

**2024**

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

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION –  
REPORT 10 - INQUIRY INTO ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2022-23**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**Presented by  
Andrew Barr MLA  
Chief Minister  
August 2024**

## **Introduction**

On 11 February 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the 2 December 2020 Resolution of Establishment (clause 3) referring the Annual and Financial Reports to the relevant Standing Committee for inquiry and report by 9 April of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

The 2022-2023 Annual and Financial Reports were reviewed by the relevant Standing Committees, and each Committee held hearings and reported separately. The below Government Response addresses the recommendations within the report from the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion.

The following Annual and Financial Reports or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion:

- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- Community Services Directorate;
- Education Directorate;
- Major Projects Canberra;
- Canberra Institute of Technology; and
- University of Canberra.

**Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion – Report 10 - Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-23**

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue the trial of disability inclusion coaches and provide the committee a copy of any evaluation of the initiative.</p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>The ACT Government’s <i>Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-34</i> and its associated First Action Plan included a commitment to introduce school-based inclusion coaches in a network-based try, test and learn approach in Tuggeranong.</p> <p>Seven inclusion coaches have been recruited for schools led by an office-based Senior Inclusion Coach, with work starting in Term 1, 2024. Inclusion coaches will play an important role in shaping targeted professional learning and developing supports across schools to ensure we are strengthening inclusion, so students with a disability can access education on the same basis as their peers.</p> <p>Evaluation reports will be collated periodically to track progress against the objectives of the try, test and learn approach and shared with the committee.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue construction of a second college for Gungahlin and include the following information in its Annual Report until construction is complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress of construction, including any delays to completion; and</li> <li>• Capacity levels at the existing Gungahlin College campus.</li> </ul>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>The capacity of Gungahlin College is 1,254 in 2024. As at February 2024 Census there were 1,118 students enrolled, giving a utilisation rate of 89.2%.</p> <p>Capacity data for each ACT public school is included in the <i>Census of ACT Schools</i> publication, made available on the Education Directorate website following each February school census.</p> <p>Progress of construction of a second college in Gungahlin, including any delays to completion, will be reported in the Education Directorate’s Annual report.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government expedite the trial of automatic opening and closing gates at ACT public schools and report on the outcomes of the trial in its Annual Report.</p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>Work to enhance community access to school facilities through the trial of automatic, timed gate access at a select number of participating pilot schools is underway and an update will be provided in the Annual Report.</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government review residency criteria with the view to expand eligibility for the Future of Education Equity Fund.</p>	<p><b>NOT AGREED</b></p> <p>The Future of Education Equity Fund is designed to provide financial support to low-income families living in the ACT to help cover the costs of education expenses. The Fund is intended for ACT residents with students attending ACT schools.</p> <p>NSW residents are eligible for supports from the NSW state government, whilst ACT residents are not. Expanding the eligibility criteria to include NSW residents would make them eligible for supports from multiple state or territory governments. This would put them at an advantage over ACT residents, who are the intended recipients of the Fund.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Palestinian and Israeli communities in Canberra, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review which ACT organisations and community centres receive funding under the Commonwealth Government social cohesion package to identify potential funding gaps;</li> <li>• report back to the committee on the outcome of this review</li> </ul>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>The ACT Government will continue to support the Palestinian and Israeli communities in Canberra. The ACT Government is committed to a multicultural and inclusive Canberra with a strong legislative framework set up under the Multiculturalism Act 2023. Everyone should feel safe, welcomed, and have a sense of belonging in our community.</p> <p>The Commonwealth Government has committed \$25 million to support Australian Palestinian, Muslim and other communities, who have been deeply affected by the conflict. The Commonwealth Government is overseeing these funding programs directly with stakeholders and organisations.</p> <p>The Australian Red Cross is administering some funding on behalf of the Department of Home Affairs in the form of small cash payments/vouchers directly to people to meet basic needs, for example, food, medicine, shelter. The funding will be provided over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 program years.