

2013

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS:
ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION
STUDENTS IN THE ACT, REPORT 10, AUGUST 2012.**

Presented by
Ms Katy Gallagher MLA
Minister for Higher Education

28 Feb 2013

Government Response Overview

Recommendation	Government view
1. The Committee recommends that planning for housing suitable for development as student accommodation be included in the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan, including consideration of how development of student accommodation could be supported and encouraged.	Agreed in part
2. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue its policy of encouraging student-specific accommodation projects along the lines of existing developments such as the ANU City West projects.	Agreed
3. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore developing student co-operative models, along the lines of the Sydney University model, with ANU or UC and report to the Legislative Assembly on this matter.	Agreed in part
4. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate a student survey in the ACT to inform and assist identification of student experience and expectations of accommodation and other related factors in the ACT. The survey results should be used by the Learning Capital Council to advise the ACT Government on student housing needs and solutions.	Agreed in part
5. The ACT Government should review the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 with regards to: • definitions of occupancy • standardised occupancy agreements • standardised provisions on evictions, to include arbitration • provisions around lodgement of bonds and the process for how occupancy rules are developed and changed • provision of information to tenants on their rights and responsibilities.	Agreed in part
6. The Committee recommends that the Learning Capital Council approach tertiary institutions in the ACT to provide details of their strategies for student accommodation and support to the Learning Capital Council to incorporate into their reports to the ACT Government.	Agreed
7. The Committee recommends that in Annual Reports the ACT Government include updates on the activities and initiatives set out in the Commonwealth-Territory higher education arrangements and agendas on the level of support and planning to respond to the demands from the implementation of those initiatives.	Agreed
8. That the Government provide a report to the Legislative Assembly on how student accommodation will be dealt with as part of the strategic planning required by the Commonwealth initiatives including for low socio-economic status students.	Agreed in part

9. That the ACT Government request advice from the Learning Capital Council on the best strategies for planning student accommodation in the ACT as part of its reporting and advice requirements.	Agreed
10. The ACT Government consult with all tertiary institutions in the ACT, particularly in relation to available funding and support.	Agreed

THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The ACT Government thanks the Standing Committee for its consideration of issues relating to the accommodation needs of tertiary education students in the ACT. The Government agrees wholly or in part to all the Committee's recommendations.

The Committee's Report was timely given the renewed focus on the place of tertiary education in the Territory as expressed in the Government's response to the Tertiary Taskforce, *Learning Capital*, and the announcement of Government's commitment to the *StudyCanberra* initiative.

Several of the actions recommended by the Committee align well with the scope of work identified by the Learning Capital Council

To that end, Government will task the Learning Capital Council with actioning recommendations three, four, six, and eight, and reporting on its findings in a single report to the Government and the Legislative Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that planning for housing suitable for development as student accommodation be included in the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan, including consideration of how development of student accommodation could be supported and encouraged.

Agreed in part

A third phase of the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan was released in June 2012. Many of the actions in Phase III are aimed at improving affordability in the private rental market, particularly for lower income households.

While Phase III does not explicitly refer to student accommodation, tertiary students generally fall within the cohorts targeted by these initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue its policy of encouraging student-specific accommodation projects along the lines of existing developments such as the ANU City West projects.

Agreed

The ACT Government has provided support for a range of student accommodation projects including the recent 'Campus 1' developments at the University of Canberra, the Lena Karmel Lodge at the Australian National University and the leasing of a student-specific residence to the Canberra Institute of Technology.

In addition to the Australian National University/City West developments, the Government is supporting the construction of 1,000 new student dwellings by the University of Canberra.

The new accommodation at the University of Canberra and the City West accommodation are being built under the National Rental Affordability Scheme, meaning that they will be rented at no more than 80% of the market rate.

The Government will continue to examine opportunities to support new student-specific accommodation as they arise.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore developing student co-operative models, along the lines of the Sydney University model, with ANU or UC and report to the Legislative Assembly on this matter.

