

2022

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

**REPORT NO.4 OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
COMMUNITY INCLUSION
INQUIRY INTO ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2020-21 - GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE**

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Introduction

On 16 September 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the 2 December 2020 Resolution of Establishment (clause 3(A)), referring the Annual and Financial Reports 2020-21 to the seven Standing Committees (the Committees) for inquiry and report by 31 May 2022.

The 2020-21 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 which relate to the 2020-21 Annual and Financial Reports.

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

- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority;
- Canberra Institute of Technology;
- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate ;
- Community Services Directorate;
- Education Directorate; and
- Major Projects Canberra.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support implementation of the Capital of Equality Strategy, with a particular focus on delivering inclusive education and equitable healthcare.

Government Response – Agreed

The Capital of Equality Strategy spans from the 2019 to 2023 to deliver equitable outcomes for LGBTIQ+ Canberrans. In March 2022 a Second Action Plan for the Strategy was released. The Second Action Plan contains 17 actions across eight focus areas that, among others, include access to inclusive education (focus area 3) and improving health outcomes (focus area 4).

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support the construction of a new arena for the Canberra Capitals.

Government Response – Noted

Since the Minister appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Australian Government has made a commitment (\$15 million – May 2022) to reinstate the AIS Arena that will provide a suitable playing venue for the Canberra Capitals once the necessary upgrades to the facility have been completed by the Federal Government.

The Australian Government has also committed \$750,000 towards the design of a smaller-scale sporting arena on the University of Canberra that may serve as a venue for regular season games.

The National Convention Centre will also continue to provide an alternate playing venue, subject to scheduling requirements, that can support regular season games for future Canberra Capitals fixtures.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate provide regular updates to the Canberra community—with particular focus on the Tuggeranong and Gungahlin communities—on development of the new ice rink in Tuggeranong and the new tennis complex in Amaroo.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The community will continue to be regularly updated on the progress of these important Government commitments.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to invest in high quality public schools in the Gungahlin area.

Government Response – Agreed

The Government will continue to invest in public school infrastructure in the Gungahlin region including in response to enrolment and population growth through delivering new and expanded infrastructure; as well as enhancements to established infrastructure.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate finalise the priority of enrolment area for Kenny high school as soon as practicable.

Government Response – Agreed

The Priority Enrolment Area for the new high school in Kenny will be established ahead of enrolments opening for the new school.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate ensure all delegates are well-trained in procurement and probity processes and that supplementary refresher training is provided regularly.

Government Response – Agreed

The Directorate is continuing to work with Procurement ACT to ensure training is provided to all delegates in relation to procurement and probity processes.

In June 2022, the Education Directorate engaged Procurement ACT to deliver Masterclasses to its Corporate and Executive Team. The Masterclasses detailed the requirements of the ACT Government Procurement Framework, including probity and delegate responsibilities.

Further training was made available to School Business Managers as part of a Business Manager's Professional Development Day in July 2022.

A Procurement Training Strategy is currently being developed to provide initial and refresher training in procurement and probity.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate consider expanding the performance measures used in annual reports when reporting on its strategic objectives.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The Directorate will participate in consultation around changes to the National Measurement Framework and will take any recommendations from that process into account in considering changes to ACT strategic objectives.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate monitor the results of ACT students. Should trends emerge, the Directorate should take further steps to understand and address the factors that may be contributing to the relevant changes, with a particular focus on any academic gender gap.

Government Response – Agreed

The Directorate will continue to monitor the results of ACT students. Trends in results are used to inform policy and program development.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Canberra Institute of Technology as a public provider of vocational education and training.

Government Response – Agreed

On 29 April 2022, the Minister for Skills released Skilled to Succeed – Skills and workforce agenda for the ACT, acknowledging CIT as the cornerstone of our local skills and training system.

The ACT Government is supporting CIT through delivery of the CIT Woden campus. This new campus will feature state-of-the-art learning facilities and flexible learning options, with smart classrooms to support e-learning, simulated learning environments, commercial kitchens and hands-on training spaces.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Canberra Institute of Technology ensure that its advertising of apprenticeships is clear on the steps a person must take to register as an apprentice.

