

**2018**

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

**RESPONSE TO ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION**

**1 November 2017**

**Review of Shopfront Services – Access Canberra**

**Tabled by  
Gordon Ramsay MLA  
Minister for Regulatory Services**

***(a) Undertake an analysis of the various shopfronts to determine whether the range of services available at the various shopfront locations provide:***

***(i) appropriate choice and availability for all ACT residents***

***Access Canberra Service Centres, Contact Centres and Website***

Access Canberra operates across the Canberra community, providing services over the phone and online, including live chat functions. In the 2016-17 financial year Access Canberra welcomed more than 450,000 customers through its service centres and shopfronts, recorded more than 2.7 million visits to the Access Canberra website and received more than 720,000 phone calls through its contact centre. Canberrans undertook over 1.7 million digital transactions in 2016-17.

Service centres are located at Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Woden and Canberra's fastest developing area, Gungahlin. The service centres provide various road transport related transactions, Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) applications, Births, Deaths and Marriage transactions, Proof of Identity cards, Seniors Cards and business and industry licensing transactions.

The Civic Drivers Licence Service, located in Civic Library, also provides some services. The services available include:

- Driver Licence renewal
- Proof of Identity Card
- Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) applications
- ACTION Gold Card services.

***Australia Post and Libraries ACT services***

In addition to the service centres, Access Canberra also offers face to face services through Australia Post outlets:

- Traffic and parking infringements
- Motor Vehicle registration renewal
- Housing ACT rent and/or maintenance payment
- General Rates
- Land Tax
- Conveyance Duty
- Residential Land Rent
- CIT student fee payment
- City Centre Marketing and Improvement Levy.

There are over 25 Australia Post locations<sup>1</sup> in the ACT.

***Specialist service centres and touchscreens***

In addition to service centres, specialist services are available through the Environment, Land and Planning Shopfront, in Dickson. This specialist centre currently administers the development application process, provides general planning advice, information about land

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Australia Post website [www.auspost.com.au](http://www.auspost.com.au). Figure includes Licensed Post Offices and Australia Post Shops.

zoning, leasing and licensing, unit titles, maps and land information, land titles and a fingerprinting service.

The Building Services Shopfront, in Mitchell, provides building file searches, house and drainage plans, plumbing, drainage and gas fitting plan approvals and inspection bookings, administration of building approval process, Energy Efficiency Rating applications, building and lease conveyancing and building depreciation information for tax. Touchscreens are available at both shopfronts, so customers can perform any transaction available electronically using the touchscreen if they pay by credit card. This includes services such as online Drivers Licence (if eligible) car registration renewal, and applications for Birth, Death or Marriage certificates.

### ***Building digital services capacity***

Access Canberra is focused on delivering high quality services to meet the needs of the ACT community through its service centres and contact centres; and building digital capacity through the Access Canberra website in line with the broader vision of the ACT Government.

This 'digital-first' focus is part of a broader strategy articulated in the Chief Minister's Statement of Ambition, which states *'we must continue to embrace the digital mindset and deliver integrated smart city initiatives.'* The strategy further states that, *'smart cities use technology to more fully engage with residents, more effectively and efficiently manage the city services, and attract and retain smart people and businesses to shape the city together.'*

The ACT population has a higher uptake of digital technology compared to other parts of the country — 94 per cent of Canberrans have internet at home; a higher proportion than the national average of 86 per cent. Among ACT internet users, those aged 15 to 17 years are the highest proportion of internet users (98 per cent) compared with the older age group (65 years and over) who are the lowest proportion of internet users (55 per cent).

According to the Digital Canberra Action Plan (2012-2018), the uptake of social media technology among ACT residents is also higher than the Australian average, as is their use of a wide range of devices — including desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile devices. It is vital that Access Canberra continues to develop to meet the changing needs of the ACT community through effective government service delivery.

Access Canberra is developing services to give the ACT community access 'around the clock'. More than fifty new digital services have been added to the Access Canberra website since the start of 2017, meaning there are now approximately 330 services available online. Some of the services recently added to the Access Canberra website include:

