

Report to the Public Accounts Committee

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**Performance Audit Recommendations  
Observations (2024) - 2024 audits**

February 2025

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# Auditor-General Report No.1 of 2024

## Urban Tree Management<sup>1</sup>

(23 February 2024)

### Auditee

The auditee for this audit was the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate.

### Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of TCCS' management of urban trees to support the ACT Government's goal of achieving 30 percent tree canopy cover by 2045.

### Summary

Urban trees provide a range of benefits to the community including increased comfort through shading and amenity, habitat for birds and other wildlife, improved health and wellbeing and increased property values.

The *Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2045* (the Strategy) sets out the ACT Government's vision for a resilient and sustainable urban forest. A key feature of the Strategy is an intention to increase canopy cover to 30 percent by 2045. A key activity of the Strategy to achieve this is an intention to plant over 459,000 trees on urban public land.

The audit assessed the effectiveness of TCCS' management of urban trees to support the ACT Government's goal of achieving 30 percent tree canopy cover by 2045.

### Government response<sup>2</sup>

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for City Services, tabled the ACT Government's response to the Performance Audit Report on 4 June 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> [Report-No.1-of-2024-Urban-Tree-Management.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> [PAC-AG-Report-1-of-2004-tabled-6-Jun-2024.pdf](#)

## Recommendation 1 – Reviewing the Preferred Tree Species List

TCCS should:

- a) finalise the ‘Living Labs’ trial, which seeks to assess the performance of new ‘climate-ready’ tree species in Canberra; and
- b) update Municipal Infrastructure Standard 25: Plant species for urban landscapes based on the results of the trial.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

*The focus in the past four years of a rapid increase of tree planting numbers on public land has been to prioritise planting of species known to perform well in the Canberra environment.*

*The most recent update to MIS25 occurred in January 2022 to update the structure of the standard and revise the species list to remove newly declared pest species and add additional information such as flowering times, foraging information and Ngunnawal Cultural notes.*

*In 2023, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) completed the Cooler Greener Municipal Infrastructure Standards Review, a focused review of the Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS) and Municipal Infrastructure Technical Standards (MITS) which made evidence-based recommendations for changes to support living infrastructure objectives including the 30% tree canopy and permeability targets, and a reduction in urban heat.*

*This Review, the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society research report, the [ACT Ecological Network Dashboard \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com) and the Urban Forest Ecological Advice Planting Map, the Living Labs Trial and other trials, evidence and research will inform amendments and improvements to the MIS25 and the Urban Open Space Management Plan in the short- and medium-terms.*

#### a) The Living Labs Trial

**The ACT Which Plant Where Living Lab plantings were established in 2020 and are due to be assessed by the end of 2025.**

*The Which Plant Where Living Lab, is a nationwide network of urban planting sites and forms part of the Which Plant Where research program, funded by Hort Innovation Australia and managed by Macquarie University and Western Sydney University. The program looks to establish a standardised set of tree and shrub plantings suitable for significant urban areas throughout Australia.*

*The program is designed to:*

- 1) *test the performance of species with different morphologies and growth forms under a wide range of environmental conditions; and*
- 2) *evaluate the co-benefits of urban greening (e.g. heat mitigation, enhanced biodiversity) by examining the role of vegetation diversity and structure.*

*By establishing a network of “Living Labs” in cities across Australia, the program will enable comparison of the performance of, and benefits associated with, standardised tree and shrub plantings in a variety of different climates, soils and landscape contexts.*

*Each trial is designed over a five year monitoring period and the ACT plantings were established in spring 2020. Species were selected from a standard national list, with those selected considered the most robust to withstand the growing conditions in the ACT, and were then sourced, planted and maintained by the Urban Treescapes team in TCCS.*

*While the Living Labs trial remains ongoing and has not been finalised, the results of the trial planting continue to be regularly monitored and audited. A seasonal audit of the Living Labs trial in the ACT has been completed and replanting of failed specimens is planned for spring 2024, with monitoring to continue for another 18 months. These long-term Living Lab trials are designed to determine species performance, focussing on heat and water availability in the medium term over several seasons and climatic conditions. Given the extended wet conditions and mild winter temperatures over the length of the trial period to date, an extension of the trial may be considered necessary to continue monitoring performance through hotter, colder and drier conditions to determine true suitability. This trial and other ongoing trials, including species suggested in the ANU Fenner School of Environment & Society research report, will continue as new potential species are identified.*

*While Canberra’s climate is forecast by the Fenner School to move closer to that experienced further west and similar to that of Wagga Wagga or Dubbo through 2050 to 2090, current cold winter conditions will influence the success of many of the suggested species for some time due to frost sensitivities of those species.*

#### b) Update of Municipal Infrastructure Standard 25

**The Municipal Infrastructure Standard 25: Plant species for urban landscapes (MIS25) will be updated in the first quarter of 2024-25 ahead of a more comprehensive update in 2025-26.**

*To maximise opportunities to increase canopy cover and permeable surfaces on public urban land in the ACT, an interim update of MIS25 will occur in the first quarter of 2024-25 to reflect the most up to date evidence available. This will include:*

- incorporating Cooler Greener Municipal Infrastructure Standards Review recommendations;
- including any species deemed suitable through the interim results of the Living Labs trial;
- reviewing species information available in the Fenner research report and incorporating updates where the suitability is relevant to the current climatic conditions; and
- removing species if they are no longer suitable.

Management and siting notes in the MIS25 species tables will provide details of any concerns or special considerations.

The results of the Living Labs trial, together with the maturation of the [ACT Ecological Network Dashboard \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com) and the Urban Forest Ecological Advice Planting Map, and the Urban Forest Condition Report will inform a more detailed and refined update to MIS25 in 2025-26. This will be incorporated into the Urban Open Space Management Plan implementation and work that progresses with the district strategies. As reflected in the Government response to Recommendation 2, in drawing on all of this information in a holistic way, the refined MIS25 will include:

- greater site-specific information on existing and possible habitat, biodiversity, sub-climate and other ecological values;
- clear information on what is intended to be achieved with planting at specific sites, in addition to greater canopy cover, and why;
- detailed information on the most appropriate canopy, understory, shrub and ground layer species to be planted at specific sites that will achieve the intended aims.

Annual Report (TCCS)	Last Reported Status	In Progress
<p><u>2023-24 Annual Report:</u></p> <p>The Living Labs Trial is in the fourth year of the five-year trial. A preliminary audit of the trees and shrubs has been undertaken and the results to date have been provided to the Which Plant Where Living Labs team at University of Western Sydney. Plans are in place to replant the failed species in spring 2024.</p> <p>The final results for the Living Labs trial will not be available until end of 2025 calendar year when the trial ends.</p> <p>Planning is also underway to expand on the Living Labs project with additional long-term trials to test the performance of tree species from warmer climates that have potential to work in Canberra’s future climate.</p> <p>A preliminary update of Municipal Infrastructure Standard 25: Plant species for urban landscapes is underway and a revised timeframe of second quarter 2024–2025 is anticipated for release.</p>		
Auditor-General’s Observation		
<p>The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and its two key elements.</p> <p>TCCS’ <i>Annual Report 2023-24</i> provided a fulsome indication of activities underway to implement the two parts of the recommendation.</p>		