Government Response – Noted

Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) articulates pathways, instructions and processes to inform and guide community members as to how to commence as an Australian Apprentice in multiple ways.

These include:

- A dedicated apprenticeship page on the CIT website https://cit.edu.au/apprentices_trainees/apprentices.
- Specific marketing collateral developed for individual apprenticeship courses - such as electrical apprenticeships.
- CIT's Industry Engagement Unit with the function to:
 - support individual employers and apprentices in navigating their apprenticeship training at CIT.
 - actively promote and support CIT Australian Apprenticeships within the ACT Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors.
- CIT's Open Day has a dedicated stand to promote CIT apprenticeships and provide relevant information to community members and to support the processes required.

Where appropriate CIT ensures information does link to other support networks relevant to both the ACT and regional Australian Apprenticeships.

Additionally, as part of CIT's quality assurance, all Australian Apprenticeship collateral and information is regularly reviewed to ensure currency.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate expand its reporting on Youth Affairs to include advice and policy recommendations provided by the ACT Youth Advisory Council and Youth Assembly, in addition to updates on government responses and implementation of recommendations.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The ACT Youth Advisory Council develops a one, two-year workplan based on research, trending issues that affect young people in our community and ACT Government priorities. This workplan identifies the priority areas that the Council will focus on over and guides their work. The ACT Government partners with the Council to host the ACT Youth Assembly. The Youth Assembly report is written by the Council, it is written by young people for young people and highlights the key information from the day, including recommendations made by the Council and the other young Canberrans who attend the ACT Youth Assembly. Youth Assembly reports including ACT Government response to the reports are available on the Community Services Directorate at <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/youth/consultation>

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that Child and Family Centres can meet current and future demand as a matter of urgency.

Government Response – Noted

The Child and Family Centres continue to manage demand by utilising strategies such as referral to other services, use of waiting lists if required and reviewing programs to assess if it is possible to increase capacity. The Government is regularly considering the requirement for early childhood services and supports, as part of the work on across sector strategies such as Set up for Success and the First 1000 Days Strategy.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review how Child and Family Centres Satisfaction Surveys are undertaken and publish the results of the review.

Government Response – Agreed

In 2021-22 the collection methodology timing for surveys was reviewed and changed to ensure consistencies across centres. This will be reported in the Annual report for 2021-22.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government begin tracking the incidence of delayed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis, including by collecting and collating data from the Child Development Service and community stakeholders.

Government Response – Noted

The Community Services Directorate has access to details regarding referrals made to the Child Development Service (CDS) for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments.

CSD has no line of sight of data from community services who families may approach regarding their concerns about ASD, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme Early Childhood Early Intervention Partner (EACH), nor of referrals made to alternative ASD assessment pathways, such as paediatricians or psychologists.

As such CSD does not have access to the data required to track the incidence of delayed ASD diagnosis.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify and address any delays in the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the ACT.

Government Response – Noted

There may be multiple reasons a diagnosis is delayed, some of which would not be able to be addressed by Government services. For example, a person moving from interstate or overseas, presentation of characteristics of autism emerging later in childhood or children not presenting to health services until a later age.

To support early identification the Child Development Service provides information to the community sector and potential referrers such as Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Child Youth and Protection Service case workers on typical development, signs and symptoms of autism, and when and how to refer families for further assessment of development.

CSD has worked to build depth and security in the Child Development Service Autism Assessment offer by engaging procured providers to deliver a telehealth service model to complement face to face assessment services. Ongoing funding commensurate with demand will assist in early identification and diagnosis.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support implementation measures under the Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029 and associated Action Plans and continue to actively identify opportunities to better support people with disability in custodial and other criminal justice settings.

Government Response – Agreed

The ACT Government has an ongoing commitment to the ACT Disability Justice Strategy and the implementation of actions under the Strategy. The Strategy continues to maintain a focus on identification of people with disability and the reasonable adjustments required to ensure appropriate support is provided across all justice settings including in custodial and criminal justice settings. The second action plan of the DJS is currently under development. New initiatives or actions developed for the second action plan will be subject to normal ACT budget processes.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate expand its annual reporting to include information on performance in relation to cross-directorate initiatives such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy.

