

Government Response to the Select Committee on Estimates 2025-2026

*Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2025-2026
and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative
Assembly) Bill 2025-2026*



Acknowledgement of Country

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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● Introduction

The 2025-26 Budget continues the Government's track record of balancing investment decisions to improve our fiscal position, while continuing to deliver high-quality services and support for our community.

The 2025-26 Budget provides funding to maintain accessible and quality services for all Canberrans. Our investments have been guided by providing high-quality services to those in our community who need it, whether it be in healthcare, education, cost of living support, combatting disadvantage and marginalisation, while balancing competing needs across the Territory. The Budget also continues significant investments in our infrastructure program including health, transport and community infrastructure to support the growth of our city, boost our economy and provide services for Canberrans, both now and in the future.

Following the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Estimates 2025-2026 – Inquiry into the *Appropriation Bill 2025-2026* and *Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2025-2026* held between 22 July and 7 August 2025, the Select Committee on Estimates 2025-2026 released its report on 29 August 2025. The Government's consolidated responses to the Committee's recommendations are included below.

The Government wishes to acknowledge the role played by the Select Committee in scrutinising the Budget and thanks them for their recommendations.

The Select Committee on Estimates engaged the services of Pegasus Economics in undertaking an independent and detailed review of the Territory's Budget. The Pegasus Report addressed a range of issues relating to technical assumptions of the Budget and its outcomes. On 22 July 2025, the Government provided a response to the Chair of the Select Committee addressing the themes of interest raised in that report.

In our response, the Government has:

- Acknowledged the Select Committee provided eight findings;
- Agreed to eight recommendations;
- Agreed in principle to nine recommendations;
- Identified that 22 recommendations relate to an existing Government policy;
- Noted 25 recommendations; and
- Did not agree to one recommendation.

The Government is open and transparent in its budget papers and related documents to ensure that our practices strengthen the integrity and accountability of the management of the Territory's public finances. From 2025-26, as part of the broader ACT Public Service transformation initiative, the Government will be further embedding the Wellbeing Framework by reviewing performance reporting against wellbeing outcomes as part of Directorates' annual reporting.

Response to Findings

Finding 1

The Committee finds that interest expense represents the fastest growing element of ACT expenditure. By 2028–29, General Government Sector interest expense will be the equivalent of 26 percent of taxation revenue and represent around 9 percent of expenditure.

Government response

The Government acknowledges the finding of the Select Committee on Estimates.

Finding 2

The Committee finds that the ACT Government may be underestimating the full cost of payroll tax concessions in relation to Commonwealth employees.

Government response

The ACT Government does not provide payroll tax concessions in relation to Commonwealth employees. States and Territories are not permitted under the Australian Constitution to levy payroll tax on Commonwealth employees. See response to recommendation 7.

Finding 3

The Committee finds that current reporting on funding for infrastructure lacks transparency.

Government response

The Government acknowledges the finding of the Select Committee on Estimates. We will consider these findings as part of the development of future budgets. See the response to Finding 6.

Finding 4

The Committee finds that effective scrutiny is impeded by the currently available information on future infrastructure spending.

Government response

The Government acknowledges the finding of the Select Committee on Estimates. We will consider these findings as part of the development of future budgets. See the response to Finding 6.

Finding 5

The Committee finds that any future commitments to deliver infrastructure including via public-private partnerships will lead to further increases in the debt held by the Territory.

Government response

The Government acknowledges the finding of the Select Committee on Estimates. We will consider these findings as part of the development of future budgets

Finding 6

The Committee finds that the public debate on investment in strategic infrastructure would be better served by increased transparency in the ACT Government's public reporting on its infrastructure plans.

Government response

The ACT Government provides the following plans and reporting to support transparency of infrastructure planning and procurement:

- The Infrastructure Plan, available on the Built for CBR website, is the ACT's multi-decade strategy for infrastructure investment that outlines potential projects over a more than 10-year horizon.
- The Built for CBR website also includes information on active projects and those in consultation and planning.
- The Budget Statements, released annually, contains details of approved project and project budgets over the forward years.
- A searchable database, available on the Treasury website, provides information on project value and budget funding.

- The ACT Government Infrastructure Pipeline publishes advance notice of planned infrastructure procurements providing visibility to suppliers on future opportunities and contributing to a more connected and sustainable city.
- The ACT Government Contracts Register records details, including total contract price, of all contracts with a value of \$25,000 or more

Finding 7

The Committee finds that managing and reporting against multiple funding arrangements presents a cost burden for non-government organisations, which may not be reflected in the funding they receive.

Government response

The Government acknowledges the finding of the Select Committee on Estimates.

Finding 8

The Committee finds that changes to payroll tax are likely to have an impact on the behaviour and choices of businesses, including health care providers.

Government response

The Government acknowledges the finding of the Select Committee on Estimates.

● Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reduce the growth rate of debt and interest.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The Government's fiscal strategy and debt management and consolidation policy (outlined on pages 31-32 of the 2025-26 Budget Outlook) will reduce the growth rate of debt and interest.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce more robust monitoring and management mechanisms for health expenditure, including increasing Treasury capacity to provide internal checks and challenge to health budget and spending (to challenge the Health and Community Service Directorate to make best use of National Health Funding Pool) and lower risk of future budget overspends.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

In the 2025-26 Budget, the Government provided \$13 million over three years from 2025-26 to undertake a transformation program at Canberra Health Services (CHS). Goals of the program are to identify efficiencies and to improve revenue generation across the public health system. The Health and Community Services Directorate, CHS and Treasury are in the process of establishing implementation arrangements, which will support work to improve the health system's financial sustainability. The funding provide will also support Treasury participation in the transformation program and enable it to have greater visibility of health funding decisions.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish an independent review of health demand and expenditure, including the drivers of the ACT's high unit costs, the accuracy of forecasts, and the robustness of models used.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

An independent inquiry into health system demand, processes and data has commenced, in line with the Assembly Resolution of 24 June 2025 regarding the establishment of an independent inquiry into health data and processes.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify and publicly report on all cost-saving measures in the Health portfolio on a quarterly basis.

Government response

Noted.

The Government recognises the importance of transparency and accountability. All agencies are expected to meet their obligations under the *Financial Management Act 1996*. Agency financial performance is reported as part of the Budget Review process in the Supplementary Budget Papers and the Minister will provide an update to the Assembly on Canberra Health Services' efficiency measures at that time.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government routinely analyse and model potential behavioural impacts of fee and tax increases.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

Analysis and modelling of changes to ACT Government fees and taxes is informed by best practice, including the Commonwealth Government's Charter of Budget Honesty Policy Costing Guidelines. The Government factors in behavioural impacts where the magnitude is expected to be significant and there is sufficient information and capacity to do so.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government model and publish the full cost of forgone revenue, including payroll tax, that would otherwise be paid by the Commonwealth Government, and pursue proper compensation.

Government response

Noted.

The Government reports every year on revenue forgone through tax concessions in the annual Tax Expenditure Statement (TES), published on the Treasury website. As States and Territories are not permitted to levy payroll tax on Commonwealth Government employment, hypothetical revenue from payroll tax on Commonwealth Government employment is not reported in the TES.

Modelling of the impact of hypothetical payroll tax collections from Commonwealth employment under an alternative Constitution would also need to consider impacts on the ACT's GST allocation. This is discussed in the response to Recommendation 7 below.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government for a reform to the GST funding formula and additional compensation for the inability to levy ACT rates and taxes on Commonwealth agencies.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government routinely advocates on behalf of the ACT to maximise the ACT's GST share, during the Commonwealth Grant Commission's 5-yearly Methodology Reviews, and each annual Update process. Within this advocacy, at every opportunity, the ACT seeks to maximise GST shares for the ACT on the basis of the revenue and expenditure pressures associated with the ACT's unique status. The GST distribution formula itself already accounts for these factors. In particular, the ACT is already a recipient jurisdiction for GST in respect of the CGC's assessment of payroll tax revenue.

Were it possible for the ACT to levy payroll tax on the Commonwealth Government at all, it is possible that the ACT would be worse off in net terms, when considering the implications for our GST allocations. This is because our payroll revenue raising capacity would likely shift from below average to above average, resulting in a redistribution of GST away from the ACT under this assessment.

General rates are not within the purview of the CGC's assessment methodology – rates are a municipal revenue source. It is worth noting that the Commonwealth compensates the ACT for municipal services to the Commonwealth Government through a general revenue grant. The grant is estimated to be \$46.3 million for 2025-26.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reduce its reliance on the Treasurer's advance, reaffirming its use strictly as an emergency or unforeseen expenditure mechanism.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The *Financial Management Act 1996* (FMA) requires the Treasurer to be satisfied that there is an immediate need for the payment (s18(1)(a)(i)), that the payment is not already provided for, or insufficiently provided for in an appropriation because of an erroneous omission or understatement in an appropriation (s18 (1)(a)(ii)(A)) or that the payment was unforeseen (s18 (1)(a)(ii)(B)) until the last day when it was practicable to provide for it. Treasury also provides regular advice to agencies that there is a requirement to ensure agency budgets are managed within existing appropriations and alternative strategies to address funding pressure should first be considered before an application for a Treasurer's Advance being made.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve its forecasting models to reduce reliance on in-year reprofiling of expenditure between financial years.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The Government's Whole of Government Expenditure Reform initiative, outlined on page 89 of the 2025-26 Budget Outlook, includes enhanced budgetary control processes.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that Treasury include specific explanations of large fiscal variations in its Budget reporting, detailing the underlying causes and their potential future impacts.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The 2025-26 Budget Outlook provides explanations of the variances between budget and estimated outcome for expenses (pages 165-166) and provides extensive information on past revenue variances and forecasts (pages 169-184).

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that Treasury incorporate into the forward estimates anticipated costings for:

- the planned implementation of Foundational Supports; and
- ongoing public housing maintenance needs in 2027 and out years.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The forward estimates already contain funding for Housing ACT repairs and maintenance as well as provisioned funding for the ACT contribution to Foundational Supports.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reduce the use of lapsing or terminating program funding for ongoing service provision.

Government response

Noted.