## Recommendation 2 – Cross-Directorate Collaboration on Biodiversity and Canopy Cover Goals

<p>TCCS and EPSDD should work collaboratively to review the Territory’s biodiversity goals and canopy cover goals with a view to identifying opportunities to manage competing priorities and reduce limitations on locations for urban tree plantings.</p>		
Government Response	Reported Status	Agreed
<p>TCCS will continue to liaise with EPSDD on biodiversity issues, including collaboration on the recent ACT Urban Habitat and Connectivity Project which resulted in the <a href="https://arcgis.com">ACT Ecological Network Dashboard (arcgis.com)</a> and the Urban Forest Ecological Advice Planting Map. This project is looking for opportunities to align strategic objectives from the Urban Forest Strategy and the Nature Conservation Strategy, specifically in relation to areas of the urban landscape prioritised for ecological restoration through planting or other means (as shown in the ACT Ecological Network).</p> <p>The project is undertaken as part of the Connecting Nature, Connecting People initiative, and involves three main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas of the landscape in which additional planting of trees and large shrubs would contribute to habitat condition or ecological connectivity. Areas falling within the spatial extent relevant to the Urban Forest Strategy were prioritised in this step.</li> <li>• Identify areas of the landscape in which additional planting of trees and large shrubs would detract from habitat condition or ecological connectivity (based on existing ecological values, including those associated with grasslands).</li> <li>• Identify areas of the landscape which are important ecologically, but for which specific planting advice has not yet been developed.</li> </ul>		

The first stage for finding priority areas for the addition of trees and shrubs to enhance habitat for native animals looked at areas identified as being isolated on the map of ecological connectivity modelling for small to medium terrestrial mammals in the urban ACT (developed as part of the ACT Urban Habitat and Connectivity Project).

The second stage followed the priority 'initiatives' proposed for inclusion in the District Strategies, under the Blue-Green Network Driver. This analysis looked within mapped potential habitats and corridors within the Urban ACT Ecological Network to identify areas where the addition of native trees and shrubs would improve habitat value. For each priority 'initiative' within the District Strategies:

- Identify ecosystem type (woodland, riparian or woodland/riparian).
- Provide an overview of which large habitat patches (usually nature reserves) will be better connected as a result of planting in this area.
- Identify any threatened ecosystems which occur in the corridor (natural temperate grassland, potential threatened woodland).
- Identify constraints within the corridor (mowing, fire, development, or grassland/open woodland where further plantings are inappropriate).

Additional input has also been sought from the three ACT Catchment Groups, stakeholders within Environment, Heritage and Water, including staff from the Parks and Conservation Service and from Resilient Landscapes, and community organisations such as Friends of Grasslands.

This work has now progressed to operational planning, with planting principles developed for planting near grasslands.

TCCS and EPSDD will also continue to engage on canopy cover related initiatives which can help to reduce limitations on locations for urban tree plantings and work collaboratively to ensure planting opportunities are capitalised to remain on track to achieve the 30% tree canopy cover goal. Current initiatives include:

- the measurement of the ACT's performance against the tree canopy cover target using Light Detection and Ranging imagery, with the next survey taking place in summer 2024/2025;
- recent reforms as part of the new ACT planning system which have created new tree canopy cover requirements for commercial and community facility zones and new estate subdivisions; and
- the evaluation of options to improve heat resilience in areas where it may be harder to increase tree canopy cover, including by utilising tree canopy-equivalent infrastructure such as shrub beds or wetlands.

Annual Report (TCCS and EPSDD)	Last Reported Status	In Progress
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2023-24 Annual Report:

City Services continues to liaise with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) to identify and build on opportunities to support biodiversity and canopy cover goals. These projects include:

- Supporting the development of the Loss of Mature Native Trees Key Threatening Action Plan and to facilitate the Implementation Plan to achieve the Action Plan objectives.
- Continued engagement with EPSDD to implement recommendations made in the Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS) 'Cooler, greener infrastructure' review by updating standards to support living infrastructure and maximise tree planting opportunities.
- Engaging in the 'Measuring the cooling benefits of living infrastructure' project to identify, compare and differentiate between different forms of living infrastructure and analyse their respective cooling benefits within the urban environment.
- Collaborating on the Connecting Nature, Connecting People initiative to support biodiversity and community wellbeing outcomes, including on the Sullivans Creek Renaturalisation project.
- Continued engagement with EPSDD on biodiversity and conservation mapping, including incorporation of the Plant Community Zone mapping in urban open space into City Services' tree planting program.
- Collaborating on planning to support actions listed in the Draft Native Species Conservation Plan for the Grey-headed Flying-fox (GHFF) by protecting and enhancing GHFF foraging and roosting areas on public urban land.
- Ongoing development of the Tree Heath and Biodiversity Restoration project guidelines (in draft) to identify and prioritise sites and direct management activities to support tree health and canopy growth and restore local native understorey.
- Collaborating on the upcoming LiDAR capture planned for 2024–2025 which will inform on progress made towards the target of 30 per cent canopy coverage by 2045 within ACT's urban footprint.
- Sharing spatial datasets to measure and analyse the urban forest, including TCCS tree asset data, and EPSDD mature tree crown, Gang-gang cockatoo nest tree, and mature tree loss (2015–2020) datasets.

Place Management will continue to work collaboratively with TCCS Urban Treescapes and EPSDD to review biodiversity and canopy goals in the next ten years of the Urban Open Space Land Management Plan Implementation.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

TCCS' *Annual Report 2023-24* provided a fulsome indication of activities underway to implement the recommendation.

### Recommendation 3 – MOU with Yarralumla Nursery

TCCS should finalise the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Urban Treescapes unit and the Yarralumla Nursery for the production and delivery of tree seedlings for the planting programs. The MOU should clearly document expectations for the production and supply of seedlings for future planting programs.

<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	Agreed
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*Urban Treescapes (TCCS) has commenced development of an MOU with Yarralumla Nursery. The MOU will formalise the current arrangement of sourcing all plant stock from Yarralumla Nursery, either through propagation or supply from external stock and provides an understanding between the parties in relation to the supply of a range of trees required for tree planting and urban forest renewal related projects as part of delivering against the Urban Forest Strategy. The MOU is expected to be finalised by 30 June 2024.*

<b>Annual Report (TCCS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	In Progress
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2023-24 Annual Report:

*The MOU is in the final stages of drafting with proposed consultation to occur with Yarralumla Nursery in early August 2024. The MOU is now expected to be finalised by 30 September 2024.*

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with this recommendation and that it would be completed by 30 June 2024.

TCCS' *Annual Report 2023-24*, which was published in December 2024, reported the implementation of the recommendation was in progress and identified a new expected completion date of 30 September 2024.

### Recommendation 4 – Tree Management and Planting Policies

TCCS should:

- a) finalise the *Tree Management Policy* and *Tree Planting Policy*; and in doing so
- b) articulate how its urban tree management activities (including its urban tree planting activities) will contribute to the achievement of the 30 percent canopy cover goal.

