

2025

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

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

**ACT Government Response to the
2025 ACT Youth Assembly Report**

**Presented by
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Minister for Children, Youth and Families
December 2025**

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ACT Government Response to the 2025 ACT Youth Assembly Report

Acknowledgement of Country

The Health and Community Services 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 staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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Minister's message



I am pleased to present the 2025 ACT Youth Assembly 'Our Voice, Our Impact' Report – ACT Government Response.

The insights and recommendations shared by young people through the 2025 ACT Youth Assembly provide valuable guidance for shaping policies and programs that reflect their needs and aspirations.

Thank you to every young person who contributed their time, ideas and shared their lived experiences. Your voices are essential to building a fair, inclusive and vibrant Canberra.

Michael Pettersson MLA

Minister for Children, Youth and Families

● Introduction

The ACT Government has a long-standing commitment to supporting youth engagement and participation.

On 27 May 2025, the ACT Government partnered with the ACT Youth Advisory Council to deliver the 2025 ACT Youth Assembly (the Assembly).

The Assembly brought together 51 young Canberrans aged 12 to 25 to deliberate on key issues affecting their lives and to present recommendations to government.

The process was informed by lived experience, co-design and evidence, ensuring the voices of young people remain central to the Territory's policy and planning.

The 2025 Assembly explored 3 contemporary themes identified by young people through pre-Assembly consultations:

1. Education,
2. Health and Wellbeing,
3. Housing.

Through facilitated forums, participants developed 9 recommendations across these themes, focusing on practical actions to improve mental health supports, strengthen education pathways, and address housing affordability and access for young people.

This Government Response outlines the ACT Government's position and actions relating to each of the 9 recommendations, incorporating input from relevant ACT Government directorates to ensure accuracy and reflect existing and emerging initiatives.

Education forum

This forum explored how ACT schools, vocational training and higher education can better prepare young people for adult life. Participants identified gaps in civics education, financial literacy and career guidance, and called for consistent learning opportunities and fair access to resources across all school settings. Young people put forward 3 key recommendations to help achieve this.

Recommendation 1

The ACT Government to invest in teaching resources that deliver consistent education in civics, financial literacy and career pathways, with delivery of these resources being a mandatory requirement in the school curriculum.

ACT Government response

Civics, financial literacy and career education are supported within the ACT curriculum.

Career Education

The ACT Government's Education Directorate delivers career education programs aligned with the *Future of Education Strategy* and supports ACT public schools to embed consistent approaches.

To strengthen career pathways, the ACT Government developed the *Understanding Building and Construction Program (UBCP)*, also known as *Try-a-Trade*, which is currently implemented in 6 ACT public schools and will expand to 10 schools by 2026. UBCP is a curriculum-based program which provides:

- Year 8: An introduction to career development and opportunities in the construction industry.
- Years 9/10: A *Women in Construction* work-studies elective, supporting gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated fields.

This initiative is supported by industry and tertiary partnerships and aligns with broader strategic frameworks including the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*, *Skilled to Succeed Action Plans* and the *ACT Wellbeing Framework*.

The ACT Government is also trialling and refining integrated career-related curriculum across all school levels:

- Primary: *Career Learning and Pathways pilot (2024)* – Health and Physical Education (Australian Curriculum V9.0)
- Years 9-10: *Work Studies* (Australian Curriculum)
- Years 11-12: *Pathways to Work and Learning* (ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies courses)

All ACT high schools and colleges also have access to online resources including:

- *Career Tools* – curriculum-aligned lessons, résumé and cover-letter builders, e-portfolios and virtual job experiences.
- *Myfuture* – a national online platform offering career-exploration and self-awareness tools to support informed decision-making.

Financial Literacy

All ACT public schools K-10 implement the Australian Curriculum V9.0, which has a strong focus on financial literacy.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has developed a *Consumer and Financial Literacy Curriculum Connection* resource that supports teachers and leaders to plan for effective financial-literacy education.