Time-limited funding for ongoing service provision provides an opportunity to evaluate, and if necessary, revise service delivery models to ensure that they deliver the most efficient and effective outcomes. This is particularly the case in circumstances where pilot programs are undertaken to test innovative delivery models. This process of regular review also ensures service delivery is in line with Government priorities.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that Treasury strengthen its oversight of financial management, including active monitoring of both revenue and expenditure trends, to ensure budget assumptions are robust, expenditure forecasts are reliable, and fiscal projections remain accurate and credible.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The Government's Whole of Government Expenditure Reform initiative, outlined on page 89 of the 2025-26 Budget Outlook, includes enhanced budgetary control processes.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve the credibility of the medium-term fiscal strategy to return the Budget to sustainable balance, including measures to manage expenditure growth and strengthen revenue resilience, while maintaining scope for to deliver infrastructure.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The Government's fiscal strategy, outlined on page 31 of the 2025-26 Budget Outlook, provides a pathway back to surplus within the forward estimates. It also provides for the continued delivery of essential infrastructure.

The Whole of Government Expenditure Reform initiative, outlined on page 89 of the 2025-26 Budget Outlook, will achieve savings by constraining the rate of growth in expenditure across a range of agencies and directorates, supported by whole of government principles for the reprioritisation and rebasing of expenditure and enhanced budgetary control processes.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a consistent reporting framework, standardising program reporting formats and names across Budget Papers and annual reports to enable year-to-year tracking of initiatives and commitments.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The Budget papers and agency financial statements employ a consistent approach to reporting commitments, which also enables comparison with prior year documents. Program budgeting is not used in the Territory. Agencies also report against accountability indicators in agency financial statements and in annual reports.

To support transparency, the Reader's Guide to the 2025-26 Budget is available as on Treasury's Budget website. This provides guidance on the framework used in the development of financial statements and the Budget Outlook. It also includes information on how to interpret strategic objectives and indicators, outputs and output classes and changes to appropriation tables. The Annual Report Directions also provide guidance to agencies on the format required in the preparation of Annual Reports.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve its reporting of Budget offsets by showing the exact source or sources of each offset and identifying the programs or initiatives where funding is reduced or removed, alongside the new initiatives they are used to support.

Government response

Noted.

Offsets for an initiative can include existing funding provisions, the generation of new revenue, underspends in existing programs, the reallocation of existing resources or staffing, or savings in agencies or other programs and projects.

The reallocation of existing resources or funding towards a new initiative does not necessarily reflect the cancelling of a program or change in policy. Offsets can reflect improvements or efficiencies gained in service delivery or structure by agencies that can be used to support new priorities.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that Treasury provide a list of lapsing and terminating programs in the budget papers each year.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

Initiatives with time-limited funding are identifiable in Chapter 3.2 – Investing in the Wellbeing of Canberrans in the Budget Outlook. Programs with terminating funding can be identified in the 'changes to appropriation tables' in agency Budget statements. Likewise, agency infrastructure tables and the capital works database also provide a date for physical completion for each project.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government structure Budget papers— particularly Budget Statements B—to always designate a single lead minister for each output. Each output should explicitly identify the lead minister and responsible agency accountable for implementation and achievement of outcomes, with other ministers' roles noted as supporting where appropriate.

Government response

Noted.

As a small jurisdiction delivering a wide range of functions and services, the Government recognises there are instances where Ministerial portfolios share output classes. In those circumstances, it is appropriate that Minister's share accountability and ownership of an output or deliverable and a 'lead' Minister would not be appropriate. Similarly, it is also appropriate that agencies share ownership of delivering an output or deliverable.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reintroduce a clear breakdown of the ACT's debt structure—including types of instruments, maturity profiles, and interest obligations—and publish a long-term Debt and Interest Management Plan covering the forward estimates period. This plan should outline debt objectives, risk management strategies, and liabilities projections in greater detail.

Government response

Noted.

Details about the debt structure are included in the Key Balance Sheet Metrics chapter of the Budget Outlook. Additional information about the Territory's debt issuance program and management policies, including debt objectives and risk management strategies is provided in the Borrowing Management Policy Framework (https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/2888910/Borrowing-Management-Policy-Framework.PDF).

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish clear mechanisms for policy input and accountability for cross-directorate initiatives.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

There are requirements in place for agencies to collaborate when cross-directorate initiatives are brought forward for consideration in the Budget process. Agencies must develop proposals in accordance with Government policies and priorities, including collaborating in the development of proposals.

The *ACT Performance and Accountability Framework* outlines the requirements for all ACT Government agencies in managing accountability for whole-of-government initiatives. For whole of government plans, the Annual Reports Act allows for whole of government reporting for the purposes of presenting the ACT Government's 'one government' approach. In 2025-26, CMTEDD will be working with directorates on options for further strengthening collaboration and reporting on progress in relation to significant cross-directorate initiatives, as part of the next phase of embedding the ACT Wellbeing Framework.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government put forward a more comprehensive plan to deliver transformation in public services. This would include better Key Performance Indicators and reporting, and addressing the issues raised in the 'ACTPS 2025 Taskforce' report.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The ACT Government is currently developing a program of work associated with the ACTPS 2025 Taskforce Report and implementation of previously stated government commitments such as review of the Public Sector Management Act 1994, updating the Public Sector Standards, budget control processes and further embedding the Wellbeing Framework.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the accountability and strategic indicators.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

Directorates review accountability and strategic indicators in the development of their Budget Statements. The ACT Performance and Accountability Framework is the policy guide that outlines the performance reporting for all ACT Government agencies, including the development of strategic and accountability indicators. In 2025-26, CMTEDD will be working with all directorates to update the Framework to better align with the ACT Wellbeing Framework.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide evidence how the ACT Wellbeing Framework is being used to assess policy decisions.

Government response

Noted.

