Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the provision of municipal services in Canberra

Submission number: 004

Submitter: ACT Government

Date authorised for publication: 18 December 2025

ACT Government

Standing Committee on Transport and City Services Inquiry into the provision of municipal services in Canberra

ACT Government Submission

Introduction

The intention of this submission is to address each of the points outlined in the scope of the Standing Committee on Transport and City Services' inquiry into the provision of municipal services in the Australian Capital Territory.

The Terms of Reference include:

- The maintenance and upkeep of public spaces such as playgrounds, sportsgrounds, local shops, verges and waterways;
- The appropriateness of the geographic spread of active travel infrastructure, parks and playgrounds;
- The effectiveness of services relating to waste removal;
- The effectiveness of policies relating to street art and graffiti removal, and
- Benchmarking ACT performance against similar jurisdictions for each of the items listed above.

Servicing overview

The City and Environment Directorate (CED) plays a vital role in shaping the liveability and functionality of Canberra by planning, building, and maintaining a wide range of ACT Government infrastructure and public assets. This includes:

- Roads, bridges, and cycling paths, community paths and the streetlight network;
- Playgrounds, sportsgrounds, and recreational facilities;
- Public spaces and parks and waterways; and
- Infrastructure around local shops and community hubs.

These assets are essential to the daily lives of residents and visitors, supporting mobility, recreation, safety, and social connection. Maintaining them is not just about upkeep—it's about delivering reliable and equitable services across Canberra that meet community expectations relating to the safety, function, accessibility, cleanliness and ongoing fitness for purpose of community assets.

How we deliver maintenance services

Overall, maintenance service delivery is structured to ensure both planned and unplanned (reactive) works are carried out efficiently and effectively.

Planned works are programmed to maximise value for money and service efficiency. This includes:

- Grouping works geographically (e.g. path renewal and grinding within a suburb, mowing and weed spray services);
- Mass action programs (e.g. monthly and annual playground safety audits); and
- Routine services (e.g. sportsground mowing, toilet cleaning).

Unplanned (reactive works) respond to emerging needs and community requests. These are prioritised based on risk and impact with:

- high-risk issues (e.g. reported safety hazards) prioritised and addressed urgently; and

- lower risk matters batched and scheduled later to ensure cost-effective delivery.

Service delivery must balance planned work programs against reactive responses to community requests and unforeseen events. Much of the servicing of the city's assets is best delivered through adhering to a scheduled program of works. Reactive responses can be inefficient and, if not carefully managed, can divert resources away from the scheduled work program, ultimately affecting the overall maintenance of assets, and causing more reactive requests.

Historical perspective on asset maintenance post ACT self-government

With the introduction of self-government in 1989, the ACT Government assumed responsibility for the maintenance and management of public assets as part of its newly acquired administrative functions. This included infrastructure such as roads, parks, playgrounds, and public buildings, which had previously been built and maintained by the Commonwealth Government.

To ensure continuity of service delivery, the ACT Government was substituted as a party to existing maintenance contracts, service agreements, and leases, allowing services to continue without renegotiation.

Challenges of the transition

The transition presented several significant challenges for the newly formed ACT Government, which included a legacy of high-quality infrastructure and servicing regimes.

Prior to self-government, the Commonwealth Government had developed Canberra's infrastructure to national showcase standards, including:

- Roads and bridges;
- Water and wastewater systems; and
- Playgrounds, parklands, and sports facilities.

These assets were high-value and high-quality, but also expensive to maintain. The Commonwealth also provided a highly responsive maintenance regime for living assets such as grass and trees—an approach that proved unsustainable under the ACT's more limited resources.

Financial constraints

The ACT Government inherited these assets with fewer financial reserves than the Commonwealth. Maintaining infrastructure to its original standards was financially demanding, requiring immediate restructuring of budgets to ensure sustainable funding for maintenance. In essence, from the outset, the ACT Government was in a substantially weaker position to service the assets for which it had assumed responsibility.

Aging infrastructure

Much of the infrastructure was already decades old at the time of self-government. As assets aged, maintenance needs increased, and the ACT Government had to plan for capital upgrades and rehabilitation.

Lack of established systems

The ACT Government had to develop its own asset management systems from the ground up. This included creating strategic Asset Management plans; capital upgrades programs and procurement and tendering processes for maintenance services and future capital works:

Balancing growth and maintenance

Soon after self-government, Canberra was experiencing rapid population growth and urban expansion, particularly in areas like Tuggeranong and later Gungahlin. The ACT Government had to balance investment between building new infrastructure and maintaining existing assets.

These maintenance challenges have persisted over time, requiring continuous adaptation of asset management strategies to meet evolving financial, environmental, and community needs.

Addressing the challenges

To address these challenges, the ACT Government introduced:

- Targeted repair and maintenance programs, along with strategic planning cycles to align infrastructure needs with budget priorities; and
- Adjustments to annual maintenance funding, especially for living assets. For example, by the mid-2000s, drought conditions required significant increases in the maintenance budget to support water conservation and energy efficiency upgrades.

Strategic asset maintenance for sustainable public value

Maintaining public spaces and infrastructure is a fundamental government responsibility. However escalating costs driven by inflation, supply chain disruptions, estate growth and design changes, and increased demand for skilled labour can place growing fiscal pressure on both routine maintenance and capital works activities. Since 2019, services such as mowing, cleaning, and minor repairs are now significantly more expensive, while larger capital works face compounding cost escalations that challenge long-term planning and delivery.

The scale and diversity of municipal assets—combined with estate growth, ageing infrastructure, increased community use and rising expectations—means the ACT Government is challenged to deliver more servicing while operating within fiscal controls.

