



STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Elizabeth Kikkert MLA (Chair), Michael Pettersson MLA (Deputy Chair),
Andrew Braddock MLA

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
20 October 2021

Asked by Elizabeth Lee MLA on 20 October 2021: Andrew Barr MLA took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Transcript 20 October 2021, Page 40]

In relation to:

MS LEE: Thank you, Chair.

Can I just ask a question, I am referring to the Centre for International Economics Reports, page 63, where we talk about ACT residents that do not qualify for the Commonwealth Government Concession Programs, do not receive any special dispensation. And that has been acknowledged in the Cost-of-Living Statement attached to the budget.

Can you outline, Treasurer, please what—I suppose, measures or initiatives or anything that is in place to ensure that our most vulnerable Canberrans, or I suppose the lower income Canberrans who are most vulnerable to increases in costs and charge, how they are being looked after?

Mr Barr: The ones outlined in the budget papers in context of all of the initiatives that we have. But you would know from the statement that we provide free health, education, and we provide subsidised public transport services, we provide access to a range of ACT government services across all directorates at either no or low cost, so that is the main way.

Then we have a concessions program that provides direct financial assistance to low-income households. And that is outline in the budget papers.

Included amongst that this year is the \$1,000 utilities concession. But there is also assistance with motor vehicle registration, with drivers' licenses, with a range of other fees and charges. I mean, I will not list them all now. I will take—they are the budget papers, you know them. We could give you the list if you would like us to write them down again.

MS LEE: No, just a matter of—I was more asking about, obviously, the concession scheme being limited to those who are eligible for the commonwealth concession scheme as well. So I am just wondering whether there is anything aside from that, given the limitation?

Mr Barr: Well there would be some elements of ACT government concessions that would go to people who are not on commonwealth statutory income payments or are on partial commonwealth statutory income payments.

MS LEE: Okay. Are you—can I have a list of that, please?

Mr Barr: Sure.

MS LEE: Thank you. Sorry, can I just say for the Hansard, it is taken on notice.

Mr Barr: Yes, it is taken on notice.

ANDREW BARR MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

The ACT offers a range of concessions that provide targeted cost of living support to low income and vulnerable households.

In providing cost of living assistance to Canberrans, the ACT Government generally provides assistance to recipients of Commonwealth concession cards and statutory income payments, targeting support to the lower income and wealth households who need it most. However, there are some discounts and assistance measures available to low income, senior and asylum seeker households who are not necessarily receiving Commonwealth benefits.

Assistance	Description	Available to
Utilities Concession	Rebate on bills up to \$1,000 in 2021-22 (\$750 per year ongoing with an additional temporary \$250 in 2021-22)	Commonwealth Low Income Health Care Card holders (not aligned to statutory income payments), ACT Services Access Card holders (asylum seekers)
Utilities hardship fund	\$1 million contribution to the fund over four years from 2021-22	Canberrans who need support paying their utility bills
Rates (aged) deferral	Deferment of rates at very low interest rate until property is transferred or sold	Property owners aged 65 or over who own at least 75 per cent equity in their home
Rates (hardship) deferral	Deferment of rates at very low interest rate	Property owners suffering significant financial hardship
Mortgage Relief Fund	Interest free loan of up to \$10,000	Property owners of a single property valued below the ACT median property value, who have at least 10 per cent equity and are having difficulty making mortgage repayments due to an unforeseen change in their circumstances
Conveyance duty concessions	Up to 100 per cent discount on stamp duty payable	First home buyers, residents who have not owned or whose partner has not owned residential property in the last two years, owner occupier purchases of off-the-plan units valued at \$500,000 or less

Spectacle Subsidy scheme	Subsidy of up to \$200 once every two years on spectacles	Commonwealth Low Income Health Care Card holders
Taxi Subsidy Scheme	Assistance for people with a disability or significant mobility restriction	People with severe activity limitations preventing them from using public transport
Motor Vehicle Registrations	10 per cent discount on standard vehicle registration or 28 per cent discount on gas or electric vehicle registration fees	ACT Seniors Card holders
Public transport concessions	Reduced or free fares on Transport Canberra bus and light rail services	Free travel for ACT Seniors Card holders aged over 70, reduced fares for all other ACT Seniors Card holders, reduced fares for ACT Services Access Card holders
COVID-19 hardship payments	\$270 payment for Canberrans who are complying with public health orders, including isolating while awaiting COVID-19 test results	Everyone in the labour force who meets the eligibility criteria, including casual, part-time, full-time workers and self-employed individuals
COVID-19 residential tenancy relief (COVID-19 assistance measure)	Land tax credit up to \$100 per week, from 1 August to 31 December 2021	Landlords who reduce rent charged to tenants significantly impacted by COVID-19 by at least 25 per cent
Rates deferral (COVID-19 hardship) assistance	Deferral of Q1 2021-22 rates interest free for up to three months on principal place of residence	Homeowners experiencing significant financial hardship due to COVID-19 lockdown

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Signature: 

Date: 5.11.21

By the Treasurer, Andrew Barr MLA