The Government embeds the Wellbeing Framework into decision making through mandatory Wellbeing Impact Assessments (WIAs) for Cabinet submissions and Budget business cases. WIAs advise Cabinet and the Expenditure Review Committee, including during the 2025-26 Budget. They systematically assess impacts across the Framework's domains and draw on evidence to inform policy choices.

Wellbeing Impact Assessments are now routinely released as part of Cabinet decisions.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that in future budgets the ACT Government include a section outlining how the Wellbeing Framework has been used in the decision-making process.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The 2025-26 Wellbeing Budget Statement included information regarding how the Wellbeing Framework was used in the Budget decision-making process. This included the identification of Wellbeing Budget Priorities, assessing wellbeing impacts via Wellbeing Impact Assessments, the provision of advice to the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet about wellbeing impact and information on next steps for embedding wellbeing. The 2025-26 wellbeing Budget Statement was the second such document, and the Government will consider further enhancements in future Budgets.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish a five-year infrastructure plan, which includes annual estimates for each project post procurement, as well as the impact on the five-year forecasts for the Central Capital Provision.

Government response

Agreed.

The Government has published the ACT Infrastructure Plan to provide a future pipeline of infrastructure, informed by population growth, and other long-term planning, including District Plans and social needs analysis.

The annual Budget process allows government to prioritise investments over the near term, including prioritising any unanticipated requirements as they emerge. iCBR is in the early stages of considering how the public service can provide better advice to government on the infrastructure prioritisation and early planning.

iCBR also publishes the Infrastructure Pipeline, which provides up to date information about current and anticipated infrastructure procurement. The ACT Government Contracts Register records fulsome details, including total contract price and contract variations, of all contracts with a value of \$25,000 or more. The ACT Government Notifiable Invoice Register contains relevant information about a notifiable invoice, requiring it to be published within 21 days after the end of the month in which an invoice is paid. The Notifiable Invoices Register, in conjunction with the ACT Government Contracts Register provides transparency about government purchasing to the community.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that each year the ACT Government publish a comprehensive analysis of the identified gaps in the provision of key community infrastructure in a way that informs public debate on the infrastructure priorities outlined in its budgets.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

“Inclusive Centres and Communities” is one of the five key drivers in the District Strategy 2023. Volume 1 – Metropolitan Context and Big Drivers, includes information on how the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) analysis has been considered and used to inform district planning objectives.

Volume 3 – Implementation, includes Action 4.2: “Undertake detailed localised analysis to inform and confirm the need for new community and recreational facilities. This includes collaboration across government directorates and with the community.”

The implementation timeframe is short-term (0–5 years) which allows for progressive refinement of the strategy. District strategy updates will allow the findings from assessments to be incorporated into each district strategy if and where needed.

The Government is undertaking community needs assessments as outlined in the District Strategies to inform future planning.

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver the ACT Budget no later than the first week of June each year.

Government response

Noted.

The timing of the delivery of the Budget is a Government decision, and multiple factors are taken into consideration when determining the timing of the ACT Budget. Under the *Financial Management Act 1996* the Budget must be delivered no later than three months after the beginning of the relevant financial year. The timing of the Budget is also to ensure sufficient time is provided to incorporate all decisions and forecasts stemming from the Commonwealth Budget. The ACT Budget outlines that 41 per cent of GGS revenue over the forwards is expected to be received from the Commonwealth. As such even relatively minor adjustments to Commonwealth decisions and forecasts can have a material impact on the ACT Budget. This is in accordance with Recommendation 15 from the 2009-10 Select Committee on Estimates Report.

Timing is also dependent on the sitting calendar of the Legislative Assembly and is impacted by the timing of two public holidays in late May/Early June.

The Government recognises the timing of the Budget can create uncertainty with our community sector partners where decisions on time limited programs can affect their planning in determining the activities for their forthcoming year. The Government is working to address this uncertainty as per Recommendation No. 28 below.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider separating program, contract, and grant end dates from financial years to ensure decisions regarding commencement, continuation or cessation of funding are made with sufficient time for organisations to respond.

Government response

Noted.

The Government is open to consideration of how contract settings and timeframes can be revised to provide greater certainty to the NGO sector.

Recommendation 29

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government evaluate programs well in advance of expiration of funding agreements and budget allocations, including consultation with the relevant sector.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

As part of business-as-usual activities, the Government regularly evaluates programs and services, including funding levels. As noted in the response to Recommendation 28, the Government is open to considering how opportunities with contract settings and timeframes can be revised to provide greater certainty to the NGO sector.

Recommendation 30

The Committee recommends that the that the ACT Government establish an ongoing review, to operate in parallel with the commissioning process, to support ongoing improvements and better meet service needs.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government agrees to review its contracts, grants and procurement processes as part of the core business of the establishment of the central area responsible for community sector funding. This will include detailing the intersection with commissioning and the requirement for ongoing review.

Recommendation 31

The Committee recommends that the that the ACT Government commit to a full mapping of the youth homelessness service environment to better understand interconnected work done externally to the government.

Government response

Agreed.

The ACT Government has undertaken mapping across the government funded homelessness sector and has tabled this at the Joint Pathways Executive. The ACT Government is looking forward to Joint Pathways Executive partners mapping other services to obtain a comprehensive map of government and non-government homelessness services.