<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	Agreed
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*Development of the Tree Management Policy and Tree Planting Policy is underway and additional resources will be allocated to prioritise both documents' completion. These policies will provide more detail on the methods outlined in the Urban Forest Strategy. The Strategy has six key objectives to support a healthy, resilient and sustainable urban forest and achieve the 30% tree canopy cover (or equivalent benefit) target by 2045. Each objective is broken down into actions that provide a road map to guide government activities. These actions have been allocated a rating to reflect their potential contribution towards achieving the tree canopy target.*

*A reduction in the number of plantings in the next two years will allow additional resources to be invested in strategic planning of planting locations and a focus on replacement of ageing trees planning in areas most influenced by urban heat, such as carparks. This takes more time and planning but ultimately has a much higher impact on addressing urban heat and will allow time to assess the new data in the Urban Forest Condition Report and carefully plan the staged renewal of trees reaching end of life. This investment in strategic planning, and the more sophisticated MIS25 which will follow in 2025-26 is intended to result in an enhanced capability to deliver higher planting targets and optimal ecological outcomes in the years to come. The required per year planting estimates will need to be reviewed several times up to 2045.*

*The Urban Forest Condition report discussed in Recommendation 9 will provide an update on the urban forest and revision of the estimated tree replacements necessary, enabling new modelling to be undertaken to update calculations. This report is anticipated to be delivered in August 2024.*

<b>Annual Report (TCCS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	In Progress
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2023-24 Annual Report:

Planning is underway to develop the Tree Management Policy and Tree Planting Policy. The development of policies and procedures to support the management of urban trees are being prioritised according to their importance to essential business activities.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

TCCS' Annual Report 2023-24 indicates implementation of the recommendation is in progress.

## Recommendation 5 – Policy and Procedural Guidance

TCCS should review and finalise its policy and procedural guidance for urban tree management.

**Government Response**

**Reported Status**

Agreed

Development of the policy and procedural guidance for urban tree management is underway. Additional resources will be allocated to the development and completion of a service handbook to include an overview of the team including structure, roles and responsibilities, document team processes and include reference to all other supporting material including policy, registers and forms. This service handbook, incorporating existing policy and procedures, will be compiled by 30 June 2024. A detailed list of required policies and procedures has been developed, with the priority documents to be developed during 2024-25. To support cross-referencing, individual policy and procedural documents will be entered into the comprehensive Tree Management Policy as they are completed.

**Annual Report (TCCS)**

**Last Reported Status**

In Progress

2023-24 Annual Report:

A 'Service Handbook' is in the initial stages of drafting and consultation has occurred within Urban Treescaping on requirements for structure and content. The handbook will continue to be updated as additional procedural policy becomes available.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation, with expected completion by 30 June 2024.

TCCS' Annual Report 2023-24 indicates implementation is in progress through the development of a Service Handbook.

## Recommendation 6 – Allocation of Tree Planting Responsibilities

As part of the implementation of Recommendations 3 and 4, TCCS should develop guidance for the allocation of tree planting responsibilities between the in-house planting team, contractors and volunteers. The guidance should document the factors to be considered when allocating tree planting sites.

**Government Response**

**Reported Status**

Agreed

The rapid increase to tree planting targets over the past four years has required careful planning to allocate planting sites to the most appropriate resource. The inclusion and subsequent expansion of an in-house team in 2023 increased the complexity of delivery of the planting program. Development of a strategic plan for future planting programs is underway to ensure smooth allocation of planting sites and responsibilities. This will be completed prior to the commencement of the spring planting season in September 2024.

**Annual Report (TCCS)**

**Last Reported Status**

In Progress

2023-24 Annual Report:

A planting planning working group was established in early 2024 to work through program complexities. Urban Treescaping is currently undertaking training and refresher training on core processes for the Programs team to ensure clarity on roles and responsibilities, reporting lines, and tree

selection and marking up procedures. Duty statements are being prepared and will be incorporated into the Service Handbook also under development. Existing guidelines for assessing planting sites, planting checklists, and contractor inductions are in the process of being updated.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and that the 'development of a strategic plan for future planting programs is underway and that this would be completed before September 2024.

TCCS' Annual Report 2023-24 indicates implementation of the recommendation remains in progress.

## Recommendation 7 – Contract Management Plans

TCCS should develop and finalise contract management plans for its Tree Watering Trucks and Other Related Services Panel and Urban Seasonal Tree Planting Services Panel.

#### Government Response

Reported Status

Agreed

TCCS will develop and finalise contract management plans for its Tree Watering Trucks and Other Related Services Panel and Urban Seasonal Tree Planting Services Panel by 30 June 2024. Procurement and contract management reporting is already maintained on a monthly basis.

#### Annual Report (TCCS)

Last Reported Status

In Progress

#### 2023-24 Annual Report:

Contract management plans are being developed and finalised. All new contracts, e.g. the upcoming new Tree Watering Trucks Panel, will have a current contract management plan included at the time of execution of contracts going forward.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and that contract management plans would be completed by 30 June 2024.

TCCS' Annual Report 2023-24 indicates that implementation of the recommendation remains in progress.

## Recommendation 8 – Reporting of Tree Plantings in Low Canopy Suburbs

TCCS should improve its public reporting of achievements against the *Urban Forest Strategy 2021- 2045* by reporting on cumulative tree plantings in hot or vulnerable and low canopy coverage suburbs since the commencement of the expanded planting program in 2019-20.

#### Government Response

Reported Status

Agreed

TCCS will continue to improve the urban tree planting reporting capability to include trees planted in hot or vulnerable areas. This will include adjoining trees planted in close-proximity (e.g. 15m) to a hot and vulnerable area where the tree will positively impact that location. TCCS will provide the number of trees planted on a suburb by suburb basis in the Urban Tree Canopy Coverage annual update. As the information and data matures, together with a more sophisticated MIS25, more detail will be provided about what has been planted where and why.

#### Annual Report (TCCS)

Last Reported Status

Complete

#### 2023-24 Annual Report:

Tree planting undertaken in hot and vulnerable areas and tree planting undertaken within ACT districts in 2023–2024 is reported in the 2024 Urban Tree Canopy Coverage progress report.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

TCCS' *Annual Report 2023-24* indicates implementation is complete through the publication of the *2024 Urban Tree Canopy Coverage progress report*. The report was published in September 2024.

## Recommendation 9 – Strategic Tree Replacement Program

TCCS should develop and implement a strategic tree replacement program that focuses on:

- a) identifying mature trees at risk; and
- b) planning for the end-of-life removal and replacement of those trees.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

*A contract to deliver an Urban Forest Condition Report through Remote Imagery Capture and Analysis has been awarded and data was captured in early February 2024. Anticipated to be delivered in August 2024, this report will provide a quantitative analysis of the current state of the urban forest and enable the development of a Mature Tree Replacement Plan. A Senior Arborist (Tree Inspector) TO4 position has been recruited to develop and implement the Mature Tree Replacement Plan based on the Urban Forest Condition Report. However, this Plan will need to be re-assessed again in years to come, as environmental factors and maintenance interventions influence the health and condition of the urban forest. The development of the Mature Tree Replacement Plan will involve two stages. A project plan based on the findings in the Urban Forest Condition Report will be developed by the end of 2024-25. This plan will guide the prioritisation of engagement with the community in areas established to require renewal in the short term. District based renewal plans will then be developed in collaboration with the community, and informed by the more sophisticated MIS25.*

### Annual Report (TCCS)

### Last Reported Status

In Progress

#### 2023-24 Annual Report:

*The Urban Forest Condition Report, and the accompanying spatial vegetation condition dataset, are under development and will be delivered in August 2024. This information will inform the Mature Tree Replacement Plan being developed by the new Urban Forest Renewal Co-ordinator.*

### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and that it would be completed by August 2024.

TCCS' *Annual Report 2023-24*, which was published in December 2024, reported the implementation of the recommendation was in progress.