CED uses several strategies to manage these challenges:

- Risk-based prioritisation to ensure resources are directed to areas of greatest need;
- Geographic bundling of works to reduce costs and improve efficiency;
- Performance-based contracts with external providers to drive value;
- Use of technology and innovation, such as robotic line marking and smart irrigation, to reduce long-term costs;
- Community engagement to align service delivery with public expectations and improve transparency;
- Benchmarking with local government jurisdictions;
- Adopting a strategic asset management framework to enable the effective management of municipal assets;

- Utilising asset management systems; and
- Minimising whole of lifecycle costs through Municipal Infrastructure Standards, Technical Specifications and Standard Drawings for the design and construction of new public assets.

In the pursuit of best practice, CED has sought to align its guidance with the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) National Asset Management Strategy (NAMS). The IPWEA NAMS Framework is aligned with the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 55000 series of asset management standards.

The authoritative policy for asset management in CED is the Director-General's Financial Instructions. Section 5.0 Asset Management of the Financial Instructions identifies the Policy, Rationale for Policy, and Responsibilities and accountabilities in relation to asset management.

As identified from the *Financial Management Act 1996*, the Director-General of a directorate must manage the directorate in a way that promotes the financial sustainability of the directorate.

Controlled recurrent funds are provided down to the output class level within a directorate, with outputs being the goods produced, or services provided by or on behalf of a directorate to the community. The agreed performance standards are published annually through development of the ACT Budget.

These standards are set out as strategic indicators and accountability indicators. Accountability indicators relate to outputs agencies produce through activities, and strategic indicators relate to outcomes that the Government is trying to achieve or influence through providing these outputs. Accountability indicators are annually set and provide measures of a directorate's performance (effectiveness and efficiency). ACT's performance and Accountability Framework states that performance indicators should generally be within the direct control of or significantly influenced by agencies (e.g. primarily limited to controlled recurrent funds because directorates don't control the allocation of capital funds).

A. The maintenance and upkeep of public places

Playgrounds

There are 548 play spaces in Canberra's urban realm managed by ACT Government. This is a relatively high provision of playgrounds for our population size (more detail provided in Benchmarking section). There are number of reasons for this, including the geographical spread of Canberra and the legacy of playgrounds that were handed over at the time of self-government. Historically, 95% of all residences in Canberra are within a 400-metre radius of a local play area. More detail about the distribution of playgrounds is provided in the section 'Geographical Spread of Assets'. Further information about playgrounds in the ACT can be found at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/play-spaces.

Age and lifespan of equipment

The average lifespan of playground equipment is around 20 years. The age of playground equipment matters because, like any other man-made structure, it can deteriorate over time due to various factors such as weather, wear and tear, and vandalism. As a result, older playground equipment may pose safety risks to children who use it.

Playground equipment has a limited lifespan due to the constant exposure to the elements and wear and tear from regular use. With time, metal structures may rust, wooden structures may rot, and plastic

structures may crack, leading to weakened and unsafe equipment. In addition to the physical deterioration, older playground equipment having met the safety standards at the time of its instalment may not now meet current safety standards.

Eighty per cent of the 548 playgrounds in Canberra are 20 years or older. However, many of the individual elements in them would have been renewed or refreshed (e.g. soft fall/ mulch, replacement parts, painting etc).

Management of playgrounds

The ACT Government is progressively transitioning to a more strategic approach to maintaining and improving play spaces across the network. This is outlined in 'Better places to play: ACT Play Space Strategy' which provides a strategic framework to guide future planning and prioritisation to continually improve the play space network. This approach focuses on investment on new or upgraded play spaces in areas of highest need, while prioritising maintenance activities to ensure all play spaces remain clean and safe.

Recurrent funding focuses on maintenance and refurbishment of play spaces. This includes minor works such as replacing/repairing items of play equipment that are broken, vandalised or at end of life. Repainting playgrounds, refurbishing decks and topping up soft fall occurs to bring the play spaces back to life and make them safe and more inviting.

The provision of new playgrounds requires capital funding and occurs through the budget process. New playgrounds are often committed as part of election commitments, which informs the delivery over the term of Government.

General upkeep

The parkland area and playground are frequently inspected with maintenance activities such as litter picking and graffiti removal occurring as programmed or as is required. Mowing and weed maintenance of the playground surrounds are generally undertaken during the programmed mow or weeding activities for the suburb.

Ensuring safety of playgrounds

Over 26,000 safety inspections are conducted on Canberra playgrounds each year to ensure they remain safe and fit for play.

Visual inspections are undertaken by Infrastructure Canberra. Local play spaces are inspected fortnightly, Central weekly and District twice a week. Visual inspections check for vandalism, sharps and obvious faults with any of the equipment and basic repairs are carried out at the time. Litter is collected and bark is raked into the heavy use areas such as under swings and slides.

Operational inspections are undertaken monthly to bi-monthly depending on use. This is a more detailed inspection during which the equipment is tested for operation, wear and tear, deterioration and any other faults.

Compliance audits are also conducted annually as each playground varies in age and condition. These audits are completed by an independent assessor to inspect the playgrounds against the current Australian Playground standards.

Proactive equipment maintenance

The annual compliance audit is a helpful tool to plan proactive maintenance work. Each year, over 90 per cent of the playgrounds inspected typically require some level of work.

Proactive maintenance is essential to preserving the quality and safety of Canberra's playground assets. When maintenance is deferred, it increases the risk of asset deterioration, potential injuries and reputational harm.

Due to the size of the playground asset base, and resource constraints, works are triaged and prioritised. For example, in the 2025/2026 financial year, $2.321million has been allocated for safety works. This investment is expected to improve safety at 45 playground sites.