Recommendation 32

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider ways to provide longer funding for established programs and that short-term funding arrangements provide sufficient time and funding for the necessary Budget and decision-making processes.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government will consider how to best address for short term and long-term funding arrangements as part of the core business of the establishment of the central area responsible for community sector funding in the Health and Community Services Directorate.

Recommendation 33

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a comprehensive review of the funding and functions of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, covering the period 2017–18 to 2025–26, to assess:

- the adequacy of funding support compared with the work expected of the Office;
- the range and volume of tasks required;
- the extent of unpaid overtime undertaken by staff; and
- whether the Witness Assistance Service is meeting identified needs.

The findings of the review should be tabled in the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2025.

Government response

Noted.

The Government works closely with the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on its resourcing needs. The Office of the DPP is conducting preparatory work to support the upcoming budget considerations of Government, and the Government will consider this advice in the context of future budget processes. Additional expertise has been provided to the Office of the DPP to temporarily support this work and wider corporate functions.

Recommendation 34

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure funding for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is guaranteed beyond a single financial year to provide security and forward planning capability for the Office.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The DPP receives ongoing recurrent funding over the forward years.

Recommendation 35

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the functions and funding of the official visitors to assess the adequacy of funding support compared with the work expected, particularly for corrections and Disability visits and for the IT upgrades and data-sharing requirements.

Government response

Noted.

Official Visitors play an important oversight role as the eyes and ears of Ministers across a range of visitable places. The ACT Government will continue to work with the Official Visitor Board to monitor the adequacy of funding for the Official Visitor scheme, including requirements for IT and data sharing.

Recommendation 36

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that adequate resourcing as well as staffing is provided when oversight bodies are given new functions such as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) and Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

Provision of budget allocation for new oversight initiatives are sought through the policy development process with business cases developed for the ACT Budget each year.

Recommendation 37

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government examine the community sector indexation rate to ensure it adequately accounts for rises in all employment costs associated with the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award and supports organisations to operate sustainably.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The ACT Government consistently and equitably increases contract funding to community sector contracts through the CSI rate. The rate reflects both wage and CPI increases and enables organisations to better keep up with increasing costs. Indexation fluctuates in response to economic pressures as they change over time and while government recognises that it is not perfect, it is an efficient way to adjust the price government pays for service delivery.

Recommendation 38

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the announced review of ACT school budget management is undertaken with publicly available terms of reference, includes consideration of resourcing, maintenance and facilities for individual schools and the school system, forward planning processes, and demographic pressures; and that the results of the review are published as soon as practicable after its completion.

Government response

Agreed.

The Government will publish Terms of Reference for the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review once finalised and formally commenced. The Expert Panel will be asked to provide the Government their work through a Final Report and the Government will publish this following appropriate review and consideration.

Recommendation 39

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government strengthen transparency and engagement in school budget management by:

- publishing the guidelines schools use to develop budget management plans; and
- publishing comprehensive details of any net job losses in the Education Directorate or schools during the current calendar year, as reflected in the staffing profile in *Budget Statements F*.

Government response

Agreed.

Resources to support ACT public schools to develop budget management plans will be provided to ACT public schools, communicated to key stakeholders, including school boards and industrial partners, and published on the ACT Education Directorate website.

The Education Directorate staffing profile will be published in the Budget Statement and Education Directorate Annual report.

Recommendation 40

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that funding across ACT Government agencies and non-government organisations is provided with clear statements regarding the expected delivery requirements associated with that funding and with statements outlining new responsibilities being published.

Government response

Noted.

There are existing mechanisms to ensure that funding provided to agencies, and funding provided to non-government organisations for the provision of services or other outcomes, is delivered according to its purpose.

Sections 31 and 55 of the *Financial Management Act 1996* require the Directors-General of Directorates and CEOs of Territory Authorities to manage their agencies (or authorities) in a way that promotes the achievement of the purpose of the agency, as determined by the Government, and promotes financial sustainability. These sections also require that money spent must be in accordance with the appropriation made.

New funding provided through Budget initiatives are for a specific purpose. This funding is reported in agency financial statements and relevant agencies are responsible for delivery against that purpose. Generally, in the case of funding directed to non-government organisations, delivery requirements and responsibilities specified through procurement outcomes and grant funding agreements.

Recommendation 41

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government model and report on the impact of payroll tax changes on general practitioner bulk billing rates and allied health provision.

Government response

Noted.

Information on bulk billing rates is publicly reported. Analysing the impact of payroll tax changes on bulk billing rates would require this impact to be separated from other factors that impact bulk billing rates, including other ACT and Commonwealth Government policies. This would likely be a resource intensive theoretical and empirical exercise, with low confidence in any outputs.

Recommendation 42

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify and strengthen the policy alignment and advisory roles between the Cultural Facilities Corporation and artsACT to ensure strategic planning and arts infrastructure meets the needs for community art across the Territory.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The Cultural Facilities Corporation (CFC) and artsACT work together as required including delivering ACT Government priorities for the arts. *Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital – Arts, Culture and Creative Policy 2022-2026 Action Plan* identifies and reports on priority actions for both the CFC and artsACT within their areas of responsibility.

Recommendation 43

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government convert its plans for playing fields at Stromlo and Taylor so as to install natural rather than synthetic turf if appropriate.

Government response

Not agreed.

