Several of the buildings housing Access Canberra staff are to be sold under the government asset recycling scheme. In December 2015 a tender process was undertaken to establish a new location for a Vehicle Inspection Station (VIS). In November 2015 a Registration of Interest (ROI) process was undertaken to identify suitable accommodation for Access Canberra in Woden as the south side hub.

ICT systems

Since the beginning of Access Canberra considerable time and effort was spent planning and initiating the development and consolidation of ICT systems that support and enable the changes

required for Access Canberra to meet its goals. Work is continuing to provide enhanced systems that support doing business.

Collaboration across ACT Government

Policy responsibility for areas of work for which Access Canberra is operationally responsible remains with Directorates. Memoranda of Understanding are in place to ensure the successful separation of Regulation and Policy functions between Environment and Planning Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission and ACT Health (Health Protection Service) are maintained.

Red tape reduction has also been achieved through collaboration. Some red tape reduction initiatives suggested by Access Canberra and included in the Red Tape Reduction Amendment Bill 2016 are:

- reducing the reporting burden on incorporated associations that are also charities;
- easing the administrative pressure on new agent licensees with respect to submitting trust-account details;
- enabling more streamlined digital service delivery by removing requirements in several Acts for the production of statutory declarations; and
- facilitating the public's access to government by removing requirements from several Acts for complaints to be provided in writing and signed by the complainant.

The cleaner delineation of responsibilities has improved communications and strengthened relationships leading to better service delivery. Access Canberra has also seconded staff to the policy areas of other departments to provide for learning opportunities and cross pollination.

Joint licensing and compliance inspections which include government agencies outside Access Canberra commenced in September 2015. These inspections have reduced the number of interactions between government and businesses, with great success. An example was the inspection of public land in areas of high levels of construction to ensure the safety of the community and construction workers and protection of public assets.

Access Canberra is working closely with the Office of the Chief Digital Officer on the iConnect program which will transform digital service delivery, enable new transactions to be put online and make it easier and more convenient for businesses and the community to deal with government.

Taken together, these initiatives have allowed Access Canberra customers to access and utilise services easily and more efficiently in the ACT.

Independent Review of Progress to date

Late in 2015 Access Canberra engaged an independent third party, 1448 Pty Ltd, to undertake a review of the approach and progress for Access Canberra's ongoing business transformation. As part of the review a small number of stakeholders from Government and stakeholder organisations were interviewed. The *Review of transformational initiatives and related governance structures (the review)* was delivered in December 2015.

The review found significant progress in the first year, including the achievement of some clear milestones. The initial organisation structure was put in place, followed by a re-alignment of teams

to focus the organisational changes needed to deliver on the Access Canberra vision. Stakeholders recognised and were complimentary of the changes that had occurred in service provision.

The review also outlined areas for further focus, noting that progress was not as far advanced as had been anticipated early in the life of the organisation, as the pace of change was moderated to ensure staff were aligned and behind the change. The number of regulators, teams and functions and the number of locations were noted as affecting the pace of change. Further focus on the change effort to ensure robust, fit for purpose and repeatable outcomes as well as balancing future planning for change against the staff impacts and expected benefits was also recommended.

Other recommendations included enhancing project management capability and ensuring effective regulatory compliance, risk management and improved communication of the changes.

The organisation has responded to these suggestions by:

- Ensuring planning for further change takes into account the need for balance with providing ongoing services;
- Planning for co-ordinated project management training;
- Forming organisation wide committees to regularly review, report and manage risks;
- Implementing an internal Regulatory Advisory Committee to review and recommend compliance action across the organisation; and
- Finalising strategic communication plans, using a variety of internal channels to communicate change in the organisation and building communication skills.

During 2016 the organisation will focus on building capacity and capability of staff to provide improved and streamlined services to the community.