## Recommendation 10 – Data Quality Controls

TCCS should strengthen data quality controls for the use of Salesforce for urban tree activities by:

- a) providing additional training to staff and contractors on its use; and
- b) developing quick guides on different system functions.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

*TCCS provides training to staff and contractors on the use of Salesforce and has developed training material to support staff in its use. This material will be enhanced to strengthen data quality controls and quick guides on different system functions will be developed. A City Operations Triage team has also been created to triage and assign requests related to City Operations, efficiently prioritise and resolve requests and provide additional training and support to all City Operations teams. These efforts are leading to improvements in data quality, customer responsiveness and staff efficiency.*

*While Salesforce is used as the TCCS customer relationship management platform, many operational programs are coordinated through the use of spatial data, and training material and programs are also being reviewed or developed for the use of ArcGIS and Fieldmaps.*

*Operational programs to manage the urban forest include the tree planting program, juvenile tree watering program, contractor tree removal program and the tree assessment/auditing program. These programs are planned, developed, and delivered through the ACT Government's ArcGIS Online instance, with several hosted feature services, hosted view layers, maps and applications (including dashboards). Initial data capture is also undertaken through the ArGIS Field Maps mobile app.*

The ArcGIS Online operational program data has continually evolved since the Urban Treescapes team started utilising ArcGIS Online to deliver their programs in 2014. An ArcGIS Online hosted data and workflow review (and update) is currently underway to align with current best practice, improve the field capture experience and improve authoritative reporting outputs.

<b>Annual Report (TCCS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	In Progress
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2023-24 Annual Report:

a) A review of existing data, provided by all systems, is underway to assess current shortfalls in data collection. Following completion of the review, mitigation strategies and enhancements to the existing training will be provided to staff and contractors on expected system use. It is estimated this work will be completed in early 2025.

b) Development of a training workbook is underway, with the City Operations Triage Team assisting in the process. Due to the nature of the required training and the requirement for adaptative materials for all learning styles, further consultation is expected to take place before the quick guides can be finalised. It is estimated this work will be completed in early 2025.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

TCCS' *Annual Report 2023-24* indicates implementation of the recommendation remains in progress, with estimated completion in early 2025.

### Recommendation 11 – Public Reporting of Achievements

TCCS should improve its public reporting on tree planting numbers and achievement against the canopy cover target by including data on tree survival rates and cumulative planting numbers in suburbs with low canopy coverage that are vulnerable to urban heat.

<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	Agreed
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TCCS will continue to improve the urban tree planting public reporting capability to include planting survival rates for trees planted within the last three years. Survival rates are estimates only based on audits undertaken during the juvenile tree watering programs (typically on the first 3-5 years) and may not include trees that have failed outside of the juvenile tree care period. Survival rates will be reported on retrospectively to ensure completeness. For example, the survival rate reported for 2023-24 will include trees that have failed since 2021-22.

Please also refer to the response at Recommendation 8 on how this will be further achieved.

<b>Annual Report (TCCS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	In Progress
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2023-24 Annual Report:

Urban Treescapes' data management system is currently being updated and a process to capture tree failures will be included as part of the new structure. Tree survival data will be captured as trees are watered through the tree watering program, and tree failures will also be captured through the formative pruning program currently under development.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

TCCS' *Annual Report 2023-24* indicates implementation is in progress and that 'Urban Treescapes' data management system is currently being updated and a process to capture tree failures will be included as part of the new structure'.

## **Auditor-General Report No.2 of 2024**

### **Management of Key Contracts Under A Step Up for Our Kids<sup>3</sup>**

(14 April 2024)

#### **Auditee**

The auditee for this audit was the Community Services Directorate.

#### **Audit Objective**

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of CSD's:

- management of key contracts for services delivered under A Step Up for Our Kids; and
- planning for service delivery in the design of Next Steps.

#### **Summary**

The Community Services Directorate is responsible for the delivery of out-of-home care services under the *Children and Young People Act 2008*. A Step Up for Our Kids, the Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020, set out the ACT Government's approach to out-of-home care in the ACT.

Service delivery to children, young people and families is achieved through various contracted services from a number of providers. Two significant agreements for out-of-home care services are with ACT Together (Barnardos) and Uniting Children and Families ACT (Uniting CFACT). These agreements cover services for the provision of out-of-home care and other support for vulnerable families.

The audit considered the effectiveness of Community Services Directorate's oversight and administration of the agreements with ACT Together (Barnardos) and Uniting Children and Families ACT (Uniting CFACT).

#### **Government response<sup>4</sup>**

Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, tabled the ACT Government's response to the Performance Audit Report on 27 August 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> [Report-No.2-of-2024-Management-of-Key-Contracts-Under-A-Step-Up-For-Our-Kids.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/2573726/22\\_ACT-Auditor-Generals-Report-No-2-Management-of-key-contracts-under-a-Step-Up-for-Our-Kids-Government-response.pdf](https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/2573726/22_ACT-Auditor-Generals-Report-No-2-Management-of-key-contracts-under-a-Step-Up-for-Our-Kids-Government-response.pdf)

## Recommendation 1 – Performance Management Framework

As part of implementing the Next Steps strategy, CSD should implement a robust performance management framework with its contracted service providers. The framework should include:

- performance measures that are measurable and support accountability for delivery of contracted services;
- processes to regularly assess performance and provide timely feedback to providers; and
- mandatory contractual provisions that clearly express these arrangements as well as processes for managing non-compliance or poor performance in delivering contracted services.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

The Community Services Directorate (CSD) has built a strong evidence base of information, as demonstrated by the 2021 [Post-Strategy Evaluation Stage 1 Report](#). This will continue to be matured and supplemented with additional measures to evaluate the impacts of Next Steps.

The Government has committed over \$400,000 over 4 years from 2024-25 and a further \$100,000 for data validation in 2030-31 for the design and validation of an integrated outcomes and evaluation framework. Utilising external expertise, these will be developed in partnership between government and community partners and include how children, young people and families can provide views and input on the success of Next Steps reforms. Evaluation will include a qualitative component on how reforms have directly impacted children, young people, families, carers, workforces and partner organisations.

To ensure consistency and maximise efficient use of ACT Government resources the project will include:

- the co-design of a robust performance management framework (PMF) and accompanying service level agreement (SLA) to provide holistic performance management of the new child protection and out of home care service system with clear alignment to the Next Steps Evaluation Framework.
- alignment with the national Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework and other National reporting requirements.
- alignment with the ACT Wellbeing Framework along with existing internal and external reporting requirements including six-monthly reporting against Our Booris, Our Way recommendations and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028.
- the review and update of current reporting measures in the publicly available Out of Home Care Snapshot Report.

As part of the Next Steps reform, a Children, Young People and Families Panel will be established to deliver earlier support and diversion, child protection and out of home care services. The Panel will be established through a phased approach commencing in the first half of the 2024-25 financial year. A Service Funding Panel Deed (Deed) has been agreed for this Panel which contains provisions for a co-developed system wide PMF with government and non-government service providers.

The Deed sets out the high-level assessment and reporting approach while the detailed measures, targets, key performance indicators and performance assessment will be detailed in the Panel Provider Services Orders. The system wide PMF will be finalised to coincide with the commencement of Service Orders from 1 January 2025. This will include associated system and service reporting requirements.

The scoping, conceptual and process mapping work has been completed for the system wide PMF and will guide the co-development work with government and non-government service providers. The PMF and accompanying SLA will ensure performance accountability across the government and non-government sectors. The PMF will clearly outline performance measures that are measurable and support accountability for delivery of contracted services. The PMF will monitor and track reform performance enabling adjustment and corrective action in real time.