The provision of synthetic grass facilities within Stage 1 of the Stromlo District Playing Fields will progress in accordance with the Development Application submitted for this project, currently under assessment. The broader design for the site incorporates additional natural grass fields, which are proposed for delivery in a later stage of works. For the Taylor District Playing Fields, the government intends to proceed with the design and delivery of synthetic grass facilities at this location, noting this will complement the natural grass fields already accessible at the site.

Recommendation 44

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commit to a multi-year infrastructure plan for sport and recreation facilities.

Government response

Agreed.

CBR Next Move 2023-2028 provides direction and a roadmap for strengthening and developing sport and active recreation in the ACT - CBR Next Move - Sport and Recreation

The Sport and Recreation Implementation Plan details priority infrastructure projects identified in CBR Next Move 2023-2028 - Implementation Plan - Sport and Recreation

The Report Card provides a summary of and key updates on infrastructure projects and other initiatives - Report Card - Sport and Recreation

In addition, the ACT Infrastructure Plan Update for Entertainment, Arts & Sports also includes an indicative project pipeline over the short, medium and long-term.

Recommendation 45

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide greater details for the outlined \$27 million fund for chronic disease management and prevention.

Government response

Noted.

This funding will support the ongoing delivery of chronic disease management including dialysis, endocrinology and home therapies through investment of \$27 million over four years. It will support the ongoing delivery of out of hospital services which has experienced significant growth, leading to over 18,500 more occasions of service across renal, respiratory, nutrition, paediatrics, sexual health and other medical services. Canberra Health Services will continue to develop opportunities for early intervention and diversion from acute hospital care for people with chronic disease, in partnership with consumers and carers.

Recommendation 46

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government complete all mental health data remediation activities to ensure full reporting is included in the Report on Government Services.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

Data remediation for mental health data is currently underway as part of a broader Health Data and Reporting Remediation Program. This will enable mental health data to be included in the 2027 Report of Government Services and 2026 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reporting, which will report on 2024-25 financial year data.

Recommendation 47

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure culturally appropriate mental health services are sufficiently scaled to match the size of Canberra's multicultural community and engage local providers in the codesign of the service.

Government response

Existing Government policy.

The ACT Government recognises the impact of mental illness on our local multicultural community. Through Commissioning, the ACT Government considers a number of population groups including multicultural communities.

Recommendation 48

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate Canberrans being removed from their NDIS plans with minimal notice, and continue to advocate to the federal government to stop this practice.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government holds regular meetings with key ACT peak bodies to hear community concerns about changes to participants' NDIS plans. These forums will continue to inform the ACT Government's advocacy to the Australian Government.

Recommendation 49

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional transparency to the community about the rollout timeline of Foundational Supports.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring reforms to the NDIS and foundational supports are fit for purpose for the ACT community. It regularly engages with people with disability and the ACT disability sector on these reforms and will continue to do so as *Thriving Kids* is iteratively rolled out, and as other Foundational Supports are developed.

Timeframes for, and approaches to, targeted foundational supports rollout to additional cohorts beyond the initial *Thriving Kids* initiative, as well as general foundational supports, remain subject to ongoing negotiations. The ACT Government will provide updates to the community on these issues as soon as negotiations settle.

Recommendation 50

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a youth strategy to establish a whole-of-government focus on children and young people.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government notes that existing frameworks provide significant strategic guidance in relation to young people across the ACT. The ACT Government is guided by the National Engage! Strategy, which sets a vision for all young people across Australia to ensure they can have a say on issues that impact them. The strategy sets out three priority areas for youth engagement with government:

1. We will recognise and listen to young people.
2. We will empower young people to advocate and engage with government.
3. We will support government to work with young people.

These three priority areas align closely to the work of the ACT Government which delivers practical engagement initiatives on behalf of the ACT Minister for Children, Youth and Families, such as the now annual ACT Youth Assembly, Youth Advisory Council, ACT Youth Week, grants and scholarships for young people, and the Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards.

Any consideration of an ACT specific strategy would need to align and not duplicate the work of existing strategies including the Next Steps for Our Kids 2022–2030 strategy, and the National Engage! Strategy.

Recommendation 51

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure recommendations from the ACT Youth Advisory Council be made public, to ensure the minister is representing their advice accurately.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The ACT Government supports transparency in how young people inform decision-making. The Youth Advisory Council provides advice to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families and to ACT Government directorates through a range of means including verbal advice, position papers and formal consultation responses.

The Youth Advisory Council also co-runs the now annual ACT Youth Assembly, with the support of the Office for Youth Engagement. Past ACT Youth Assembly reports and ACT Government responses are published on the [ACT Government website](#), providing a clear record of the views not only of Council members, but of young people from across the ACT more broadly, and how these relate to ACT Government initiatives.

Recommendation 52

The Committee recommends the ACT Government reconsider the withdrawal of funding for the Rent Relief Scheme.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The Government is considering the impact of the cessation of the Rent Relief Fund, noting that the Fund was a temporary measure with funding provided until the end of the 2024-25 financial year. The Fund did not have recurrent funding and was not intended to be a long-term measure.

A pressing priority for Government is supporting those families with cost-of-living pressures, including financial assistance with day-to-day demands such as food relief for those experiencing food insecurity. Utilities and the cost of housing remain the largest areas of expense for households. Since ceasing the Rent Relief Fund, the Government has prioritised enhancing food relief services through \$1.5 million to establish a 3-year Food Bank Fund, which supplements current food relief funding. The Government has also permanently increased the Electricity, Gas and Water Rebate to \$800 per year, to support low income and vulnerable households.