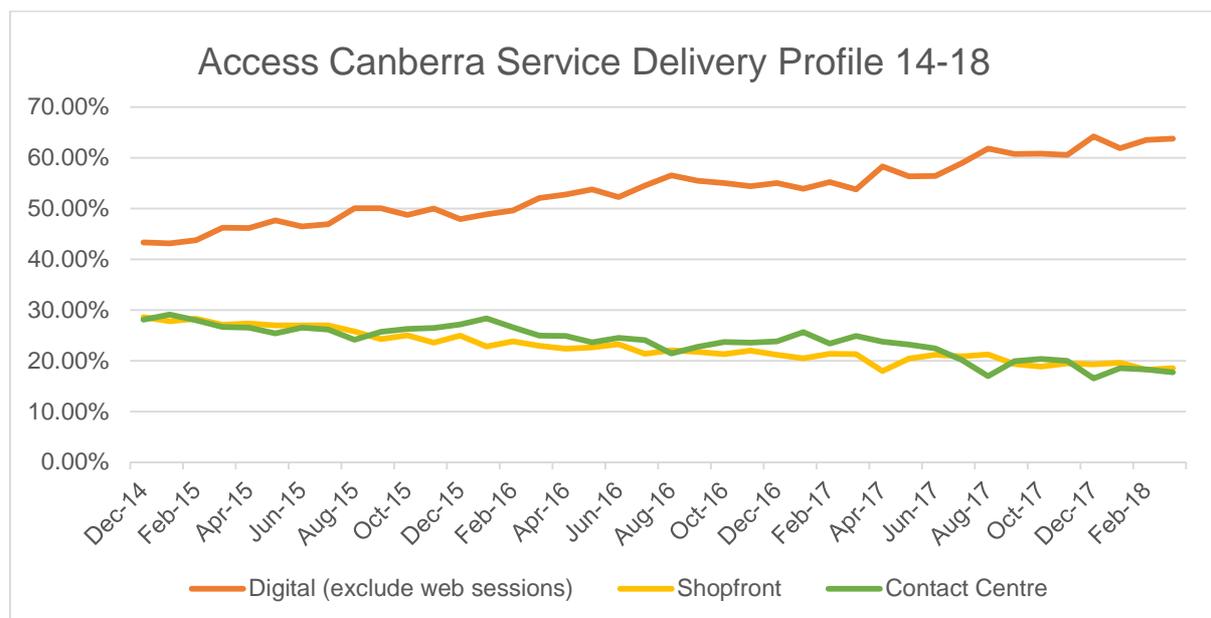
- driver licence renewal;
- rainbow and replacement number plate application;
- traders licence transfer;
- request parking infringement image;
- notice of application or approval for disposal to landfill — this is an application for disposal; of contaminated material to landfill in the ACT;

- application for various business trader licences including sale or repair of motor vehicles, second hand dealers and pawnbrokers.
- first Home Owner Grant application; and
- justice of the Peace online portal.

The effectiveness of moving Access Canberra transactions online can be demonstrated through the example of Driver Licence renewals, which were introduced in September 2017. Since the introduction of this online service, 13,000 Canberrans have renewed online and approximately 25,000 through the service centres.

This amounts to an approximate 30 per cent take-up of the service.

This example is reflective of the broader trend in uptake of digital services across Access Canberra, which is increasing year by year (see chart below). The most recent data available (to end March 2018), shows approximately 64 per cent of transactions are now taking place online, with approximately 19 per cent face-to-face at service centres and approximately 17 per cent through the contact centre.



This is a significant increase (of more than 20 per cent) since December 2014, when 43 per cent of transactions were taking place online, with 29 per cent face-to-face at service centres and 28 per cent through the contact centre.

***(ii) sufficient customer service;***

Since Access Canberra was established, a survey has been undertaken annually by Micromex Research to measure the level of self-reported ‘service satisfaction’ and ‘ease of dealings’ in Access Canberra across service centres; the contact centre and online.

Additionally, all customers at service centres are invited to provide feedback on their customer experience through the ‘Qflow’ system. The results of Qflow data in the 2016-17

financial year consistently show that regardless of the wait time the 'overall satisfaction' level remains very high, dropping only when a person cannot complete the transaction.

The Micromex research is critical in the context of the broader business plan for Access Canberra, which is focused on delivering customer-centric, efficient services which meet the needs of the community. In 2016 and subsequently 2017, the focus of the tracking survey was on measuring the following:

1. awareness of Access Canberra;
2. usage of Access Canberra's channels, i.e. service centre, contact centre, and website;
3. overall satisfaction, ease of use and suggested changes for those centres used; and
4. identifying the community's preferences for undertaking transactions or interactions with Access Canberra.