The *Consumer and Financial Literacy Curriculum Connection* shows educators where consumer and financial literacy is addressed across the curriculum. Teachers may make additional connections that best suit their school context. The Australian Curriculum V9.0 addresses learning about consumer and financial literacy through explicit content in the Mathematics, Humanities and Social Sciences and Technologies learning areas in Foundation to Year 10 and connects to key elements and organising ideas of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

To further support teachers, the ACT Government has partnered with Dr Carly Sawatzki (Deakin University) to develop a series of teacher

professional-learning resources that helps teachers strengthen students' financial capability and confidence.

Civics Education

All ACT public schools K-10 implement the *Australian Curriculum V9.0*, which has a strong focus on civics education.

- In Kindergarten to Year 6, schools teach *Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)*, which incorporates civics and citizenship as a learning focus.
- In Years 7-10, students study *Civics and Citizenship* as a separate humanities subject.
- Teachers also have access to a range of supporting resources, including ACARA's *Respectful Relationships Curriculum Connection* and the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) teaching materials and programs, such as Learning Activities And Resources For Schools - MoAD Online

In addition to targeted support for schools to implement learning programs relating to civics, financial literacy and career education, the ACT Government works with ACT public schools to strengthen all aspects of teaching, including curriculum planning. This work helps to ensure consistent and quality enactment of the *Australian Curriculum V9.0* in all settings K-10.

Recommendation 2

The ACT Education Directorate to maintain and enhance mandatory Diversity and Inclusion training for all educators, focusing on supporting neurodivergent students and young people of colour and for fostering inclusive, cohesive classrooms. It should be regularly updated, co-designed with diverse communities and include practical, ongoing support for teachers.

ACT Government Response

The ACT Government has an ongoing commitment to inclusive education.

All educators have access to professional learning to support neurodivergent children and young people, including ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI)-accredited sessions about understanding neurodiversity,

complex communication needs, sensory processing and understanding behaviour.

The *Inclusive Education Student Voice Forum* has also been established to provide a voice and ensure that neurodivergent students, students with disability and their allies have a say about inclusion reforms.

All teachers are required to engage in ongoing professional development to maintain their registration with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.

The Education Directorate offers a range of professional learning to teachers and school leaders through the learning-management system. Broadly, these offerings fall into the following categories:

- Cultural Integrity – supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities.
- Inclusion – supporting neurodiverse students or students with specific physical or learning needs.
- Respectful Relationships – with a focus on gender.
- Health-related information – for specific student support.

In addition to student-focused offerings, teachers and school leaders can access a range of other ACT Government Diversity and Inclusion training sessions. Schools may also engage in specific training to meet the needs of teachers and school leaders in relation to the needs of their student cohort.

Recommendation 3

The ACT Government to increase funding for all ACT high schools to employ at least one dedicated career adviser to enhance support for students' career development and facilitate a smoother transition into college, vocational training, or employment.

ACT Government Response

ACT public schools currently deliver career education through various staffing arrangements.

The ACT Government acknowledges the importance of supporting students' career development and transitions into further education, training or employment. While the recommendation to increase funding

for dedicated career advisers in all ACT high schools is appreciated, current funding arrangements are designed to provide flexibility for schools to allocate resources based on local priorities and student needs.

Colleges (Years 11–12)

The ACT Government provides ongoing annual funding for each of the 9 mainstream ACT public colleges and 2 specialist schools to employ a *Transitions and Careers Officer (TaCO)*. These are qualified teachers with nationally recognised career-development credentials who work closely with students, school staff and feeder high schools to support transitions and career planning.

Cross-School Collaboration

TaCOs in colleges support students from their network of feeder schools. For example, Gungahlin College TaCOs work with Gold Creek, Harrison and Amaroo Schools.

Currently, ACT colleges have funded TaCO positions, while ACT high schools deliver career education through varied resources and professional support.

High Schools (Years 7–10)

High schools are not funded specifically for TaCOs. Career education in schools is delivered through a variety of approaches, including work-readiness activities, integration into the curriculum, transition-planning support and individual career guidance. Some schools may choose to invest in additional resources based on their own priorities, which may include assigning teachers or staff members with career-development responsibilities.

