



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2015-16

MR BRENDAN SMYTH MLA (CHAIR), MS MEEGAN FITZHARRIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), DR CHRIS BOURKE MLA, MS NICOLE LAWDER MLA

COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS SURVEY

**SURVEY OF COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY GROUPS ON THE
ACT BUDGET 2015-16
PRESENTED BY THE ACT GOVERNMENT ON 2 JUNE 2015**

If you wish to respond to this survey, please return it to committees@parliament.act.gov.au by **12.00pm Friday 5 June 2015**. If there is insufficient room for any of your comments, below, please append additional comments.

1. Full name of group/organisation:

UnitingCare Kippax

2. Name of contact person for this survey and their telephone number and email address:

Meg Richens 6254 1733 eo@kippax.org.au or

Gordon Ramsay gordon@kippax.org.au

3. Has your organisation/group developed a written analysis of the ACT Budget that it would like to submit to the Committee?

Yes (If yes, please email it to the Committee Secretariat with your completed survey and analysis.)

No

4. Please list, in order of priority, your three key priority areas regarding the ACT Budget 2015-2016 (you can expand on these in Question 5):

a. Support for those dealing with financial hardship

b. Support for families involved in the out of home care system

c. Consistent, collaborative service provision for vulnerable people in the community

5. Please detail your views on the ACT Budget in relation to your three priority areas?

- 5.a Support for those dealing with financial hardship includes funding for emergency financial and material aid; an appropriate and effective concessions system and access to affordable housing.

The 2015-16 ACT Budget failed to provide additional support for emergency financial and material aid (EFMA) for people in Canberra despite reductions in this support from the Australian Government. This is despite years of advocacy for additional funds that are required to meet demand. We remain concerned that the delay in the review of the EFMA program throughout a difficult time in the ACT economy has and will negatively impact those who are already most vulnerable.

It is positive that the budget grows the current investment in the concessions scheme for a further year. We note that this is in the context of the current review and the intention to undertake additional research into reform and increased targeting. It is important that this research and any subsequent reform takes into consideration the recommendations of the Targeted Assistance Strategy, which include a focus on increased and more effective access to concessions for those who need them.

The renewal of public housing stock is a significant and positive step. It will create a better and more inclusive stock of housing, and increase the quality of living for those in public housing. We are disappointed that there is no expansion in the overall number of people who are able to access public housing by this initiative. Homelessness in the ACT and access to affordable housing remains central to the quality of life of many vulnerable Canberrans.

- 5.b The current review of the Out of Home Care System in the ACT, as reflected in the Step Up for Kids procurement process, includes short term funding for the transition from the current system to whatever will be procured in the near future. It is important that this process recognises and resources the role of early intervention and prevention work that begins at the universal level and flows seamlessly into more targeted services in a way that is consistent with the implementation of the Blueprint for the Human Services System. Failure to resource the universal services will undermine the intention to reduce demand for intensive service provision in the longer term.

- 5.c The provision of funding for the Better Services Program and the Community Reform Program is welcomed. Extended funding for the One Human Services Gateway and the Strengthening Families program will need to be well targeted and effectively applied to ensure that outcomes are consistent with the intention of the Blueprint for Human Services. We do not believe that the continuation of a .34% levy on the community sector for the reform program is appropriate. This levy significantly impacts on community sector organisations who are required to absorb increasing costs as funding in the sector is 'rolled over' for another year. Along with others in the sector, we do not believe there is evidence that the imposition of this levy has produced results of benefit to the sector.

6. Are there any other particular issues with the ACT Budget that you would like to bring to the Committee's attention?

Yes No

a. If yes, please comment/attach further details:

7. Did you provide a budget submission to the ACT Government?

Yes (go to question 8) No (go to question 9.)

8. Do you think that the ACT Budget has addressed the issues raised in your submission?

Yes No

a. If yes, please comment

To some extent. The Government's intention to work constructively with the community, create/generate increased economic drivers and structure funding to support social inclusion and equality is positive. The steps taken in these directions are still limited.

9. Does your organisation/group wish to give its views in a Committee public hearing on Friday 12 June 2015, at the Legislative Assembly, London Circuit, Canberra.

Yes No

If you indicate yes, and the Committee decides to invite you to appear at the hearing, the Committee Support Office will contact you by close of business Wednesday 10 June 2015 to confirm arrangements. Please note that the Committee may not be able to hear from all groups/organisations.

Thank you for contributing to the inquiry.