This annual research, along with customer feedback data collected on an ongoing basis, and specific consultation with community groups, provides a strong platform for improvements to suit an evolving ACT community. A few key results from the 2016-17 survey are:

- overall satisfaction with service centres increased from 94 per cent in 2016 to 97 per cent in 2017. The main driver was staff thoroughly and fairly dealing with customers' issues and transactions;
- satisfaction with the contact centre increased from 87 per cent in 2016 to 91 per cent in 2017. The main drivers for this rating were fairness of staff in dealing with customer transactions and the willingness of staff to assist;
- satisfaction with the Access Canberra website increased from 78 per cent in 2016 to 83 per cent in 2017; and
- over 67,000 items of unique feedback left at the pedestals in the Access Canberra service centres with customers scoring questions on customer service at 96.4 per cent.

### ***Survey results 2017***

The results of the most recent Access Canberra survey data indicate a high level of overall satisfaction with services provided through Access Canberra.

The Micromex survey results from the last two years (2016-2017) indicate a continuing high level of satisfaction with Access Canberra services. The percentage of respondents indicating self-reported 'satisfaction' with services provided **increased** between 2016 and 2017, indicating improvements were made in service delivered by Access Canberra over time.

The Micromex survey taken in 2016 and 2017 indicates 'satisfaction' for the face-to-face service centres, with overall self-reported 'satisfaction' ratings of 87.8 per cent in 2016 and 91 per cent in 2017.

### **Addressing complaints**

A specialist complaints management team was established in June 2017 to monitor customer satisfaction and ensure any difficulties are managed and resolved quickly and to the satisfaction of complainants.

The data received by the complaints team is shared with relevant business areas to ensure services continue to be adapted to meet the needs of the community and individual concerns are addressed.

### ***(b) review the opening hours and operating procedures at the various shopfronts to determine how waiting times can be reduced***

The current operating hours across Canberra were established to provide for a range of options for accessing service centres, including outside of business hours. While service centres are not open on public holidays, some centres are open during the public service Christmas shut down period. The current opening hours at Access Canberra service centres are shown in the table below.

Belconnen Service Centre	9.00am – 5pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays, opens public service Christmas shut down period
Tuggeranong Service Centre	8.00am – 5.00pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays, opens public service Christmas shut down period
Woden Service Centre	9.00am – 5.00pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays; opens public service Christmas shut down period
Gungahlin Service Centre	8.00am – 6.00pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays; open public service Christmas shut down period
Environment, Land and Planning Shopfront	8.30am – 4.30pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays; closed public service Christmas shut down period
Building Services Shopfront	8.30am – 4.30pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays; closed public service Christmas shut down period

Civic Drivers Licence Service	10.00am – 5.30pm	Monday to Friday excluding public holidays; closed public service Christmas shut down period
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Continual monitoring of the number of customers visiting service centres ensures that staffing and opening hours address the needs of the community. Data from this monitoring has shown that a very low proportion of customers are visiting service centres which offer extended hours (Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and the Civic Driver Licence Service), outside standard business hours.

Of the 601,733 customers who visited service centres which offer extended hours during the sample period (March 2016 – April 2018), 27,077 visited outside of standard office hours (9am-5pm), meaning 95% of customers visited during standard office hours.

The number of customers per hour and feedback from the community will continue to be monitored to ensure Access Canberra service centres adapt to the evolving needs of the community.

***Cost to expand opening hours***

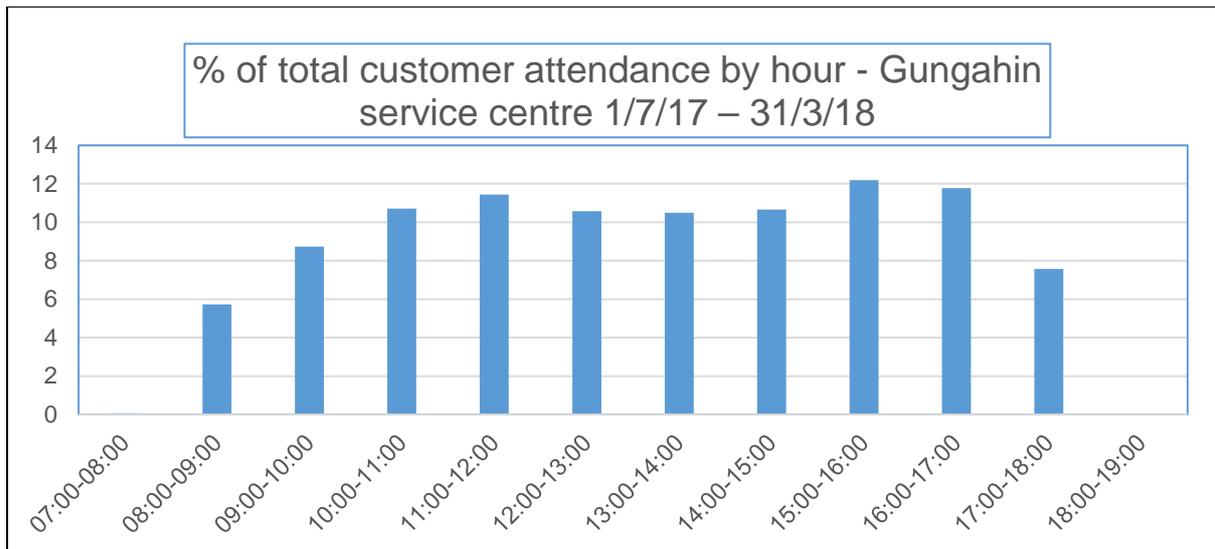
Access Canberra has an integrated service model, meaning that back of house support is required for some decisions, system monitoring and more complex assessments that cannot be made in the service centres.

