



ACT Ombudsman to work with Revenue Office on assessment and debt collection processes

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The Minister for Finance, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, today met with the ACT Ombudsman to discuss his investigation into the ACT Revenue Office and its collection of historic land tax debt, *What's Fair? Collecting historical debts*.

The Ombudsman has agreed to continue working with the Revenue Office to improve the way it engages with individual taxpayers in undertaking reassessment, objection and compliance processes.

The Government will also expedite work already underway to improve Revenue Office correspondence and engagement with Canberrans on compliance matters.

"I have been concerned to hear about the distress experienced by some Canberrans as a result of their engagement with the ACT Revenue Office," said Minister Stephen-Smith.

"We never know what is going on in someone's life and people can be vulnerable or already under pressure for a range of reasons.

"While it is important that the Revenue Office undertakes compliance work, it seems clear that it could engage with people in a more constructive and supportive way.

"The Ombudsman's role includes working with agencies to improve their decision-making and complaints handling processes and I welcome the release of this systemic review.

"The Revenue Commissioner has accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations, and I will be meeting with him tomorrow to discuss how expertise from across government can be brought to bear to support their implementation."

In addition, Minister Stephen-Smith will seek further policy advice from the Revenue Office and ACT Treasury about improvements that can be made to processes for claiming concessions, undertaking compliance, and the application of penalties and interest for individual taxpayers, particularly where there may be a lack of clarity about their circumstances.

"In addition to the Ombudsman's report, the experiences of Canberrans who have received reassessment notices related to the Home Buyer Concession Scheme have raised a range of complex issues.

"I thank those people who have shared their stories with me and other Members of the Legislative Assembly, as well as through the media.

"It is important that ACT Government agencies always treat Canberrans with fairness and respect and the Revenue Office team has been reflecting on the feedback.

"I look forward to engaging with the Legislative Assembly Committee inquiry that was unanimously supported by Members last week, but I am keen to get on with making changes as quickly as possible to improve Revenue Office systems and processes," said Minister Stephen-Smith.

- Statement ends -

[Rachel Stephen-Smith, MLA](#) | Media Releases