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further information to multicultural communities about the redevelopment of the Exhibition Park in Canberra precinct.</p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>In 2023-24, Venues Canberra, with assistance from CSD, undertook stakeholder engagement with multicultural communities regarding the Fitzroy Pavilion and EPIC precinct. Meetings were held with the ACT Multicultural Advisory Council and Multicultural Festival organisers in July and September 2023 regarding the refurbishment of the Fitzroy Pavilion at EPIC. A refurbished Fitzroy Pavilion will provide upgraded catering facilities and amenities and be suitable for hosting larger scale community and multicultural events. In October 2023, an onsite session was held with prospective hirers to view conceptual designs and discuss needs.</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government, in consultation with Women's Health Matters and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, develop 'perceptions of safety' measures that reflect the experience of women in the ACT.</p>	<p><b>AGREED IN-PRINCIPLE</b></p> <p>'Perceptions of safety' measures sits within the existing ACT Government policy framework. All Australian Governments report on 'perceptions of safety' annually in the Report on Government Services, under Part C (Justice). This data is collated by the Australian Federal Police and has been used to inform annual reporting on Community Services Directorates Strategic Indicator 5 (Promote an anti-violence culture in the ACT to ensure that women feel safe).</p> <p>The ACT Government will continue to explore whether this measure is the most fit-for-purpose measure to report on perceptions of safety.</p> <p>The ACT Government continues to consult with Women's Health Matters and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women on matters affecting women in the ACT including perceptions of safety.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that-the ACT Government work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to develop data metrics and report on the outcomes of this work in its Annual Report.</p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Affairs is working across the ACT Government to improve data reporting frameworks in line with commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.</p> <p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body included feedback on the need to improve data collection and reporting in the report from the August 2023 hearings.</p> <p>A key component of this will be working with external parties, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Controlled Community Organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, to develop data metrics that report on targets under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-28.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further funding to the Integrated Service Response Program.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>Any changes to the Integrated Service Response Program will be considered as part of the ACT Government's response to the Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Royal Commission into Violence, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government consult with the ACT office of Australian War Widows Inc. on how best to commemorate War Widows Day in the future.</p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>The ACT Government has an established relationship with ACT War Widows Inc. The Act Government will continue to work with ACT War Widows Inc to commemorate War Widows Day in the future.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that, during the pilot of the new Seniors Card Program, the ACT Government work with the Supplier to better integrate the ACT Seniors Card with the MyWay system, and report on actions taken in its annual report.</p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p> <p>The published Investment Plan highlights how the commissioning cycle has informed changes to the ACT Seniors Card Program and sets out the long-term intentions for the program. This includes reference to the need for cross-sectoral partnership and collaboration to support a well-managed transition of the dual Seniors Card and MyWay card through pending ticketing reforms.</p> <p>The establishment of the ACT Seniors Card Reference Group will support this work, bringing together key ACT Government stakeholders (with responsibility for aspects of the Program) and the Supplier. Participation in the reference group will be embedded in the Agreement for the program pilot.</p> <p>Key updates on the progress of work over the pilot term will be reported via the Community Services Directorate annual report.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support and expand fee-free TAFE and report back to the committee on areas of unmet demand following completion of the first tranche of the three-year agreement.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p>Fee Free TAFE is a funding agreement between the ACT and the Australian Governments. Tranche one was a 12-month agreement and commenced in January 2023. Over 2,600 students had enrolled in Fee Free TAFE courses at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) in 2023, achieving the enrolment commitment for tranche one of 2,530.</p> <p>Tranche two is a 3-year agreement that commenced in January 2024. There are 3,600 places available over the three-year period. As of 20 May 2024, priority learners have enrolled in 683 places.</p> <p>As part of the 2024-25 Budget, the Australian Government announced an expansion of Fee Free TAFE focusing on the Building and Construction industry. The ACT looks forward to discussing this expansion with the Australian Government.</p> <p>The ACT Government reports quarterly to the Australian Government and will continue to monitor and report on demand and uptake of places.</p>