In parallel, an interim PMF has been co-developed with the current service provider of therapeutic residential care services. A Try, Test and Learn methodology is being used to implement the interim PMF, so findings can inform the further development and implementation of the system wide PMF.

Both the Panel Deed and Service Orders clearly outline expectations of service providers including processes for managing non-compliance and/or poor performance in delivering contracted services.

Relationship and contract managers will manage the ongoing Panel arrangements including the Panel Deeds to deliver best practice contract management and financial control / compliance. This will be achieved through a cultural change program, the implementation of ACT Audit Office recommendations and the training of staff including relationship and contract managers to ensure risks are closely monitored and continually addressed. The Government has committed funding to source external expertise in contract management to support establishment and operations of the new Panel from July 2024 onwards.

### Annual Report (CSD)

### Last Reported Status

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

The response identified a commitment of 'over \$400,000 over 4 years from 2024-25 and a further \$100,000 for data validation in 2030-31 for the design and validation of an integrated outcomes and evaluation framework'. The response also identified that 'a Service Funding Panel Deed (Deed) has been agreed' for the forthcoming Children, Young People and Families Panel as part of the *Next Steps* reforms.

The response also identified 'the Deed sets out the high-level assessment and reporting approach while the detailed measures, targets, key performance indicators and performance assessment will be detailed in the Panel Provider Services Orders. The system wide PMF will be finalised to coincide with the commencement of Service Orders from 1 January 2025. This will include associated system and service reporting requirements'.

## Recommendation 2 – Governance and Administrative Arrangements

For the purpose of the *Next Steps* strategy, CSD should develop and implement a revised approach for its governance arrangements and for managing service funding agreements with its service delivery partners. In doing so CSD should:

- undertake a lessons learnt exercise with regards to how its service funding agreements, and associated governance arrangements, with ACT Together (Barnardos) and Uniting CFACT have been administered under *A Step Up for Our Kids*;
- review better practice contract management and governance resources and critically examine how they could be implemented in *Next Steps*;
- articulate and document a contract management approach via a formal contract implementation plan at the outset of *Next Steps*;
- develop and implement risk, fraud and stakeholder communications plans for service delivery partners for *Next Steps*; and
- implement a process to continually review and refine contract management and governance arrangements over the life of *Next Steps* to ensure the approach is fit for purpose and achieving its desired goal.

**Government Response**

**Reported Status**

Agreed

*Revised governance arrangements are being progressively established to ensure a robust and contemporary governance framework is in place to oversee delivery of Next Steps reform. This builds on established cross government and joint government and community sector governance structures to monitor the reforms and ensure engagement of key stakeholders to measure system effectiveness.*

*In 2021-22, a layered governance model was co-designed with a small and diverse group of sector partners and oversight agencies. The governance model identified a role for an advisory council to guide and champion continuous improvement for the children and family services sector. The council composition was intended to reflect the intent behind Next Steps with greater engagement with the community sector and lived experience informed.*

*Governance arrangements will ensure requirements for policy, system, service and practice outcomes are met while creating strong networks and improved communications across the service system. Progress to date includes:*

- Members to the new Child and Family Reform Ministerial Advisory Council were appointed in September 2023 to oversight the Next Steps reforms and ensure the implementation of Next Steps progresses and achieves its intended outcomes. The Council comprises a diverse membership including 30% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership and significant membership with lived or living experience of the out of home care system.*
- Established in early 2023, a joint Government and provider Placement and Case Mix Committee meets weekly to manage therapeutic residential care referrals and ensure that appropriate services are provided for children and young people.*
- Change to how Children Youth and Families Division and services within CSD is structured to align with Next Steps reform and legislative changes to the Children and Young People Act 2008.*
- Refreshed internal governance arrangements including the CYF Business Improvement Executive Committee to oversee and advise on business assurance and reform delivery. An updated CYF strategic risk register with 6 monthly reporting to the CSD Strategic Board of Management will underpin operations of this Committee.*

*A lessons learnt exercise has been undertaken on how service funding agreements and associated governance arrangements have been administered under A Step Up for Our Kids. This project, overseen by the Corporate Assurance Risk Management Branch, provided advice on*

strengthened governance and contract management arrangements. This included a focus on better practice contract management and governance resources and examined how they could be implemented in Next Steps.

The CSD Relationship and Contract Management Refresh Project (Project) was initiated in January 2023 to develop a consistent CSD approach to managing relationships and contracts with community partners. An Executive Steering Committee was established to guide the Project.

The proposed model establishes a consolidated and centralised relationship and contract management team in CSD as the coordination point for CSD funded community partners. The proposed model will provide a 'whole of organisation' view of community partners to join up information, build consistency of contract and relationship management practice and identify/manage cross-Directorate risks.

The consolidated model will provide for a variety of continuous improvement measures including:

- increased rates of community sector satisfaction.
- improving trust and transparency in relationships.
- building a consistent service response through the development and implementation of an enterprise Quality Management System
- improvements in monitoring contractual requirements that strengthen service delivery expectations, performance and outcomes for clients.

The new consolidated model will be underpinned by mutual accountability in contract and relationship management via a formal contract implementation plan. The new approach will pursue innovation in the development of the model, its practice framework, and client management system. Over time, it will include the creation of new digital systems and technologies to help track management data and performance outcomes.

Future contract management functions will ensure alignment with the Australian Government Contract Management Guide to ensure contracts deliver value for money.

The Directorate commits to developing and implementing a Next Steps risk and fraud plan. Working with the Corporate Assurance and Risk Management Branch, this plan will be overseen by the CYF Business Improvement Executive with regular reporting to the CSD Strategic Board of Management.

The Directorate maintains a zero-tolerance approach for risk related to integrity, fraud, and corrupt practice. As outlined in the Directorate Fraud and Corruption Prevention Framework, the Directorate works actively with service providers to make sure they are informed and equipped with contemporary business continuity plans and well placed to respond to business continuity issues.

Current Directorate Risk Management, Fraud Prevention and Business Continuity frameworks will be updated and augmented to ensure appropriate risk plans or registers are in place to address any emerging risks. In addition, integrity risk registers will be developed to ensure an appropriate fraud control strategy is in place and being implemented.

The Directorate's Communications and Engagement Branch is developing a comprehensive stakeholder communications plan to outline key messages for stakeholder groups, timelines and sequencing of messaging and communication/engagement approaches. To ensure clear and transparent communication among stakeholders and service providers, updated governance arrangements will be supported by appropriate Terms of Reference to govern operations of committees and fora.

Updated policies, procedures and guidelines will be developed to support operations of the new Children, Young People and Families Division. The focus will be:

- effective monitoring of contractual requirements and service delivery expectations.
- building in processes to continually review and refine contract management and governance arrangements over the life of Next Steps to ensure the approach is fit for purpose and achieving its desired goal.

<b>Annual Report (CSD)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	Not reported
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2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

The response identified that a lessons learned exercise had been 'undertaken on how service funding agreements and associated governance arrangements have been administered under *A Step Up for Our Kids* [which] included a focus on better practice contract management and governance resources and examined how they could be implemented in *Next Steps*'. The response also identified a range of other activities underway to address aspects of the recommendation.