Provision of shade at playgrounds

Since 2012, the ACT Government has been progressively installing shade structures in playgrounds. However, it is not financially sustainable to provide shade structures at all playgrounds utilising the available budgets.

Shade sails are generally not installed at local play spaces but are usually installed over district park play spaces and some larger centrally located play spaces where the frequent visitation rates and longer visit times justify and maximise the benefit to the greatest number of children/users.

While artificial shade structures offer an instant shade solution, planting trees in play space sites, or incorporating existing trees into new or upgraded play spaces, increases canopy cover and provides a range of other environmental benefits.

Sportsgrounds

Range of facilities

Canberra is one of the most physically active populations in Australia and the ACT government plays a vital role in supporting local sport and recreation, offering a diverse range of facilities to support participation across all levels. This includes:

- Community sports fields (e.g. football, rugby, cricket);
- Specialised facilities (e.g. synthetic fields, athletics tracks, Equestrian); and
- Shared-use open spaces used for community sport and informal recreation.

With over 280 hectares of irrigated sportsgrounds and approximately 884 individual hireable fields, the network of ACT government facilities caters to a wide range of community and competitive sporting needs. This includes 16 enclosed ovals, 46 district playing fields, and 32 neighbourhood ovals, each serving different user groups—from elite competition to grassroots training and informal recreation.

These grounds are distributed across Canberra's suburbs, ensuring equitable access for residents and sporting organisations.

The infrastructure supporting these sportsgrounds is also extensive. There are 70 training light installations of which 14 have competition-grade lighting systems, enabling evening use and winter scheduling. Amenities across the grounds include 98 toilets, 58 sets of change rooms, 66 canteens, 30 drinking

fountains, and 58 storerooms, which collectively support the comfort, safety, and functionality of the grounds for players, officials, and spectators alike. Further information on sportsgrounds in the ACT can be found at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/sportsgrounds.

Management and maintenance

All these assets are managed to ensure safety, accessibility, and equitable use across sporting codes, with seasonal closures in March and September allowing for essential turf renovations and infrastructure upgrades. The maintenance activities required to keep a sportsground and its surrounds in hireable condition include:

- Scheduled mowing (weekly to fortnightly depending on season and usage) and weed control;
- Waste and litter removal;
- Line marking (manual and robotic);
- Plumbing maintenance and irrigation management using smart systems;
- Sports lighting maintenance;
- Surface repairs and turf management; and
- Maintenance and cleaning of auxiliary amenities.

The first two services listed above are delivered inhouse by CED Place Management under a Service Level agreement. The others are programmed for delivery by CED Sport and Recreation Facilities. Maintenance levels are prioritised on a case by case basic based on usage intensity, field condition, and seasonal demand.

Usage

Usage of ACT sportsgrounds is substantial, with tens of thousands of hours logged each season. They are heavily used by community clubs (football, cricket, rugby); schools and education providers and the public for informal recreation.

In the 2024-2025 financial year, sports usage reached 120,000 hours of activity, and of that included more than 41,000 hours of sporting flood light use at 75 of the ACTs 97 hireable community sports facilities. This also includes significant training allocations, reflecting the high demand for evening and weekend access. Not surprisingly, peak usage occurs during weekends and school terms. The ACT Government subsidises around 86% of sportsground maintenance costs, with user fees contributing to the remainder 14%.

Asset improvement priorities

Despite robust service regimes, challenges remain. Aging infrastructure, soil limitations, and peak-time demand place pressure on facility quality and safety. Many grounds were constructed on shallow soil bases, complicating turf maintenance and water retention.

In 2024–2025, major investments occurred in irrigation systems, turf management and lighting infrastructure, highlighting the scale of operational upkeep required to maintain these sites.

Floodlight infrastructure also continues to be a priority as these upgrades are essential for supporting evening training and competition, especially during winter months when daylight hours are limited. Upgrades are prioritised based on need and available funding, with any operational decisions made in consultation with peak sporting bodies and community clubs.

Smart and sustainable practices

In recent years, sportsground maintenance has undergone a quiet revolution, driven by the need for innovation, sustainability, and to be community focused. A suite of new technologies and approaches is reshaping how these community assets are managed and used. These include:

- **Robotic line marking**, now deployed across several high-use fields. These autonomous machines deliver precise, consistent markings with minimal human intervention, boosting efficiency and enabling more flexible use of fields for different sports and events.
- Complementing this is the rollout of **smart irrigation systems** at key sites. These systems use real-time weather data and soil moisture sensors to optimise watering schedules, ensuring healthy turf while conserving water—a critical step in adapting to climate variability.
- Water sustainability is further supported by pilot projects around s**tormwater reuse** at selected locations. These initiatives aim to reduce reliance on potable water by capturing and repurposing rainwater for irrigation, aligning with broader environmental goals.
- the use of **mobile assets**, such as repurposed shipping containers, has enabled the creation of modular changerooms, toilets, and canteens. These units can be deployed as either temporary or permanent facilities, cutting construction costs by up to 50% while maintaining functionality and comfort.

Also, in a move to enhance community access, Sports and Recreation Facilities (SRF) is collaborating with ACT Education to open school sportsgrounds for public hire. This initiative not only maximises the use of existing infrastructure but also strengthens the connection between schools and their local communities.

Local shops

There are 90 local, group and city shopping centres across Canberra which are cleaned regularly by CED Place Management crews. These range in size from the large Civic shopping precinct to small suburban shopping centres.

Where a shopping precinct is privately owned (e.g. Lanyon, Casey), maintenance responsibility rests with the owners.