Expanding the trading hours of the service centres requires the expansion of service hours for back of house operations.

Similar government bodies have trialed longer opening hours and have concluded that longer opening hours are not popular enough to warrant the cost. For example, Service NSW initially opened some of its service centres 7am-7pm, but found little demand before 8.30am and after 5.30pm.

Similarly, after extending Access Canberra opening hours at Gungahlin (for the last three years), and Tuggeranong (for the last two years), there has been modest attendance during hours outside business hours, suggesting that most people are comfortable to transact in traditional hours of business.

The graph below shows a sample of customer attendance taken over the last six months at the Gungahlin service centre. This indicates a low percentage of attendance before and after standard business hours relative to attendance during business hours. During this sample period, the most popular time to visit the Gungahlin service centre was between 3.00pm and 5.00pm, during which time approximately 24% total attendance occurred.



Any expansion of service centre operating hours, taking into account staffing and other costs, would require a considerable increase in spending on these services.

***Operating procedures***

Access Canberra operations are monitored to ensure accurate and timely resolution of queries. Community members also have options to provide feedback through service centres, contact centres and online. Current feedback shows a high overall satisfaction level with services provided through Access Canberra, and improvements are being made to ensure this satisfaction level is maintained as the needs of the community change.

Since 1 July 2017, out of the approximately 350,000 people who completed transactions through Access Canberra service centres, there were less than ten complaints received by the complaints management team about waiting times.

Based on the low proportion of customer attendances outside core business hours, the increasing availability and takeup of digital transactions and the continuing high rate of satisfaction expressed by customers, there is no compelling reason to further adjust the operating hours of the service centres.

***(c) continue to consult with customers to better understand how to deliver improved accessibility, especially for those who work or who rely on others to take them to the shopfront to undertake their business transactions;***

While the current available data indicates a high satisfaction level with Access Canberra services overall, there is still room for improvement and innovation to ensure ongoing engagement and satisfaction with Access Canberra across the ACT community.

All service centres include accessible counters, visual and audible service indicators and hearing loops. In addition, Access Canberra engaged Dementia Australia to undertake an environmental audit of the service centre design and friendliness for people with dementia or cognitive issues. Dementia Australia is also undertaking audits at additional service centres throughout 2018. An excerpt of this audit is below.

*According to the environmental audit, the Access Canberra Belconnen service centre scored high in each area, particularly in comparison to other organisations and businesses of a similar nature.*

*The categories highlighted in this audit include: safety, seeing and being seen, familiarity, size, variety of spaces, movement and engagement, stimulus enhancement and stimulus reduction. The highest scores across all areas were obtained in the Approach to entry and Entry space categories. These areas were most obvious in their function and scored best across the listed categories.*

*According to the many other audits we have completed for businesses of a similar nature, we find that centres that maintain common and similar features and practices over the years score the highest for supporting people living with dementia and cognitive impairment because their design, approach and features are familiar to the person based on their previous usage of the centre over the years.*

The 2016 census data shows that 4.2 per cent of the ACT population needed assistance with core activities, and Access Canberra is committed to being as accessible as possible to all members of the community regardless of economic status, ability or cultural background. As a first stage, consultations are underway with community leaders from a range of organisations.

The community consultations prioritise discussions with organisations that represent members of the ACT community who may have particular needs when accessing government services.

This first stage consultation, taking place throughout 2018, will inform developments in Access Canberra operations, and there are already some specific areas to address. Selected ideas received through these consultations are shown below as an example only.