## Recommendation 3 – Culturally Appropriate Care

<p>CSD should, applying the Child Placement Principles:</p> <p>a) work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community stakeholders to define and agree on culturally appropriate care prior to contracting service delivery partners for the purpose of <i>Next Steps</i>; and</p> <p>b) include the definition of culturally appropriate care in its approach to market and subsequent agreements with service delivery partners under <i>Next Steps</i>.</p>		
Government Response	Reported Status	Agreed
<p><i>In 2019 the CYF Division commissioned Curijo to develop the Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families: Providing Culturally Responsive Practice for CYPs staff. It encompasses key aspects of culturally appropriate care including: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; the concepts of 'active efforts' and 'culturally responsive practice'; essential considerations for effective engagement; practical examples of culturally responsive approaches across CYPs processes; and the integration of these principles with legislation and practice standards.</i></p> <p><i>In consultation with the Our Booris, Our Way implementation Oversight Committee, CSD developed new contract clauses that outline expectations for services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. The contract clauses are standard and will be included in all contracts executed with providers as part of the new Children, Young People and Families Panel.</i></p> <p><i>In August 2023, the Territory released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to establish a new Children, Young People and Families Panel of appropriately qualified and experienced non-government organisations including Aboriginal and Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver statutory and non-statutory services to children, young people, families, and carers. Cultural competency was a key evaluation criterion common to all Service Packages for the RFP.</i></p> <p><i>The RFP included clear and upfront messaging about the Territory's intention to engage ACCOs to deliver services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. ACCOs were encouraged to respond to the RFP to ensure delivery of culturally safe and appropriate services to children, young people, families, and carers. Support was available from the Aboriginal Services Development Branch to assist ACCOs with the tender process and requirements.</i></p> <p><i>CSD is committed to transferring services to ACCOs, and the procurement process was designed to enable a flexible approach to expanding ACCO services over time.</i></p>		
Annual Report (CSD)	Last Reported Status	Not reported
<p><u>2023-24 Annual Report:</u></p> <p>Not reported.</p>		
Auditor-General's Observation		
<p>The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.</p> <p>The response also identified a range of activities and initiatives that have been, and are being, undertaken to address the recommendation.</p>		

## Recommendation 4 – Monitoring and Review of Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

<p>Under the <i>Next Steps</i> Strategy, CSD should develop and implement a monitoring and review framework that effectively addresses outsourced out-of-home care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. The framework should provide assurance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people receive culturally appropriate services from service delivery partners.</p>		
Government Response	Reported Status	Agreed
<p><i>The Government has committed to transferring case management responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). This recognises that these organisations are best placed to provide culturally appropriate services.</i></p>		

*In January 2023, the Aboriginal Service Development Branch was established within the Community Services Directorate to work with ACCOs, supporting their operational capability and capacity to meet community goals to deliver services across the entire human services system. The Directorate acknowledges that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families may choose to not engage with an ACCO and therefore requires that all services provide culturally appropriate services.*

*The ACT Government commits to a monitoring and review framework to provide assurance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People are receiving culturally appropriate services. Recommendation 22a from the Our Booris, Our Way report focuses on improving the quality of case work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on long term orders under ACT Together.*

*To address this, a Monitoring and Review Framework was jointly developed and implemented with endorsement from the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee. Commenced in September 2021, the Framework provides tangible evidence of the quality of case work under six domains aligned to core elements of the Child Placement Principles with reflective practice prompts from “Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families: Providing Culturally Responsive Practice”. The Framework has been embedded as part of a program of work for one provider and will be expanded as part of the Next Steps PMF.*

<b>Annual Report (CSD)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	Not reported
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2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

**Auditor-General’s Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation.

The response identified a number of activities and initiatives that have been, and are being, undertaken to address the recommendation including a commitment to ‘a monitoring and review framework to provide assurance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People are receiving culturally appropriate services’.

## Auditor-General Report No.3 of 2024

### Management of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program<sup>5</sup>

(8 May 2024)

#### Auditee

The primary auditee for this audit was Housing ACT.

#### Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of Housing ACT's management of the *Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program*.

#### Summary

The *Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program* (Program) is intended to replace 1,000 older, not fit-for-purpose public housing homes with new, fit-for-purpose homes and add 400 new, additional homes to the Territory's public housing portfolio.

The audit assessed the effectiveness of Housing ACT's strategic management of the Program. The audit considered:

- governance and administration arrangements established for the Program;
- the framework and approach taken for making decisions about the public housing portfolio; and
- the framework and approach taken for selling existing public housing homes and building and buying new public housing homes.

The Audit Office intends to conduct a subsequent audit on the implementation of the Program. This audit will primarily focus on Housing ACT's:

- processes for making decisions about the suitability of public housing homes for sale or redevelopment;
- procurement activities to build new public housing homes; and
- activities for selling and buying public housing homes.

#### Government response<sup>6</sup>

Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, tabled the ACT Government's response to the Performance Audit Report on 5 September 2024.

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<sup>5</sup> [Report-No.3-of-2024-Management-of-the-Growing-and-Renewing-Public-Housing-Program.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/2574171/7\\_ACT-Auditor-General-Report-No-3-of-2024-Management-of-the-Growing-and-Renewing-Public-Housing-Program-Government-response.pdf](https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/2574171/7_ACT-Auditor-General-Report-No-3-of-2024-Management-of-the-Growing-and-Renewing-Public-Housing-Program-Government-response.pdf)

## Recommendation 1 – Embedding a Collaborative, Cross-Sector Approach

<p>To embed a collaborative, cross-sector approach for public housing growth and renewal, Housing ACT should:</p> <p>a) establish a formal reporting mechanism between the Growth and Renewal Inclusive Partnerships (GRIP) and the Program’s Operational and Steering Committees; and</p> <p>b) ensure that community services sector organisations that are providing support to public housing tenants are offered regular opportunities to attend meetings of the GRIP or other forums that support communication and collaboration between Housing ACT and the nongovernment community services sector.</p>		
<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	<p>1a) Agreed-in-principle and</p> <p>1b) Agreed</p>
<p>a) <b><u>AGREED IN PRINCIPLE</u></b></p> <p><i>In October 2023, the required relocations policy ceased. GRIP is no longer operational due to tenants not being relocated under the Program. Notwithstanding this, the Community Services Directorate will continue to improve its processes and prioritise and integrate community sector feedback and tenant wellbeing considerations when making decisions on public housing assets.</i></p> <p>b) <b><u>AGREED</u></b></p> <p><i>The Government will implement mechanisms, where community services sector organisations are offered regular opportunities to attend forums, that support communication and collaboration between Housing ACT and the non-government community services sector.</i></p>		
<b>Annual Report (CSD)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	Not reported
<p><u>2023-24 Annual Report:</u></p> <p><i>Not reported.</i></p>		
<b>Auditor-General’s Observation</b>		
<p>The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the second part of the recommendation. The response lacked specificity on how this will be achieved.</p>		

## Recommendation 2 – Asset Assessment Panel – Criteria for Making Decisions about Public Housing Homes

<p>Housing ACT should consolidate all the criteria and information required to be used by the Asset Assessment Panel to make decisions about public housing homes into a single document. This document should:</p> <p>a) reflect better practice whole-of-lifecycle asset management for social housing; and</p> <p>b) provide explicit instructions about how criteria are to be applied and how decisions are to be made, including definitions of terms and, where applicable, ratings and/or thresholds.</p>		
<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
<p>a) <i>The Asset Assessment Panel documentation will be updated to reflect better practice whole-of-lifecycle asset management.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Asset Assessment Panel documentation will be reviewed to consolidate all criteria, information, instructions, definitions, ratings and thresholds.</i></p>		
<b>Annual Report (CSD)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	Not reported
<p><u>2023-24 Annual Report:</u></p>		

Not reported.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation. The response lacked specificity on how this will be achieved.