The maintenance program is routine but comprehensive for the public spaces surrounding these local shopping centres. It is recognised that these areas are vital community hubs, and their upkeep supports safety, accessibility, and amenity for residents and visitors. Information on local shops in the ACT can be found at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/shopping_centres.

Maintenance program

The regular maintenance program delivered by CED Place Management includes:

- Mowing;
- Litter picking and bin servicing (up to 5 times a week);
- Surface cleaning and pressure washing of paving as needed;
- Toilet cleaning (daily);
- Maintaining drinking bubblers;
- Graffiti removal from ACT Government assets;
- Carpark cleaning;

- Pruning bushes and trees, and minor horticultural maintenance of garden beds;
- Street furniture repairs; and
- Fallen leaf removal.

Information on mowing, weed control and public bins/waste removal can be found at the following links:

- **Mowing:** https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/maintenance/grass-mowing
- **Weed control**: https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/maintenance/weed-control
- **Public bins/waste removal:** https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/recycling-and-waste

Upgrades and Improvements

In addition to routine maintenance, the ACT Government also undertakes shopping centre upgrades to enhance public spaces. These may include:

- Improved lighting, pathways, and paving;
- New or upgraded park/street furniture;
- Playground equipment and integrated community artwork;
- Enhanced signage, traffic, and parking arrangements; and
- Landscaping and tree planting.

Community consultation is a key part of the upgrade process, ensuring that improvements reflect local needs and identity.

Abandoned shopping trolleys

Abandoned shopping trolleys pollute urban areas, parks, lakes and waterways. They can also injure pedestrians, cyclists and commuters and can be difficult and costly to retrieve when in waterways.

In accordance with the *Litter Act 2004*, retailers that provide shopping trolleys have a responsibility to manage their trolleys and to have a containment system to keep them within their shopping precinct.

Verges (nature strips)

In the ACT, verges—commonly referred to as nature strips—are the public land located between a residential property boundary and the adjacent roadway. These areas often feature grass, trees, footpaths, and may also include rain gardens or essential service infrastructure such as telecommunications, water, storm water, or energy assets.

Nature strips are a **shared responsibility** between the government and lessees. While it is standard practice for residents to mow and maintain the nature strip adjoining their property, the government is responsible for maintaining street trees, footpaths, lighting, and nature strips adjacent to public open spaces.

Residents' responsibilities include regular mowing and tidying of grassed areas and avoiding obstructions of footpaths and infrastructure.

Street trees located on nature strips are maintained by the ACT Government. Residents are not permitted to prune, remove, or plant street trees themselves. Requests for tree maintenance should be submitted via Access Canberra or Fix My Street.

Residents may grow grass without approval however any additional landscaping (e.g. garden beds, paving, decorative features) requires formal approval from the ACT Government. The ACT Government has developed guidelines for use of residential nature strips in Canberra. These can be accessed from the CED website (see useful references at end of section). CED will, in exceptional circumstances, undertake maintenance work on a nature strip if there is a safety hazard (e.g. undertake line of site mowing on a corner block) and once all other options to work with the lessee have been explored.

Laneways

There are over 2400 laneways in suburbs and town centres across Canberra, varying in design. CED Place Management crews carry out regular maintenance work in these areas to keep them safe and presentable. This includes mowing the grass, treating weeds on fence lines and in cracks, as well as pruning any overgrown shrubs.

Laneways which are predominantly made of hard surfaces are treated quarterly with herbicide: https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/maintenance/grass-mowing#Laneway%20maintenance.

Waterways (Lakes and Ponds)

There are currently 120+ lakes and ponds in the urban areas of Canberra. They are primarily designed to be water quality ponds to trap nutrients, soil, litter and debris, although they have other amenity values. They also protect the water quality of the Murrumbidgee River.

Lakes and ponds also provide the secondary benefits of providing habitat for plants and animals, improving visual amenity and creating a leisure area for the community.

Litter picking and cleaning

Foreshores adjacent to Town and District Parks (including beaches) and litter 'hot spots' are inspected and cleaned weekly as part of regular runs. All other lakes and ponds are inspected and cleaned at least once per year and after major storm events.

Litter removal from smaller ponds is reactive in response to public requests. This can be programmed for autumn / winter when mowing slows down. This can also coincide with the annual inspection / litter removal program.

Debris is removed within Kingston Harbour marina where required or as requested by the public. The kayak deck is cleared weekly and the litter trap cleared monthly or as required. The Molonglo Water-ski area is inspected prior to events and / or after heavy rain events, with debris removed where present. Annual control of invasive weeds occurs at selected water bodies and is formally programmed.

Removal of organic material such as ribbon weed (on water surface)

CED Place Management schedules bi-annual removal of the floating ribbon weed at sites such as Yerrabi Pond in the warmer months to reduce the nutrient load, improve aesthetics, and reduce the chance of smell when the weed decomposes. Removal requires specialist machinery with licensed operators in shallow waters and is labour intensive.

The local birds also enjoy eating the stems and regularly pull out the rooted ribbon weed which causes it to float and can form dense matts. This is a naturally occurring process and the management practice is to

allow smaller amounts of organic material within waterways to dissipate naturally.

Upkeep of beaches

Coarse washed river sand on lake beaches is replenished annually. Weeds are removed from sand areas annually. Litter is removed fortnightly. All these activities are programmed.

Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT) cleaning

GPTs are part of the stormwater network and are crucial to the quality of the water in our lake system as they reduce debris and litter entering waterways. After rain events producing 25mm of rain or more, inspectors assess the need for cleaning.

The cleaning frequency of each GPT is between two to six times per annum depending on catchment size, season and amount/intensity of rainfall. Occasionally, there is a requirement to extract sediment, organic material and rubbish from waterways such as creeks, channels and ponds. Currently, Roads ACT is running some trials at selected GPT sites with the aim of optimising cleaning frequency to improve water quality.