The Chief Minister has written to Hands Across Canberra regarding the Chief Minister's Charitable Fund, asking them to prioritise support for low-income families with cost-of-living pressures.

The Government has also committed \$262,142 to the Mobile Debt Clinic in the 2025-26 Budget. This service provides a mobile consumer credit legal advice service for people impacted by domestic and family violence, financial abuse, mental ill health, or any other disadvantage. The Mobile Debt Clinic was listed as one of the six funding priorities in Care Financials' February 2025 submission to the 2025-26 Budget and is an essential service to support those people in financial crisis.

The Government has been engaging with community stakeholders to take views on the impact of the cessation of the Rent Relief Fund on the community and is exploring opportunities to reintroduce a support fund which could provide targeted support to those experiencing rental stress, in a manner which acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of cost-of-living pressures.

Recommendation 53

The Committee recommends the ACT Government improve transparency and accountability in housing delivery by:

- publishing clear housing targets, broken down by specific dwelling type and annual delivery;
- providing a full mapping of the housing pipeline;
- publishing project timelines for major renewal programs; and
- reporting annually on each of the above.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The Government currently publishes:

- clear land release targets, broken down by the type of dwelling and annual release year through its Housing Supply and Land Release Program;
- detailed mapping information on the housing pipeline, including in the Housing Supply and Land Release Program and in the six-monthly ACT Land and Property Report;
- information on major renewal program timeframes in a range of publications, such as the Built for CBR website, agency budget statements and capital works reporting; and
- information on land releases, public, community and affordable housing targets and urban renewal projects in the Suburban Land Agency's and other agencies' annual reports, as well as in capital works reporting and the ACT Housing Strategy Report Card.

Additional information including indicative project timelines for major renewal programs is provided through Community Councils and other engagements. The Government will continue to investigate options to enhance forecasting and reporting in relation to land release and housing, including in relation to the delivery of housing by both the private and government sectors.

Recommendation 54

The Committee recommends that the Government release any modelling conducted on the number of homes expected to be delivered by the potential CSIRO Ginninderra acquisition.

Government response

Noted.

Studies have estimated that the eastern portion of the site could potentially accommodate approximately 3,000 dwellings.

Any potential yield will be subject to engineering and site-specific investigations. These investigations may alter final dwelling outcomes.

Should the ACT Government acquire the CSIRO site, further planning and site investigations will be conducted and an estimated yield will be one of the outcomes.

Recommendation 55

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve the experience and confidence of public housing tenants by:

- ensuring tenant communications are clear and timely, with deadlines/due dates specified;
- establishing accessible complaints channels, including for Programmed-managed services, including ensuring the complaints line for Programmed be made easily available to all public housing residents;
- conducting regular tenant satisfaction surveys to monitor outcomes; and
- regularly reporting on the number of complaints received by Programmed from public housing residents.

Government response

Agreed.

Responsive works (from 4 hours to 20 days) have a specific timeframe based on the urgency or works required. Communication with tenants is managed by Programmed to facilitate access and completion of these repairs. Works that are not considered responsive, such as planned and capital works, are assessed and given a timeframe for completion that aligns with the tenant's needs and the liveability of the asset. The completion of planned and capital works is dependent on several factors including the nature of the request, the complexity of the works required, the needs of the tenant and the wider management of the social housing portfolio.

The Housing ACT and Programmed complaints processes include accessible channels and are available to all public housing residents. Tenants can also request assistance from their Housing Manager or Community Housing Provider.

Tenants can contact their Housing Manager if they require guidance or support in seeking further information regarding maintenance issues. In matters in which there is increased complexity Housing ACT may seek clarification from Programmed regarding maintenance and provide this feedback to the tenant.

Under the Total Facilities Maintenance Contract, Programmed conduct bi-annual customer service surveys.

The Tenant Consultative Group are a group of public housing tenants who help to improve services and policies that affect all public tenants. They provide feedback and programs and services which includes Programmed and maintenance work.

Under the Total Facilities Maintenance Contract, Programmed report on complaints monthly. In addition to complaints received from Programmed for public housing tenants, Housing ACT receive incident reports from Programmed which raise issues that their staff and contractors have experienced whilst completing maintenance work.

Recommendation 56

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify the timeline for the Woden Youth Foyer coming online.

Government response

Agreed.

The procurement for an ongoing provider for the Woden Youth Foyer is well underway with the tender closing on 28 August 2025. HCSD are on-track to have a contract negotiated with the provider in December 2025. Housing ACT is working with community service providers in existing programs to utilise the accommodation while the procurement process is finalised.

Recommendation 57

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a single whole-of-government accountability framework, focussed on enabling early and coordinated action and reform, to implement the Jumbunna Report's recommendations. The framework should address the full range of systemic barriers faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT with clear coordination, oversight and reporting mechanisms.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The ACT Government recognises that the matters identified in the Jumbunna Institute's Final Report of the Independent Review into First Nations Over-representation in the Criminal Justice System are whole-of-government issues. The report is large and complex, setting out 99 recommendations for Government with a clear message that the report needs to be addressed in a coordinated way. The report makes recommendations about governance arrangements to ensure that the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has the necessary oversight of the implementation of the matters identified in the report. Noting that there are existing government coordination mechanisms, as well as community partnership arrangements, and in consideration of consultation fatigue in our small community, the ACT Government will work with community, including through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, to develop and agree the most effective arrangements for overseeing the implementation of recommendations to best deliver systemic change.