**Recommendation 3 – Asset Assessment Panel – Quality Assurance for Decision-Making**

Housing ACT should implement a quality assurance framework for decisions by the Asset Assessment Panel. The framework should:

- a) clearly define decisions that must be escalated internally for review; and
- b) identify a process for regular, external review of decisions made by the Panel.

**Government Response**

**Reported Status**

Agreed

*a) Asset Assessment Panel documentation will be updated to more clearly define decisions that must be escalated.*

*b) A quality assurance framework for decisions by the Asset Assessment Panel will be developed and implemented.*

**Annual Report (CSD)**

**Last Reported Status**

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

**Auditor-General's Observation**

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation. The response lacked specificity on how this will be achieved.

**Auditor-General Report No.4 of 2024**  
**Planning and Delivery of Services for Young People with Moderate to Severe**  
**Mental Illness<sup>7</sup>**  
(31 May 2024)

### Auditees

The auditee for this audit was Canberra Health Services.

### Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of CHS planning and delivery of services to young people (12 to 18 years) with moderate to severe mental illness.

### Summary

Canberra Health Services (CHS) provides specialist, psychosocial and acute services for young people aged 12 to 18 years old with moderate to severe mental illness. This audit considered nine of these services. These services are provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The audit assessed the effectiveness of CHS' planning of mental health services for young people with moderate to severe mental illness, the accessibility of the existing services and the extent to which the performance of these services is monitored and evaluated.

### Government response<sup>8</sup>

Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Mental Health, tabled the ACT Government's response to the Performance Audit Report on 5 September 2024.

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<sup>7</sup> [Report-No.4-of-2024-Planning-and-delivery-of-services-for-young-people-with-moderate-to-severe-mental-illness.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/2574172/7\\_ACTA~2.PDF](https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2574172/7_ACTA~2.PDF)

## Recommendation 1 – Mental Health Services Plan

ACT Health Directorate should:

- a) prioritise the development of the Mental Health Services Plan for the ACT; and
- b) ensure that this Plan addresses services for young people with moderate to severe mental illness, including those currently provided by CHS.

### Government Response

Reported Status

Agreed

- a) *The Mental Health Services Plan will set the priorities for service development and redesign of ACT government funded mental health services in the ACT. The Mental Health Services Plan will be developed following the finalisation of the Northside Clinical Services Plan and in alignment with the ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy. The northside of Canberra is facing growing demand for mental health services as its population increases. The work being undertaken to inform the Northside Clinical Services Plan includes scenario modelling and targeted consultation with stakeholders to identify opportunities to deliver services in a more integrated way. This will contribute to the development of the Mental Health Services Plan. The delivery of the Mental Health Services Plan will likely be mid-2025*
- b) *The Mental Health Services Plan will include services for young people with moderate to severe mental illness, including those currently provided by Canberra Health Services. The Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan was released in September 2023 and focuses on ACT Government funded clinical services for children and adolescents.*

Implemented by: end of 2025

### Annual Report (Health)

Last Reported Status

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and that implementation would be by the end of 2025.

## Recommendation 2 – Review Transition Arrangements

CHS should review its policies and processes for transitioning clients who turn 18 years old from CAMHS to adult mental health services and to services provided by other parties to ensure they facilitate positive outcomes for young people.

### Government Response

Reported Status

Agreed

*Current policies and processes for transitions to adult mental health or other services are embedded into CAMHS models of care. They include warm handovers to the new service, invitation to attend the Multi Discipline Team (MDT) of the referring service and meeting with the young person prior to their discharge from CAMHS.*

*Co-design of services is best practice, CAMHS will be exploring focus groups with young people and their parents/carers about what they think transition pathways to look like prior to reviewing current policies.*

Implemented by: December 2024

### Annual Report (CHS)

Last Reported Status

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and that implementation would be by December 2024. The response appeared to indicate an intention to review current policies, including the transitioning of clients who turn 18 to adult mental health services, following the conduct of a series of focus groups with young people.

There is a lack of visibility with respect to how this recommendation has been implemented. There is no reporting in the Directorate's *Annual Report 2023-24*.

### Recommendation 3 – CAMHS Community Team (North)

CHS should review the allocation of staffing resources across the CAMHS Community Teams to meet current and projected demand for services for young people with mental illness, particularly the increased demand in Canberra's northern suburbs.

#### Government Response

Reported Status

Agreed

*Short term strategies have been put in place to support the CAMHS North community team.*

*The allocation of staff across the CAMHS is currently under reviewed is due to be completed by October 2024.*

*The team will also need to consider infrastructure challenges – the required for additional interview/consult rooms and desks for the additional staff.*

*Implemented by: October 2024*

#### Annual Report (CHS)

Last Reported Status

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and a commitment to review the allocation of staff across CAMHS by October 2024.

### Recommendation 4 – Internal Audit Plan

CAMHS should collaborate with the CHS Quality Unit to develop and implement a forward plan of internal audits that focus on:

- a) areas where the implications for young people of any shortfalls are greatest; and
- b) compliance with the National Safety and Quality in Health Service Standards.

#### Government Response

Reported Status

Agreed

*The internal audit plan is currently being developed through cross collaboration with Canberra Health Services, Quality and Safety Unit, and CAMHS.*

*Implemented by: January 2025*

#### Annual Report (CHS)

Last Reported Status

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and a commitment to develop the internal audit plan by January 2025.

## Recommendation 5 – Performance Measures

CHS should review the performance indicators for CAMHS and in doing so:

- identify and confirm whether the indicators are required, current and useful for monitoring CAMHS performance;
- develop a resource that describes the performance indicators, their purpose and how they are to be collected and reported; and
- determine the internal and external audiences for the performance information and produce relevant performance reports accordingly.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

*In June 2024, CAMHS established performance targets, which have been incorporated into CAMHS Business Plan.*

*Internal performance indicators for CAMHS have identified and agreed.*

*Implemented by: January 2025*

### Annual Report (CHS)

### Last Reported Status

Not reported

#### 2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with this recommendation. The response indicated the recommendation had already been actioned and completed, but also identified a timeframe for implementation of January 2025.

## Recommendation 6 – YES and CES Surveys

CHS should implement the Your Experience of Service (YES) and Carer Experience Survey (CES) in CAMHS.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

*All materials, protocols and data management processes for expanded implementation of the YES Survey have been endorsed by the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services Governance Committee.*

*The YES survey will be implemented in CAMHS as soon as the printed materials are available.*

*The CES survey will be implemented once the processes for the YES survey have been successfully embedded into all MHJHADS program areas including CAMHS. It is anticipated this will be early 2025.*

*Implemented by: February 2025*

### Annual Report (CHS)

### Last Reported Status

Not reported

#### 2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and that implementation would be by February 2025.

## Recommendation 7 – Evaluation Strategy for CAMHS

CHS should develop a multi-year evaluation strategy for CAMHS. The strategy should be:

- a) sufficiently resourced to enable CAMHS to engage independent evaluators with specialities in mental health or youth services; and
- b) targeted towards the evaluation of:
  - i) distinct services, such as the Cottage Program; and
  - ii) processes and practices that underpin the effectiveness of CAMHS as a whole, such as referral processes for clients that turn 18 years of age.