These trials involve the installation of monitoring cameras overlayed with artificial intelligence programs to record and report on the amount of material within GPTs. If the current trials are successful, it is anticipated the trial will be expanded to additional GPTs with the aim of optimising cleaning frequency for each individual GPT.

Another initiative that is currently underway is a program to modify and upgrade GPTs to improve their performance, maintainability and efficiency of pollution removal. As part of this program three (3) GPTs were upgraded last financial year and there are up to 10 more GPTs programmed for upgrades this financial year (2025-2026) and next.

Grass clipping management

In November 2022, the Assembly passed a resolution relating to 'Grass Clippings – Impact on ACT Waterways'. CED has implemented a series of initiatives to restrict the movement of grass clippings into waterways more effectively, which include:

- better synchronisation of Roads ACT Street sweeping activities to, wherever possible, follow up after the completion of mowing runs at high-risk sites;
- two small street sweeping machines now dedicated to post mowing collection of grass clippings as and when needed;
- the use of specialised large blow machines enabling more efficient removal of roadside mower clippings; and
- conditions for external contracts for the mowing of arterial roads have been strengthened, with a clause that 'cut vegetation must not be thrown onto the road surface, gutters, cycle paths or footpaths. The affected areas must be swept or blown clean after mowing by the contractor before leaving the site'.

Further information on Waterways, lakes and ponds in the ACT can be found at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/waterways/lakesandponds.

Street Sweeping

The ACT Government conducts a comprehensive street sweeping program to remove leaves and debris from kerbs and gutters along our road network. The aim of the program is to give every street in Canberra at least 2 full sweeps each year. Details about the upcoming street sweeping works are published weekly on the CED website.

Additional sweeps also cover areas of high leaf debris during the heavy leaf period between April and September each year. Efforts are concentrated on suburbs with mature deciduous trees. Additional sweeps are focused on these areas during the heavy leaf period. During the autumn and winter periods, the following suburbs below receive additional street sweeping visits. Priority is given to streets with the heaviest leaf fall during this time of the year.

- Ainslie
- Barton
- Braddon
- Campbell
- Deakin
- Dickson
- Hughes
- Kingston
- Lyneham
- Manuka
- Narrabundah
- O'Connor
- Red Hill
- Reid
- Turner
- Watson
- Yarralumla
- Downer
- Forrest
- Garran
- Griffith
- Hackett

Information on the street sweeping program can be found at the following link: https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/roads-and-paths/road-infrastructure-and-maintenance/street-sweeping

Managing illegal dumping and abandoned vehicles

Illegal dumping

Canberra's public spaces are a vital part of our city's character and liveability. Effective regulation helps ensure these areas remain clean, safe, and accessible for everyone.

Public unleased land in the ACT is regulated under the Litter Act 2004 and the Public Unleased Land Act 2013, which support responsible use of shared spaces and help prevent environmental harm.

All Canberrans have a responsibility to dispose of waste and unwanted items appropriately. However, illegal dumping continues to impact our community—posing risks to public safety, damaging the environment and public assets, and creating significant clean-up costs.

CED Place Management crews clear up illegal dumps once initial evidence searching is completed by Licencing and Compliance rangers.

From 1 January to 29 October 2025, this enforcement activity resulted in:

- 193 infringement notices issued for littering and illegal dumping
- 224 warnings issued following investigations

Managing abandoned vehicles

Abandoned vehicles are also regulated under the Litter Act. Each year, thousands of reports are received about vehicles left in public places. Many are resolved through contact with owners, who may have experienced breakdowns or registration issues.

To formally declare a vehicle abandoned, authorised officers must have reasonable grounds and conduct thorough enquiries to determine ownership and intent. Responsibility for removal lies with the vehicle owner.

In cases where a vehicle is unlawfully parked or poses a safety risk, section 32 of the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999 allows for its immediate removal.

Between 1 January and 29 October 2025, there were:

- 1,553 complaints about suspected abandoned vehicles
- 129 vehicles removed following investigation

B. the geographical spread of assets

Active travel infrastructure

Context

ACT's Transport Strategy and Active Travel Plan provides vision and direction relating to active travel infrastructure. These policies support a shift towards increasing public transport, cycling and walking.

The appropriateness and geographical spread of active travel infrastructure is actively reviewed by maintaining ACT's Active Travel Planning Tool. The hierarchy and alignment of key active travel routes was originally developed through a study titled 'ACT Strategic Cycle Network Plan Preliminary Options Report'. This study provided recommendations associated to support:

- Increasing cycling commuter numbers;
- Reducing transport emissions and congestion; and
- Promoting an active lifestyle.

ACT's active travel infrastructure hierarchy was originally planned to include:

- Principal routes to connect between the City and Town Centres and support high volumes of shared path users to use the most direct and efficient route.
- Main routes to connect between Town Centres and support medium volumes of shared path users, which would also that link from local areas to principal routes.
- Local routes for low volumes of shared path users to support shorter trips within suburbs.

Appropriateness and the geographic spread of active travel infrastructure

The approach to develop and deliver ACT's active travel network has included a focus to invest in upgrades for all active travel route typologies (i.e. local, main and principal routes).

ACT's active travel network isn't limited to be within road corridor areas and has been provided along 'green corridors' including within urban open space (e.g. Umbagong District Park), along creeks corridors

and around lakes and ponds (e.g., recreational loops around Lake Burley Griffin, Lake Ginninderra, Lake Tuggeranong, Point Hut Pond and Yerrabi Pond).

ACT's community requests and associated investment decisions for active travel infrastructure improvements have resulted in expanding ACT's active travel network, with a higher relative provision of Principal and Main routes.