Agreed in part

The ACT Government notes that individual tertiary education providers would be best placed to lead the development of student co-operative models.

During 2012, the ACT Government assisted the Canberra Student Housing Cooperative to establish itself in a seven bedroom unit at Havelock House. This has now expanded to four multi-bedroom units occupied by 22 students. Discussions are continuing between the Student Cooperative and Housing ACT.

In conjunction with actioning recommendations four, six, and eight, Government will ask the Learning Capital Council to provide information on institution-led student cooperative models of accommodation in its report to Government and the Legislative Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate a student survey in the ACT to inform and assist identification of student experience and expectations of accommodation and other related factors in the ACT. The Survey results should be used by the Learning Capital Council to advise the ACT Government on student housing needs and solutions.

Agreed in part

The ACT Government notes that data on the student experience, including of student accommodation, is already collected through surveys conducted by tertiary education providers.

Administration of these surveys is mandated as a condition of Commonwealth funding. The Government will task the Learning Capital Council with approaching all local tertiary education providers seeking available data on the student accommodation experience.

In conjunction with actioning recommendations three, six, and eight, Government will ask the Learning Capital Council to present its findings in its report to Government and the Legislative Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The ACT Government should review the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 with regards to:

- *definitions of occupancy*
- *standardised occupancy agreements*
- *standardised provisions on evictions, to include arbitration*
- *provisions around lodgement of bonds and the process for how occupancy rules are developed and changed*
- *provision of information to tenants on their rights and responsibilities.*

Agreed in part

The ACT Government is already conducting a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, noting that the *Building Code of Australia* is the key reference document around occupancy classifications. The issues raised by the Committee will be examined in greater detail in that review.

In relation to occupancies, the legislation deliberately takes a rights-based view of occupancies, rather than attempting to catalogue the range of different occupancy types which may exist from time to time in the market. This approach has allowed the market to adapt according to market pressures, rather than the market adopting one or other pre-determined occupancies.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the Learning Capital Council approach tertiary institutions in the ACT to provide details of their strategies for student accommodation and support to the Learning Capital Council to incorporate into their reports to the ACT Government.

Agreed

The Government will ask the Learning Capital Council to seek information from all ACT tertiary education providers on their planning for student accommodation.

In conjunction with actioning recommendations three, four, and eight, the Learning Capital Council will present this information in its report to Government and the Legislative Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that in Annual Reports the ACT Government include updates on the activities and initiatives set out in the Commonwealth-Territory higher education arrangements and agendas on the level of support and planning to respond to the demands from the implementation of those initiatives.

Agreed

In accordance with the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* (the Act) and annual report directions, ACT Government directorates prepare annual reports each financial year on their operations.

These reports are presented to the Legislative Assembly, subject to part (4) of the Act.

The Government agrees that in cases where government agencies implement initiatives that provide support and planning for higher education student accommodation under the terms of a Commonwealth-Territory partnership, those initiatives will be reported on in the agencies' annual reports.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That the Government provide a report to the Legislative Assembly on how student accommodation will be dealt with as part of the strategic planning required by the Commonwealth initiatives including for low socio-economic status students.

Agreed in part

The ACT Government will task the Learning Capital Council to approach tertiary education providers for information related to strategic planning for student accommodation to support Commonwealth initiatives, including for low socio-economic status students.

In conjunction with recommendations three, four, and six, the findings will be provided in the report to Government and the Legislative Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the ACT Government request advice from the Learning Capital Council on the best strategies for planning student accommodation in the ACT as part of its reporting and advice requirements.

Agreed

The ACT Government will seek advice from tertiary education providers through the Learning Capital Council on strategies for planning student accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The ACT Government consult with all tertiary institutions in the ACT, particularly in relation to available funding and support.

Agreed

The Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Education and Training routinely meet with the Vice Chancellors of the Australian National University and University of Canberra and the Chief Executive of Canberra Institute of Technology.

The ACT Government also consults with the broader group of tertiary education providers in regard to issues that impact on their operations. These consultations include consideration of funding and support for student accommodation.