Recommendation 58

The Committee recommends that ACT Policing increase transparency to improve public trust, including by publishing aggregate data on complaints, disciplinary actions, and outcomes.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The ACT Government values integrity, which is included in the ACT Policing Purchase Agreement. Through the Purchase Agreement ACT Policing currently provides a Professional Standards report including the investigation of such complaints and any related action whether undertaken by the AFP, Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (Now replaced by the National Anti-Corruption Commission), the Commonwealth Ombudsman or otherwise:

- complaints against AFP appointees providing policing services under the agreement
- complaints submitted by category
- complaint trends/systemic issues
- complaints submitted by source
- status of complaints
- finalised conduct issues by category
- conduct issue trends

A report on victims' rights-related complaints including:

- a statement of how many written complaints were made to ACT Policing in the year
- the right in relation to which the complaint was made
- whether ACT Policing resolved the complaint

Opportunities to publish aggregate data on disciplinary actions and outcomes will be considered for future Purchase Agreements, noting that such matters are subject to procedural fairness obligations and publication may be limited by Federal legislation.

Recommendation 59

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government communicate emergency plans, including potential evacuation plans, for urban parts of the ACT at high risk of bushfire, or communicate why it is inappropriate for those plans to be shared before an emergency.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) already puts considerable effort to ensuring that the public is informed and educated about the risk of bushfires and other hazards, how to prepare themselves prior to an event and about how to respond should the worst occur. The execution of emergency plans, including evacuations plans, depends on the type and nature of an emergency incident. In relation to bushfires, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration including the direction the fire is heading and weather conditions. What may be a good evacuation strategy for one particular bushfire, may not necessarily be adequate for another bushfire in exactly the same area. For this reason, providing set information on access and evacuation routes out of a particular location in the event of an emergency would not be of assistance. This may, in fact, place community members at greater risk.

What the ESA asks the community to do, is to be aware of public information strategies that provide advice to the community on any actions they should be taking during an emergency. These include, but are not limited to, television and radio announcements, posts to social media outlets, and publication of messages on websites.

The ESA also maintains an Emergency Alert capability which can be used to broadcast warning messages directly to mobile telephones and land lines in any area of the ACT. In an extreme emergency, ESA personnel will door knock residents at risk, noting that the decision to evacuate rests with the resident. These public information strategies are supported by community engagement activities, such as the Be Emergency Ready campaign. As part of the campaign, the community are encouraged to know their level of risk to bushfire and what they should be doing to prepare, including completing and practicing their Survival Plan.

If a decision is taken to evacuate an area due to an emergency, residents should act as quickly as possible and not leave this to the last minute. Public schools and other community facilities may be used as evacuation centres in these instances, but this will be communicated in the messaging. The Incident Controller will take access and evacuation routes into account in deciding when/how to execute an evacuation plan.

Community members are also encouraged to know their level of risk, and factor this into their considerations when preparing a Survival Plan or making their own decision to evacuate.

The ESA also works closely with community groups to support vulnerable residents to get prepared for a bushfire. Any need for evacuation of an area or facility providing services to people with mobility issues is considered by emergency services personnel as a key component of planning during any emergency incident.

Additional information and educational resources are available on the ESA website at <https://www.esa.act.gov.au/be-emergency-ready>.

Recommendation 60

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clearly define and publish the role of the ACT Government Landscape Architect.

Government response

Noted.

The ACT Government has committed to appointing a Government Landscape Architect to develop a Landscape Plan. The role of the ACT Government Landscape Architect and scope of the plan is under consideration will be published in due course.

Recommendation 61

The Committee recommends that, in recognition of the findings of the Close to the Edge report, the ACT Government should undertake a serious re-examination of environmental funding with a view to making necessary investments environmental restoration.

Government response

Noted.

The *Close to the Edge* report's findings and recommendations remain under consideration by the Government.

Recommendation 62

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government amend Table 8: Strategic Indicator 3.4: Increased electrification of transport (Budget Statements E) to align with the ACT's zero emissions vehicle strategy ambition.

Government response

Noted.

The Government reviews strategic indicators each year and will consider any changes to this strategic indicator as needed in future updates.

Recommendation 63

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government restore discounted hiring rates of Library rooms for not-for-profit organisations.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

Access Canberra will explore reinstating the discounted hiring rates of Library Rooms for Not-for-Profit organisations.

Recommendation 64

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a plan to improve the relative performance of ACT schools, including:

- monitoring and publicly reporting on the implementation of literacy and numeracy initiatives, with progressive testing beyond NAPLAN to ensure milestones are met; and
- maintaining continuity of core programs such as curriculum offerings, excursions and staffing during the current calendar year.

Government response

Agreed in principle.

The Government is currently implementing priority reforms including the Strong Foundations program and Inclusive Education Strategy to strengthen an evidence-informed and inclusive public education system. Monitoring of progress will continue through existing public reporting mechanisms such as the Education Directorate Annual Report, noting that the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel recommended that "All assessment information collected should be used to inform students, teachers and families on student learning and not be publicly published". The Directorate will maintain continuity of core programs.

Recommendation 65

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider amending the *Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act 1999* to allow the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority to provide funding to employers who are not group training organisations.

Government response

Agreed.

This will be considered as part of any future amendments to the *Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act 1999*.