All ACT public high schools and colleges have access to ACT Government-funded online platforms such as:

- *Career Tools* – lesson plans, career activities, résumé builders and virtual job experiences.
- *Myfuture* – a national resource for exploring career pathways and building self-awareness, accessible via the ACT School Backpack.
- *InPlace* – standardised templates and tools to support the Work Experience program.

The ACT Government also supports career-development professionals through:

- Transition Network Groups (TNGs) – encouraging collaboration across schools.
- TaCO meetings – with opportunities for professional development.
- Myfuture workshops – providing training on using career resources.
- TQI-accredited professional learning, including:
 - *Successful Student Transitions Workshop* (3 hours)
 - *Career Education in Secondary School* (2 hours)
 - *Career Education in Primary School* (2 hours)

The ACT Government is committed to enhancing career education through:

- Cross-sector partnerships with industry and education providers.
- *Understanding Building and Construction Program (UBCP)* – career-focused curriculum for Years 8-10.
- *Vocational Learning Programs* – practical learning for Years 9-12.
- *Head Start Program* – Australian School-based Apprenticeships for Years 10-12.
- Targeted support for vulnerable students, including those with disability, in Out-of-Home Care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- New roles such as the *Inclusion Transitions and Careers Coach* (Tuggeranong network) and *Head Start Career Coach* to support career professionals and students across the sector.
- Curriculum innovation, including:
 - *Pathways to Work and Learning* (Years 11–12).
 - *UBCP Work Studies Elective* for Years 9–10.
 - *Year 8 Career Education Program* (aligned with General Capabilities) delivered in pastoral care.

- *Career Tools* lesson plans supporting career education across Years 7-12.
- *Years 5/6 Career Learning and Pathways Program* to help primary students transition to high school.

Additionally, ACT public high schools are funded through the *Schools Resource Allocation (SRA)* model, which provides funding for specific student needs.

Health & Wellbeing forum

This forum explored how young people experience the ACT's health system, from access to mental-health support to broader wellbeing services. Participants spoke about wait times, health education in schools and the need for more practical, inclusive approaches to care. They called for the expansion of online supports such as MindMap, greater access to school-based mental-health professionals and stronger harm-minimisation strategies. Young people put forward 3 key recommendations to improve health and wellbeing supports across the ACT.

Recommendation 1

The ACT Government to expand the scope of MindMap ACT to include physical and sexual healthcare with education and directory functions.

ACT Government Response

The ACT Government acknowledges the call highlighted by the ACT Youth Assembly for more integrated online support services for physical and sexual healthcare services in the ACT.

MindMap is designed to help young people find mental health service and support — a dedicated online triage and navigation portal specifically designed for young people and their parents and carers in the ACT. A feature of MindMap is its ability to provide support for young people who are on a waitlist for other services, ensuring support is available during what can be a challenging waiting period.

MindMap's core purpose is to simplify access to mental-health support, services and information and to help people find the right service within Canberra's mental-health system. Continued service development is a priority for MindMap in the ACT, including reviewing how young people use the program.

Combining mental, physical and sexual health services into MindMap would present ongoing challenges with updating and maintaining accurate

service information. In addition, adding these functions to MindMap would require significant redevelopment time and funding that may undermine the mental-health support functions of the service.

As such, the ACT Government considers that it may be best to explore how MindMap and other existing health services or directories, such as My Community Directory, can work better together.

Recommendation 2

The ACT Government to raise the standard of mental health in ACT schools by increasing the availability of on-site mental-health professionals, providing compulsory mental-health training to all school staff and students and creating sensory-friendly spaces for students.

ACT Government Response

The ACT Government recognises the importance of student mental health and supports a range of services to enhance student wellbeing.

- Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) is funded to provide mental-health promotion and education services in the ACT, including the *Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM)* program — an evidence-based program for Year 9 students developed to promote mental health and address suicidal behaviour. MIEACT also offers programs for primary and secondary students about stress, anxiety, bullying, depression and stigma.
- Youth at Risk (YAR) Project works to improve the sector response to young people with complex needs and trauma who have, or are at risk of developing, moderate mental ill-health. Staff from all ACT schools were invited to take part in Trauma Informed Practice Training as part of this project. This training was rolled out as a Try-Test-and-Learn initiative and included foundational learning on mental health, trauma, culture and disadvantage.
- Under the Australian Government Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, the ACT Government will increase mental-health practitioners in ACT public schools between 2026 and 2029. The Education Directorate is scoping the service offering to complement existing wellbeing hubs in schools. The Directorate employs allied-

health professionals and is reviewing staff capability needs for these roles.

- The Education Directorate's *Safe and Supportive Schools Policy* outlines the commitment to ensuring all ACT public schools provide positive, engaging environments for students. Calm, supervised withdrawal spaces are encouraged for students who need opportunities to regulate emotions and behaviours. Occupational therapists are available to consult with schools to create sensory-friendly spaces.
- The Canberra Health Services (CHS) *Childhood Early Intervention Program (CEIP)* provides specialist mental-health early-intervention services for children from pre-school to Year 6 who are displaying early signs of anxiety, depression and/or emerging conduct problems. The team works with children, parents and teachers through programs such as *U R Fab (Understanding and Responding to Feelings and Behaviours)*, *Cool Kids*, *Tuning into Teens* and *Circle of Security* with ACT Child and Family Centres.

Recommendation 3

The ACT Government to replicate and expand The Junction's Health Service model of care across multiple locations, with a particular focus on underserved regions. Furthermore, a harm-minimisation approach to drug use should be adopted within these services, offering non-judgemental support including access to pill testing, education and safe, evidence-based care.

ACT Government Response

In 2023-24 the ACT Government carried out a comprehensive commissioning process for Primary Health Services for Young People that was informed by the lived experience and expertise of young people across the ACT and the health and wellbeing professionals who work with them. The ACT Youth Advisory Council was consulted through this process.

A key outcome was that services should be geographically distributed so that young people can access services close to where they are.

The *Junction Youth Health Service* run by Anglicare is one of the partners delivering services through the new program. The Junction model offers youth-friendly, holistic care. This funding has enabled expansion of the

Junction’s model to underserved regions through the purchase and fit-out of a van that operates a nurse-led primary-care outreach mobile clinic, complementing their general practice services and responding flexibly to community needs. The Junction also regularly attends out-of-home care facilities, schools with large numbers of vulnerable young people and specialist youth service providers to reach young people where they are — including the Police Citizens Youth Club, Oasis Youth Housing, Gunners and Galilee School.

The Junction adopts a harm-minimisation and non-judgemental approach to alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use in line with evidence-based practice. As part of its primary-care services the Junction provides drug-and-alcohol assessment, counselling and referral to other ATOD services, including for young people with complex needs and co-occurring mental-health issues.

The ACT Government is committed to an evidence-based harm-minimisation approach to ATOD use by young people and the wider community. It has invested approximately \$109 million under the *ACT Drug Strategy Action Plan 2022-2026* to reduce ATOD-related harm, including several actions targeted at young people.

Investments include the *CanTEST Health and Drug Checking Service* — opened in 2022 and funded through June 2027 — which provides non-judgemental harm-reduction information and education to people of all ages. The ACT Government also supports pill-testing and harm-minimisation at music festivals and other events popular with young people, consistent with the *ACT Government Festivals Pill Testing Policy*.

In addition, the ACT Government will appoint a member representing young people to the Liquor Advisory Board to ensure youth perspectives inform advice on liquor laws, harm minimisation and community safety.

Housing forum

This forum explored the challenges young people face in finding safe and affordable housing, and in understanding their rights as tenants. Participants discussed the need for better housing education, stronger renter protections and fairer access to affordable options. They also raised concerns about discrimination, high rental costs and restrictive zoning laws that limit housing choice. Young people put forward 3 key recommendations to improve housing access and education in the ACT.

Recommendation 1

The ACT Government to develop a centralised, user-friendly website that provides young people with up-to-date housing information, tenant-rights education, and a safe platform to find suitable roommates for shared housing. The website should be promoted toward young people through a targeted digital and traditional campaign.