Principal routes now also connect between Town Centres, other key destinations (e.g. airport, hospitals, industrial areas, etc) and extend into suburbs. There is now also an extensive network of main routes that extend into suburbs and connect between local and group centres. In addition, ACT's principal and main routes include off-road cycling options along key arterial roads, which have been delivered as part of ACT's multimodal network projects (e.g. Majura Parkway C9 Principal route: Gungahlin – Airport).

The ACT and Queanbeyan-Palerang Household Travel Survey is used to provide a reliable picture of travel patterns and is undertaken to align with the timing of the ABS Census. When comparing results between the two most recent household travel surveys (2017 and 2022), the number of cycling trips has remained at 2.4% and walking has increased (statistically significant) from 13.7% to 18.1%.

Further information on Active Travel in the ACT can be found at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/plan-and-build/standards-codes-and-guidelines/active-travel-planning#plan and https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/roads-and-paths/road-infrastructure-and-maintenance/community-path-maintenance.

Appropriateness and the geographic spread of parks (Urban Open Space)

ACT's hierarchy of urban open space is detailed in Municipal Infrastructure Standard 16 – Urban Open Space (MIS 16). Urban open space typologies and facilities, including details such as the size and intended use and supporting amenities are also provided within MIS 16. In a greenfield development the Estate Development Code provided details relating to the size and location of public realm areas and included mandatory criteria.

Under the previous planning framework, the Estate Development Code included criteria for open-space provision in new estates. For example, Element 10 (Public Realm) outlined that residential blocks be within 300 metres of a local park or within 500 metres of a district park or sportsground. These design expectations are now embedded in the Planning (Subdivision) Technical Specification 2024, which replaced the EDC following the commencement of the Planning Act 2023.

The new planning system adopts an outcomes-focused approach, where development applications are assessed primarily against the assessment outcomes set out in the Territory Plan 2023. One Assessment Outcome requires *Public spaces provided within a subdivision accommodates a range of uses, users and activities. This includes consideration of recreational opportunities, including facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.* The technical specifications, together with the detailed infrastructure standards such as MIS 16 help outline how this outcome can be met, and ensure new development contributes to accessible, high-quality open space networks.

For example, the details below are reflected in the Planning (Subdivision) Technical Specification 2024, which includes distances associated with the spread of parks (Urban Open Space) from residential blocks.

Blocks for residential use comply with at least one of the following:

a) not more than 300m from at least one of the following:
   i. a local neighbourhood park
   ii. town park or a pedestrian parkland containing recreational facilities such as picnic and barbeque areas and playgrounds

b) not more than 500m from at least one of the following:
   i. a central neighbourhood park
   ii. neighbourhood oval
   iii. district park
   iv. district sportsground.

Appropriateness and the geographic spread of playgrounds

Details relating to the provision of playgrounds is primarily provided through ACT's Municipal Infrastructure Standards (previously known as the Urban Design Standards). The term 'playground' is still in use for certain applications, for operational purposes, however 'play space' is a general term applied for any area designed or used for play.

ACT play spaces are split into 3 categories:

- **Local** are smaller with a target age range between 0-9 years old. Historically, the intent was to provide a local playground within 400 metres of a residence to support residents to have access to multiple basic playgrounds for short visitation periods within a walkable catchment area. Local playgrounds were also intended to complement each other within a suburb by offering different play opportunities. ~95 per cent of residences are within a 400 metre radius of a local playground.
- **Central** are located to serve a whole suburb. These provide a more diverse, physically challenging range of equipment targeted at 0–14-year-olds. ~95 per cent of all residences are located within a one-kilometre radius of a central play space.
- **District** are the largest play spaces that serve the most people and typically contain the greatest number of amenities. These are the largest play spaces that serve the greatest number of users and people often travel from a wide catchment of the ACT to visit them.

As mentioned, the ACT Government has developed 'Better places to play: ACT Play Space Strategy', which provides a strategic framework to guide future planning and prioritisation to continually improve the play space network.

Relevant extract from the Play Space Strategy:

"This strategy has come about through a community centred approach to planning for play. The ACT Government facilitated the citizen-led Better Suburbs Play Space Forum as a showcase project in deliberative democracy. This forum brought together 64 members of the Canberra community to collaboratively deliberate on priorities for the location, design, management and ongoing maintenance of our city's play spaces. Forum members developed the first ACT Play Space Priorities Framework and identified the need for a play space strategy to oversee the framework's implementation."

As the ACT grows, so does the demand for services and infrastructure. Meeting community needs whilst addressing financial sustainability presents an ongoing challenge.

One of the key outcomes from the Better Suburbs Play Space Forum included recognition that ACT's community prefer quality play spaces over quantity. As such, ACT's Play Space Strategy identifies that we will prioritise district and central play spaces for refresh and major upgrades because these have a higher play value. We will generally direct investment in local play spaces towards safety maintenance and minor refurbishments. When play equipment reaches the end of its safe and useful life, it may be replaced with different amenities or the green space provided for alternative community uses depending on how frequently the play space is used. However, site context, safety and surrounding amenity also need to be considered as it may be appropriate to replace an existing local playground.

C. The effectiveness of services relating to waste removal

Residential waste removal services

Waste management is an essential service for the ACT community. ACT NoWaste manage services for residential waste removal, in line with provisions in the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016 (Waste Act).

ACT NoWaste aligns the management of its household waste removal services with the aims of the Waste Act, which are to minimise waste and promote the recovery, recycling, and reuse of resources, to protect the environment and public health.