### Government Response

### Reported Status

Agreed

CHS are currently developing an evaluation framework for this recommendation. The framework will give a structure to the purpose and types of evaluations, to inform the types and timing of evaluation needed in each program area. Some examples are:

- Whole of service reviews, benchmarking and evaluation.
- Models of care – evaluation of process implementation, alignment to objectives and currentness.
- Program area specific processes. o Project and quality improvement evaluations.

The focus of an evaluation in the first instance will be on CAMHS acute service streams (Hospital Liaison Team, Child and Adolescent Unit, Adolescent Intensive Home treatment and the adolescent day program) and distinct service streams to understand the community’s experience of delivery of the services and whether it is meeting expectations.

A review of referral processes, pathway mapping and transitions between services will be done as part of Recommendation 2. Evaluation of CAMHS will inform opportunities for improved processes, and decisions relating to Recommendations 3 and 4 if staffing, service gaps or inefficient processes are identified.

Implemented by: February 2025

### Annual Report (CHS)

### Last Reported Status

Not reported

2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

### Auditor-General’s Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with this recommendation and that implementation would be by February 2025.

# Auditor-General Report No.5 of 2024

## Management and Oversight of ACT Policing Services<sup>9</sup>

(21 June 2024)

### Auditee

The auditee for this audit was the Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

### Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of JACS' management of the Policing Arrangement and the current Purchase Agreement, for the provision of community police services to the ACT by the AFP.

### Summary

ACT Policing, the community policing arm of the Australian Federal Police, provides policing services to the Territory through a Policing Arrangement between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Governments. The Policing Arrangement is supported by periodic Purchase Agreements and Ministerial Directions from the ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate administers funds for policing services on behalf of the ACT Government through ACT Budget appropriation. ACT Policing Budget appropriation for 2023-24 to 2026-27 is \$897.47 million.

The audit assessed the effectiveness of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate's management of the Policing Arrangement and the current Purchase Agreement, for the provision of community police services to the ACT by the Australian Federal Police.

### Government response<sup>10</sup>

Mr Mick Gentleman MLA, Minister for Police and Crime Prevention, tabled the ACT Government's response to the Performance Audit Report on 5 September 2024.

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<sup>9</sup> [Report-No.-5-of-2024-Management-and-oversight-of-ACT-Policing-services.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup>

[https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/2574173/81b18782192e85594cd284c7cb4051993e1a9181.pdf](https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2574173/81b18782192e85594cd284c7cb4051993e1a9181.pdf)

## Recommendation 1 – Facilities Costs Assurance

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate, in cooperation with ACT Policing, should develop an assurance process for ACT Policing costs associated with facilities services.		
<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	Agreed
<p><i>ACT Policing and JACS will continue to work closely to manage the facilities occupied by ACT Policing and assist in the development of assurance processes for costs associated with those facilities.</i></p> <p><i>This will include, but not be limited to, an update of the Terms of Reference of the Strategic Accommodation Infrastructure Working Group and the Asset and Infrastructure Project Control Group to include the authority and responsibility for setting, approving, and monitoring targets for maintenance and agreeing on future capital works upgrades which will be subject to budget processes.</i></p> <p><i>JACS will also complete the Strategic Asset Management Plan to support (with appropriate costing) future business cases for capital upgrades and asset renewal funding.</i></p>		
<b>Annual Report (JACS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	Not reported
<p><u>2023-24 Annual Report:</u> Not reported.</p>		
<b>Auditor-General's Observation</b>		
The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and identified a range of activities to be undertaken to implement the recommendation.		

## Recommendation 2 – Enabling Service Business Units Service and Financial Data

<p>The Justice and Community Safety Directorate, in cooperation with ACT Policing, should:</p> <p>a) develop robust processes for the identification and collection of service and financial data for enabling services, as required by clause 13.6 of the 2022-26 Purchase Agreement; and</p> <p>b) develop an assurance process for ACT Policing costs associated with enabling services, which focuses on the robustness and reliability of service and financial data.</p>		
<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	Agreed
<p><i>JACS will work with ACT Policing and AFP enabling commands to develop reporting systems to capture the available information.</i></p> <p><i>ACT Policing, JACS and external stakeholders undertook a comprehensive costing of enabling services exercise, which resulted in the ACT Government providing ongoing indexation on ACT Policing Supplies and Services expense (including enabling costs).</i></p> <p><i>ACT Policing meets regularly with the AFP to discuss enabling costs. This is done through their internal Partnership Agreement Steering Committee meetings (PASC). The use of these meetings will also provide early insight to cost pressures or changing requirements. Any potential cost escalations would be brought up by ACT Policing at the regular Budget Resourcing Working Group meetings (with JACS) and would be the subject of a business case in a future budget process.</i></p>		
<b>Annual Report (JACS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	Not reported
<p><u>2023-24 Annual Report:</u> Not reported.</p>		
<b>Auditor-General's Observation</b>		

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and identified a range of activities to be undertaken to implement the recommendation.

### Recommendation 3 – Risk Management

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate, in cooperation with ACT Policing, should develop and implement a Risk Management Framework for the Policing Arrangement and Purchase Agreement, which includes:

- a) risk registers and risk mitigation plans tailored to each of the working groups; and
- b) regular reporting from the working groups to the Steering Committee on the management of risks.

<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Reported Status</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
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*JACS has developed a draft Policing Arrangement and Purchase Agreement Risk Management Framework (Risk Management Framework) which outlines processes for the management of two categories of risk relating to the Policing Arrangement and Purchase Agreement:*

- a. risks related to the delivery of services by ACT Policing, including quality, timeliness, cost, facilities, etc; and*
- b. risks related to JACS' ability to effectively manage the Purchase Agreement and Policing Arrangement to deliver services.*

*JACS will review and update the draft Risk Management Framework with supporting mechanisms including a Risk Mitigation Plan, Risk Register, with regular monitoring and reporting requirements by the working groups to the Steering Committee. The Risk Management Framework will be finalised with endorsement from the Steering Committee.*

<b>Annual Report (JACS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	<b>Not reported</b>
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2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and identified that a draft Risk Management Framework has already been developed and that supporting mechanisms will be developed to support the Framework.

### Recommendation 4 – Performance Reporting

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate, in cooperation with ACT Policing, should work to improve the accuracy and usefulness of reporting against the Performance Measure Framework, including by ensuring:

- a) trend analysis over a 5-year period is shown for Performance Measures where appropriate; and
- b) contextual information is provided, as necessary, to indicate whether the reported result reflects the effectiveness of policing measures or another potential explanation.

<b>Government Response</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
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*JACS and ACT Policing will continue to refine the reporting against the Performance Measure Framework established under the current Purchase Agreement, with potential areas for improvement, including:*

- a. providing trend analysis over 5-years for those Performance Measures identified as '5-year average or less' or '5-year average or more'. This is likely to provide information on whether performance is improving or deteriorating; and*
- b. providing further contextual information for the Performance Measures to indicate whether the result reflects the effectiveness of policing measures or another potential explanation.*

<b>Annual Report (JACS)</b>	<b>Last Reported Status</b>	<b>Not reported</b>
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2023-24 Annual Report:

Not reported.

#### Auditor-General's Observation

The ACT Government response indicated agreement with the recommendation and an intention 'continue to refine the reporting against the Performance Measure Framework'.