Government Response – Noted

Each Directorate reports on its performance against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy in its Annual Report. The Community Services Directorate coordinates whole-of-government annual reporting against the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement and National Agreement on Closing the Gap. A new Impact Statement Dashboard was launched on 19 April 2022 and can be found here:

<https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/atsia/agreement-2019-2028>. This includes whole-of-government data on procurement outcomes as indicators under the Economic Participation Focus Area.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support women entering traditionally male-dominated trades and occupations.

Government Response – Agreed

The Office for Women continues to work with Procurement ACT to explore how a gendered focus can be practically and meaningfully applied to tender processes for procurements that relate to initiatives supporting gender equity. Projects such as the Strathnairn Primary School highlight how ACT Government procurement processes can support women's leadership in industry. The forthcoming development of the third action plan of the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26 will be an opportunity to discuss this further with the sector and the broader community.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise organisations with a gendered focus in tender processes where procurement relates to initiatives supporting gender equity.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The Office for Women continues to work with Procurement ACT to explore how a gendered focus can be practically and meaningfully applied to tender processes for procurements that relate to initiatives supporting gender equity. The forthcoming development of the Women's Third Action Plan will be an opportunity to discuss this further with the sector and the broader community.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce targets for their procurement practices relating to gender equity and equal representation on private sector boards.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

Procurement ACT has Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion as one of its key values within their Charter of Procurement Values. A working group has been established to explore options for how gender targets can be practically and meaningfully applied in procurement practices. The Office for Women administers the Audrey Fagan Board Traineeship program to support women wanting to start their board careers.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that responsibility for the annual women's budget statement be moved from the Community Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate, in line with the approach taken in other jurisdictions.

Government Response – Noted

The ACT Office for Women is responsible for development of the ACT Women's Budget statement, however, the content for this statement is developed in collaboration with all ACT Government Directorates, including CMTEDD.

The ACT Office for Women is responsible for development of the ACT Women's Budget statement, however, in accordance with the one ACT Public Service model, the content for this statement is developed collaboratively with all ACT Government Directorates.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review all the progress made on the recommendations from the First Action Plan of the ACT Women's Plan 2016–2026 and report their findings to the Assembly before the end of 2022.

Government Response – Agreed

As of February 2020, 99 of the 100 actions to be delivered under the First Action Plan were completed or underway. CSD is working with other directorates to validate completion of actions under the First and Second Action Plans and will report their findings to the Assembly by the end of 2022.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government start collecting gender disaggregated data for government services and initiatives (for example, public transport) to better understand the gendered use of such services and initiatives and make any consequent improvements.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

CSD and CMTEDD are leading work to improve the consistency of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation data collection, discoverability, sharing and use across the ACT Government, an action from the Second Action Plan. Responsibility for the phased implementation of agreed definitions and variables will be dependent on individual directorates.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that ACT Government continue to pursue higher levels of accreditation as a Welcoming City.

Government Response – Agreed

CSD is leading work across the ACT Government to document evidence for submission to Welcoming Australia by December 2022 for accreditation at the 'Advanced' level of the Welcoming Cities Standard.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that ACT Government continue to provide support to multicultural groups who have missed out on opportunities due to the cancellation of the National Multicultural Festival.

Government Response – Agreed

The 2023 National Multicultural Festival is going ahead, which will provide groups who missed out on opportunities due to the cancellation of Festivals in 2021 and 2022 a chance to raise funds. To support this, the NMF team are focusing on ensuring that: multicultural groups have an opportunity to secure a stall; the Festival is widely advertised; and the Festival will have a significant attendance from local and interstate visitors. Additional grant funding of \$90,000 has also been committed and stallholder prices have not been increased in line with CPI, which will support multicultural groups and organisations to participate in the 2023 Festival.

To support fundraising and engagement opportunities in 2021-22, additional funding was allocated to Community Events to support Canberra's multicultural community by providing grants to support participation including multicultural showcases, performer groups and community run food and drink stalls at Australia Day, Canberra Day, and other community events.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that ACT Government ensure that all response to questions on notice and questions taken on notice are provided in a timely fashion.

Government Response – Noted

The ACT Government endeavours to respond to Committee Questions on Notice and Questions Taken on Notice, as per the timeframes under Standing Order 254D. However, meeting these timeframes can be dependent on the nature of the question and its complexity.