

**2020**

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY  
REPORT NO 8**

**REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2018-2019**

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

## **Introduction**

On Thursday, 24 October 2019, the 2018-2019 Annual and Financial reports of all ACT Government agencies were referred to the relevant Standing Committees of the Assembly for inquiry and reporting.

The following annual reports, or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety (the Committee):

- ACT Electoral Commission;
- ACT Gambling and Racing Commission;
- ACT Human Rights Commission;
- ACT Policing;
- Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Inspector of Correctional Services;
- Justice and Community Safety Directorate;
- Legal Aid Commission (ACT);
- Public Trustee and Guardian; and
- Solicitor-General for the ACT.

## **Response to Committee Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommends that the JACS Directorate complete the Victims of Crime Charter of Rights, and explicitly provide for and include women in the target groups to be engaged in the Charter process.

#### **Government Response – Agreed.**

The Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime (the Charter) is being developed for Government's considerations.

The Charter has been developed in close consultation with justice stakeholders. During public consultation on the Charter from 22 June – 27 August 2018:

- Six meetings were held with community groups representing women and women affected by violence, including:
  - Women with Disabilities ACT
  - Beryl Women's Inc
  - Domestic Violence Crisis Service
  - Women's Legal Centre
  - The 'Nannie's group' (a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female elders supported by ACTCOSS)
  - Female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees at AMC.
- ACT Government bodies were invited to provide feedback, including:
  - Office for Women
  - Office for Coordinator General for Family Safety
  - Domestic Violence Prevention Council.
- Of 87 online surveys completed by community members, 78% identified as female.
- Of 11 individual face-to-face meetings with victims of crime, 10 were with women.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommends the DPP continue to work with staff and staff representatives to i) better document working hours; and ii) reduce the unusually high hours worked by staff.

#### **Government Response – Agreed.**

The DPP is actively working with staff to ensure workload matters are addressed effectively and in a timely way.

The *2018-2021 Legal Professionals Enterprise Agreement* became operational on 25 February 2020. The Enterprise Agreement introduced clause N11 - *ODPP Workload Management Framework*, to manage excessive hours worked as well as workplace stress factors resulting from the confronting nature of the work and provides for additional paid time off in leave (TOIL) provisions to accommodate for both.

A draft Staff Policy No 19 – *Workload Management Framework*, outlining some proposed administrative detail for the application of leave under clause N11 was provided to the CPSU and representative staff members in August 2019 with an invitation for any required corrections. No corrections were requested, and the policy is now in place.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Committee recommends Worksafe ACT works with JACS to ensure all Work Health and Safety measures be implemented to the Court Transport Unit (CTU) facilities.

### **Government Response – Noted.**

The Directorate will continue to collaboratively engage with Worksafe ACT regarding Work Health and Safety measures across its business units.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends the ACT government and responsible agencies ensure secure ongoing funding of frontline services for victims of domestic violence facing court processes to ensure there is no repeat of insecure funding which were highlighted in the 2019-20 Budget Estimates hearings.

### **Government Response – Agreed.**

The 2019/20 Budget review provided ongoing funding for the frontline services initially funded by the Safer Families Levy relating to the ALRC/NSWLRC Report recommendation on the strengthening of protection orders and improved access to Legal Aid. The resources will contribute to ensuring the Magistrates Court is able to continue to maintain its timely response to domestic family violence matters and continuing ACT Legal Aid's Family Violence Unit based at the ACT Magistrates Court (see 2019-20 Budget Review, Expense initiatives, page 61).

### **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends the compliance team overseeing food standards investigate a sample of Canberra's larger retailers to determine compliance levels and standards with current egg labelling laws.

### **Government Response – Agreed in principle.**

Access Canberra undertakes both proactive and reactive compliance inspections which are prioritised on a risk/harm assessment. This approach also applies to inspections of Canberra retailers to determine compliance levels with current egg labelling laws.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the Government updates the Assembly twice annually on the work of Fire and Rescue's site surveys and the PFAS issue and what is discovered as this process is undertaken.