*Online information and transactions need to be made simpler and easier to use. A lot of the calls are because the online information can't be found or is confusing and not easily followed.*

*We are interested in a central point where community group staff/volunteers can call if they are having difficult locating/finding/speaking to someone on behalf of their clients, such as a dedicated case manager or community liaison officer.*

*The elderly don't have or can't afford access to the internet. They find even if they go to the Libraries and book a computer, if they require assistance the staff member doesn't always patiently explain the issue — they tend to rush through it.*

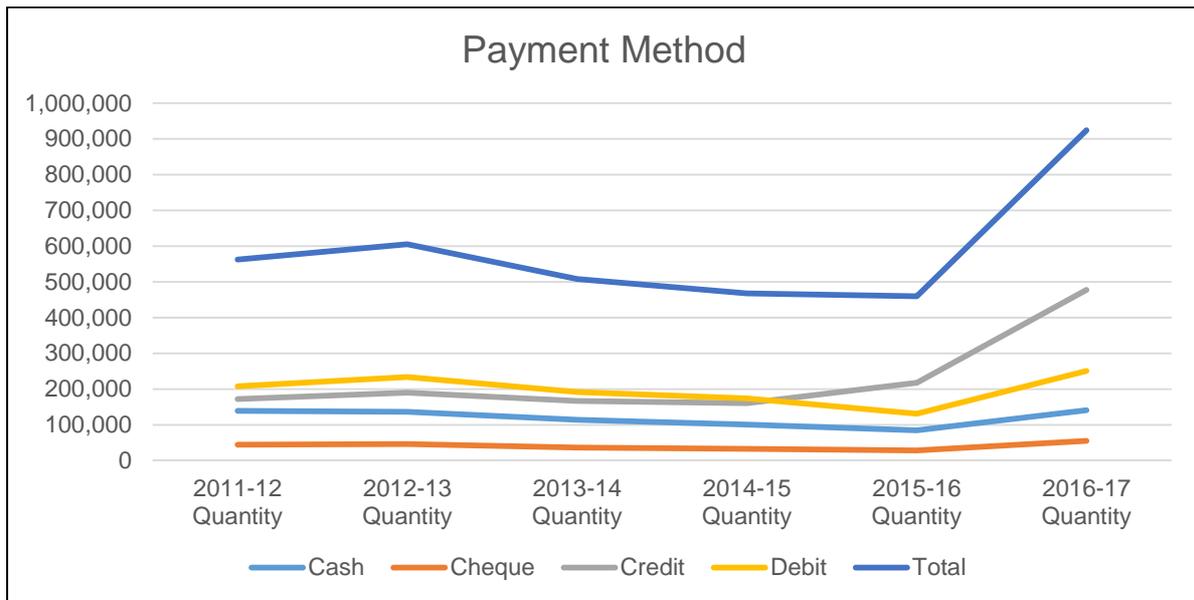
*We are interested in a newsletter for community groups — updating on changes/new business - community groups can then add to their newsletters and update staff/volunteers on what clients need to know.*

*One issue common to many community organisations representing vulnerable people is the issue of maintaining privacy for clients, where they depend on a carer/guardian/family/friend phoning on their behalf to manage essential services.*

The results of these consultations will be applied, along with ongoing survey data, to improve operations. Continuing consultations will take place with additional organisations throughout the ACT to ensure the needs of the community are met.

**(d) undertake a thorough review of the current range of payment methods to ensure they provide sufficient choice for all ACT residents**

A range of payment options are available across Access Canberra, including the website, contact centres, service centres, and Australia Post outlets – ensuring ACT residents have a range of options when paying for services. Current trends show a decline in the number of cash transactions relative to those undertaken by credit card across all service centres. The graph below shows the number of transactions by each payment type over the last six years.



*\*Note: increase in 2016-17 is attributed to adding transactions previously processed at the Office of Regulatory Services Shopfront Fyshwick (closed Dec 16) into the Access Canberra Service Centre's*

Although the number of payments are increasing over time, there is a clear shift toward payments by credit card, particularly from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

Service centres in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, and the Civic Driver's Licence Service continue to accept cash and cheque payments as do the Building Services shopfront and the Environment, Planning and Land shopfront.

Gungahlin and Woden Service Centres do not accept cash or cheques as payment methods but accept eftpos and credit card payments. Cashless centres are one way Access Canberra is improving wait times (as processing cash takes longer than other payment forms).

Cashless service centres have been designed as open environments which encourage positive customer interactions with service centre staff (e.g. with minimal security screens). Centrelink has, similarly, introduced cashless systems as a way to encourage interaction between clients and service staff, as have other client-facing organisations in Australia and internationally.

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