In 2024-25, CED provided waste management services to more than 485,000 ACT residents, with:

- over 7.1 million household rubbish, and over 3.6 million recycling collections;
- 82,062 tonnes of kerbside waste sent to landfill;
- 28,247 tonnes of household recyclable material recovered;
- over 25,000 tonnes of garden organics with over 1,404,000 million collections of green bins;
- over 106,200 bin collections in the food organics and garden organics (FOGO) pilot areas;
- 9,789 bulky waste collections; and
- 4,460 tonnes of paper and cardboard collected through the locally available Recycling Drop Off Centres.

The 2024 Waste Audit data provided the following snapshot of household waste, where on average ACT households generate 6.1kg of general waste each week (down from 7.7kg in 2022).

- 59% of the content in ACT general waste bins is recoverable material (up from 48% in 2022).
- On average ACT households generate 2.7 kg of recycling each week (up from 2.6kg in 2022)
- ACT recycling bins have an average of 11% contamination (down from 12% in 2022).
- 3% of recycling could be diverted from landfill if the items were not placed in bags.

Additional site services

The Territory provides further services to assist residents when additional waste or specific waste items need disposal. This includes items like e-waste, paint, tyres, mattresses, metal, hazardous waste, and other items as supported by the National Waste Policy Action Plan.

These services are through drop-off facilities across the region, with sites including:

- 2 transfer stations at Mugga Lane and Mitchell
- Hume mattress recycling, and
- 5 sites for recycling drop-off centres.

Education and engagement

ACT NoWaste delivers ongoing waste education programs and community outreach activities to support Canberrans to avoid waste and increase resource recovery. Delivery of waste education in 2024-25 focused on recycling and correct disposal options for hazardous waste, including batteries, and implementation of a trial in multiunit developments to measure the effectiveness of targeted education to reduce contamination. Results were positive with contamination levels dropping across most sites throughout the trial. In 2024-25, the garden organic bins and FOGO contamination was less than 1% with:

- 58% of ACT households utilising garden organics bins;
- 3,312 new green garden organic bins issued; and
- over 1,100 tonnes of organic material diverted from landfill in FOGO pilot.

The Waste Education and Partnerships team will be using a range of data from recent research to update and implement education programs in 2025-26. The 2025 Waste Behaviours Research show there is a need for continued education regarding how to recycle/dispose of waste correctly, with ease of finding information on what can/can't be recycled increasing by 18% since 2024.

Performance benchmarks

In the most recent National Waste and Resource Recovery Report 2024, published January 2025, the ACT outperformed national averages for 2022-23, with:

- a 70% resource recovery rate (vs. 63% nationally); and
- landfilling only 30% of total waste (on par with national targets).

While slightly above average in per capita waste generation (~2,600 kg vs. 2,500 kg), ACT's strong recovery systems mitigate impact and demonstrate leadership in circular economy practices. This is further supported with ACT's early FOGO pilot and planned full rollout, positioning the Territory ahead of most jurisdictions in meeting the National Waste Action Plan's 2030 organics diversion target.

Satisfaction

CED measures customer satisfaction as an indicator in the annual report. Waste and recycling services continues to report a strong outcome from the annual customer satisfaction survey, with most recent findings of 89% satisfied with services.

There was a rise in customer service calls in May 2025 when service collection for households transitioned to a new provider (see below).

Household waste collection services transition

In April 2025, the Territory successfully transitioned to a new, consolidated waste management contract, streamlining the delivery of household waste, recycling, garden organics, FOGO and bulky waste collection services. This new arrangement includes the supply, repair and maintenance of all mobile garbage bins. The contract, awarded to JJ Richards Pty Ltd, amalgamated four previous service agreements into a single, more efficient contract, enhancing both contract management and overall service delivery. JJ Richards commenced operations under the new agreement on 28 April 2025, working with the directorate supporting the public transition.

D. The effectiveness of policies relating to street art and graffiti removal

Managing unauthorised graffiti takes a whole community approach and cannot be tackled by government alone. Graffiti prevention measures aim to deter illegal graffiti while encouraging the use of legal sites. Creative measures to manage graffiti include working with graffiti removal volunteers and artists wishing to paint murals and identifying legal graffiti sites where artists can paint.

Contracted removal of graffiti- public assets

CED City Presentation has a responsive graffiti removal contract in place to remove illegal graffiti on public assets and undertakes weekly inspections on highly visible assets to detect the presence of graffiti, which is removed at the time of inspection where possible. This contract includes removal from accessible public owned assets such as light posts, pavement, bridges, street furniture and signs; with service KPIs set at:

- Offensive graffiti observed or reported will be removed within 24 hours of notification to the contractor; and
- All other graffiti is removed within 5 days of notification.

If the reported graffiti occurs on assets within sports fields, it is removed as soon as possible. Removal of graffiti along high-speed arterial roads and in difficult to reach locations (such as on bridges) requires pre-planning and the arrangement of temporary traffic management as well as specialised equipment. As a result, the removal of such graffiti can take longer to prioritise safety and ensure best value for money is achieved.

CED City Presentation cannot arrange to clean graffiti on assets which it does not own. Some of the most common graffiti targets are electricity, Australia Post and ICON water assets. Cleaning of these assets is the responsibility of the respective asset owners and referrals are made to the relevant body.

Commissioning of street art projects/murals

To help reduced unwanted graffiti on specific sites, the CED Graffiti Management Program occasionally commissions street art in shopping centres and other frequently tagged public spaces. Projects are considered based on:

- Community suggestions from residents or local groups;
- Available funding;
- Support from property owners or tenants;
- Local community interest and involvement;
- Suitability of the wall (size, surface, visibility);
- Relevance of an artwork's theme to the location; and
- Potential to improve the area's look and feel and overall safety.