**Government Response – Noted.**

The ACT Government will be guided expert advice in relation to the independent testing being undertaken across current and former ACT Fire & Rescue.

**Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that the government address immediately the shortfall of operational staff in Fire and Rescue.

**Government Response – Noted.**

The ACT Government does not accept the Committee’s characterisation. The Government has and continues to invest in Canberra’s essential services to meet the needs of the growing city and to ensure continuity of services as existing ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R) staff progress towards retirement.

20 recruits from the community-based Recruit College (College 41) commenced frontline duties in November 2019. Funding of \$678,000 was also allocated in the 2019-20 ACT Budget for two recruit colleges for 36 additional firefighters. The process to recruit for these Colleges is well underway.

Recruit College 42 commenced on 3 February 2020. Due to the COVID-19 situation, ACTF&R has implemented a range of precautions, including appropriate social distancing, to ensure that the training program can be completed on schedule, with 17 recruit firefighters to be transferred to front-line fire stations in July 2020.

At this stage, Recruit College 43 is still expected to commence in July 2020, however, ACTF&R are closely monitoring the development of the COVID-19 situation in the ACT.

In addition, the Government has committed to recruiting an additional 99 firefighters, as part of the ACT Fire & Rescue enterprise agreement. This is a net increase of firefighters.

**Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the government effectively address immediately the heavy workloads and reduction in numbers of the police force over the past decade.

**Government Response – Noted.**

The ACT Government does not accept the characterisation of the Committee. The ACT Government has worked closely with ACT Policing over the last decade to ensure that our police force is adequately resourced to respond to emerging crime trends, priorities and ACT Policing's organisational needs, including providing funding for additional staff including:

- \$9.175 million in 2010-11 for additional officers to support liquor reforms and establish an automated numberplate recognition team

- \$2.926 million for additional officers in 2011-12 to enhance traffic operations to introduce random roadside drug testing, as well as staff to support the COAG security industry reforms
- \$4.988 million in 2013-14 to expand the road safety team
- \$3.460 million funding for enabling services in 2015-16
- \$7.657 million in 2016-17 specifically to support victims of family and domestic violence and increase the capacity for Taskforce Nemesis to combat organised crime
- \$4.814 million in 2017-18 for additional patrols to support safer nightlife precincts
- \$2.576 million in 2018-19 to recruit new specialist positions to expand ACT Policing's strategic analysis capability; and \$1.594 million to recruit specialist officers to combat serious and organised crime.

In response to the growing population and evolving crime environment in the 2019-20 Budget the Government has committed \$33.866 million over four years to support ACT Policing to embark on a significant reform program that will see police serve the Canberra community even better into the future. This is the most significant investment in policing numbers in the last decade. This investment will help our police officers meet evolving community needs, tackle new and emerging crimes and be more active and visible in the Canberra community. The investment also includes better tools and technology for police officers and builds on new mobile devices and conducted electrical weapons through recent Budgets, which means our officers are now more mobile and able to work more efficiently.

### **Recommendation 9**

The Committee recommends that the government report in its next annual report on progress of getting an increased number of suitable women into the recruitment process and into the police force.

### **Government Response – Agreed.**

ACT Policing currently report on the number of their staff by gender in both professional and sworn member roles in the ACT Policing Annual Report.

ACT Policing and the broader AFP are committed to a workforce that reflects our community and our community values. Workplace diversity is of critical importance and ACT Policing have established networks like the 'National Women's Advisory Network' to ensure women are supported in the workforce and promote gender equality.

Initiatives such as the AFP's adoption of a continuous application process and the National Women's Advisory Network, ensure that ACT Policing is well placed to maintain a representative and diverse workforce. Such processes drive towards the continual support of progress to improving gender equality in recruitment processes and across ACT Policing.