ACT Government Response

Housing is a priority for government and work is under way to make housing-related information more accessible to all Canberrans, including young people. The ACT Government will launch a campaign early in 2026 to raise community awareness of the ACT Government's various housing initiatives and opportunities available to support the community's housing needs.

This campaign will direct Canberrans to find information relevant to them in a one-stop shop housing page on the ACT Government's website. Whether its young people wanting to enter the housing market, rent a place or need to find urgent accommodation, they will be able to easily find the information they need in a quick, direct way.

The ACT Government also provides tenant-rights education and housing information through existing channels including the ACT Government website, social media, newsletters and through community and industry partners (for example, real estate and community-based organisations).

The ACT Government's [Housing, Planning and Property](#) website provides advice to help people buy, rent or own a home in the ACT, as well as advice for planning and development.

The ACT Government's [Rental laws in the ACT](#) website provides advice about rental laws and rights of tenants and landlords for rental properties in the ACT. This website also links to [The Renting Book](#), a detailed guide to rental laws in the ACT written primarily for tenants to explain their legal rights and responsibilities.

There are many existing private platforms that support young people to find suitable roommates. This is not something that the ACT Government currently provides or is actively considering.

Recommendation 2

The ACT Government to implement robust initiatives to incorporate housing education within the curriculum for post-primary school students and establish initiatives that connect young people to local services dedicated to providing housing support and guidance.

ACT Government Response

Education about tenancy rights and housing pathways is an identified need.

All ACT public schools K-10 implement the *Australian Curriculum V9.0*.

The Australian Curriculum V9.0 does not currently include specific curriculum on tenancy rights and housing pathways.

The ACT Government has partnered with [Legal Aid ACT](#) to provide legal aid supports in ACT colleges, including education and advice around tenancy rights and housing pathways.

Recommendation 3

The ACT Government should update zoning laws to allow for more housing, improve protections for renters and involve young people when making changes to legislation.

ACT Government Response

The ACT Government is progressing rental protections and planning reforms.

The ACT Government has been working to implement the commitments in National Cabinet's *Better Deal for Renters* reform package. The 2 final commitments requiring work include:

- further consideration of minimum standards for rental properties; and
- consideration of the information that can be required as part of a tenancy-application process and the protection of renters' personal information.

The ACT will consult with stakeholders on these commitments.

The ACT Government is responding to the demand for greater housing choice by reforms to our planning system, including draft changes to the Territory Plan through a *Major Plan Amendment* that proposes to remove barriers in the planning system and allow more housing choice (including dual- and tri-occupancy housing, townhouses and terrace homes) in new and existing residential areas.

These changes, along with the proposed *draft Missing Middle Housing Design Guide*, will make it easier to build well-designed, sustainable homes in our existing suburbs.

The proposed *Missing Middle Housing Reform* changes are currently under consultation. For more information please refer to [YourSay website](#).

Face-to-face community-engagement events for this project were spread across Canberra, with a range of dates, times and locations. Digital options were also made available, with details provided on the YourSay website and on social media, including Facebook and Instagram. This approach ensures inclusivity for all community members regardless of their obligations and responsibilities.

As part of the engagement activities, a pop-up event was held at CIT Bruce on 10 June 2025, providing an opportunity to engage with Canberrans who study, work or attend activities on campus. The Bruce CIT pop-up engaged with 39 community members, with 79.3 per cent of participants in favour of the reforms.

The engagement program saw 19 diverse events delivered across different locations and times to ensure opportunities for community feedback during business hours, after hours and on weekends.

In addition to the *Missing Middle Housing Reform*, the ACT Government is conducting needs assessments and feasibility studies in various areas across Canberra—particularly around local and group centres and along rapid-transport routes including the current and future light-rail corridor—to explore infill-development opportunities near existing infrastructure and shopping centres.

These community-engagement activities align with Clause 11 – Principles of Good Consultation under the *Planning Act 2023*, which outlines that consultation should be accessible.