These projects aim to create a vibrant, welcoming space while discouraging vandalism.

Provision of legal graffiti practice sites

There are 31 legal graffiti practice sites across Canberra. These are located on ACT Government assets in public places like underpasses and toilet blocks. Usually, the practice sites are out of sight from residential properties and Graffiti artists can use the sites on an ongoing basis with no permits required.

The works featured at these sites change frequently and anyone can use them. Such sites have proven effective at diverting graffiti from surrounding areas. Each wall is signposted indicating that it is a legal site and ACT Policing, City Rangers and contracted graffiti removers know if a particular site is a legal wall.

Other ongoing management practices

Other ongoing management practices include reporting incidences of graffiti vandalism to the police (particularly on sensitive sites), collaborating with the Australian Federal Police to catch graffiti offenders; and working with restorative justice for juvenile offenders where practicable.

Planning for graffiti removal kits for private assets

In 2024, the ACT Government committed to providing free graffiti removal kits to households, aligning with similar programs in other states – QLD, NSW, Vic, SA and WA.

Planning for the design and piloting of the kits is well underway with the aim to support residents in managing graffiti on their properties by offering safe, easy-to-use kits that are readily accessible.

More information on Street Art and Graffiti in the ACT can be found at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/graffiti

E. Benchmarking performance against other jurisdictions

Benchmarking for playgrounds, sportsgrounds, parks and playgrounds

CED undertakes benchmarking of services across playgrounds, sportsgrounds, parks and roads through both formal and informal processes.

Formal benchmarking – Yardstick Parks benchmark

CED participates in the Yardstick Parks Benchmark, a recognised suite of benchmarking tools used nationally and internationally. This program collects, shares, and compares critical data to support evidence-based decision-making for parks and public space management.

- Scope: Annual data collection from member organisations on asset provision, costs, service delivery, strategic planning, and asset management practices. This includes playgrounds, sportsgrounds, and parks.
- Governance: Operated by a partnership of nine industry bodies, including World Urban Parks (WUP) and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA).
- ACT Participation: As a member organisation, the ACT contributes data annually. Results are compiled into a report and can be filtered by peer groups for comparative analysis.

Use of Data: CED uses the insights internally for:

- Strategic planning;
- Budget submissions;
- Service delivery analysis;
- Internal reporting and presentations;
- Collaboration: The benchmarking process facilitates networking with jurisdictions that have similar asset profiles and service characteristics; and
- Confidentiality: Under the membership Terms and Conditions, the full report and detailed data cannot be publicly shared or distributed to external stakeholders unless explicitly permitted.

Example – common terminologies - playground services

The term 'playground' is used by ACT Government to benchmark with other Local Government Authorities to share and compare information to measure performance and drive future improvements.

The Yardstick Parks Benchmarking Report description for playgrounds is provided below.

"*A playground is an area with purpose built children's playground equipment present predominantly for young children. A playground may have just one single item of equipment or several items located together. Where there is a large park there may be more than one playground on the site. A playground contains equipment predominantly anchored to the ground. A playground is not adult exercise equipment, fallen tree trunks left on parks, skateboard facilities, bike or BMX facilities".*

A copy of the Yardstick Parks benchmark report has not been provided due to the Terms and Conditions of engagement as detailed at https://www.yardstick.global/terms-and-conditions.

Informal benchmarking – Industry association engagement

CED Place Management maintains corporate membership with Parks & Leisure Australia (PLA), the leading national association for parks and leisure professionals. PLA has been supporting and advocating for the sector in various guises since 1926.

This enables informal benchmarking through engagement with other jurisdictions, sharing of pilot studies, and learning from best-practice examples in planning, design, and management of public spaces.

Benefits of membership

- Access to professional development workshops;
- Consultancy services;
- Regional forums; and
- Annual national conference.

Benchmarking for Roads ACT services

CED Roads ACT engages in benchmarking and knowledge sharing through memberships with various technical and professional organisations including but not limited to:

- Austroads;

- National Transport Research Information Service;
- Concrete Institute of Australia;
- AS/NZ Standards;
- AUS SPEC (is the local government specification for the life cycle management of assets);
- NAT SPEC (is the national specification system for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of local government assets);
- Roads Australia;
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects;
- IPWEA – NAMS+;
- Australian Transport Assessment and Planning; and
- Transport Professionals Association.

ACT's Strategic Road Maintenance Program is being developed and informed through guidance material from Austroads. An Austroads Research Report (AP-R649-21) titled 'Prolonging the life of road assets under increasing demand' developed and presented a suite of case studies that investigated the financial implications of various Technical Level of Service scenarios to assist in making informed investment decisions. The case studies confirmed several well-established practices and principles which have guided the ACT to intervene earlier (preventative maintenance) for the condition parameters of cracking and roughness.

Conclusion

The ACT Government continues to deliver quality maintenance services that support the safety, accessibility, and enjoyment of Canberra's public spaces. Through a balanced approach to planned and reactive works, and a commitment to innovation and sustainability, the City and Environment Directorate ensures that assets such as playgrounds, sportsgrounds, shopping centres, verges, waterways, and active travel routes are maintained and responsive to community needs.

Strategic planning, smart technologies, and strong partnerships also help keep Canberra's public realm vibrant, functional, and future-ready.

Ongoing benchmarking, community education and engagement, and alignment with national standards reinforce the Directorate's commitment to continuous improvement. Whether through waste recovery initiatives, graffiti management, or the thoughtful design of parks and play spaces, the ACT Government is committed to creating cleaner, safer, and more inclusive environments for all Canberrans. These efforts reflect a vision for a city that values public space, supports active lifestyles, and delivers services that meet the expectations of a growing and diverse community.