

APPROPRIATION BILL 2021-2022 AND
APPROPRIATION (OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY) BILL 2021-2022

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT 2

THE COMMITTEE

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RESOLUTION OF APPOINTMENT

On the 2 December 2020 the Legislative Assembly for the ACT resolved to establish a Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion to, in part, ‘enhance the scrutiny of the Executive, to examine and suggest improvements to any bills referred to it, to enable the citizens of the Territory to engage and to participate in law-making and policy review, to enable financial scrutiny of the Executive’s budget proposals and to review annual reports of taxpayer funded agencies.’¹

The Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion has responsibility over the following policy areas:

Committee	Primary Wellbeing Indicator/s	Areas of Responsibility
Education and Community Inclusion	Education and Lifelong Learning and Identity and Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early childhood development• Education• Youth affairs• Skills• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs• Multicultural affairs• Disability• Women (including the Office for Women)• Seniors• Veterans• LGBTIQ+• Sport and recreation

¹ ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings, No 2*, 2 December 2020, p 17 (as amended 11 Feb 21, 30 Mar 21, 22 Apr 21, and 16 Sept 21).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The resolution of establishment for standing committees of the Tenth Assembly also requires the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion to inquire into ACT Budget 2021-22:

- (7) the committees so established are required to examine the expenditure proposals contained in the main appropriation bills for the Territory and any revenue estimates proposed by the Government in the annual budget and prepare a report to the Assembly within 60 days of the presentation of the budget bills.²

At its meeting on Tuesday 9 November 2021, the Assembly resolved to amend the due date for standing committees to report on the ACT Budget to 12 November 2021.³

² ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 2, 2 December 2020, p 17 (as amended 11 Feb 21, 30 Mar 21, 22 Apr 21, and 16 Sept 21).

³ ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 28, 9 November 2021.

ACRONYMS

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Reporting and Assessment Authority
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTCOSS	Australian Capital Territory Council of Social Services
ATAR	Australia Tertiary Admission Rank
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
ATSIA	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CAYPELS	Children and Young People's Equipment Loan Service
CDS	Child Development Services
CFC	Child and Family Centres
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSD	Community Services Directorate
FASDI	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GSO	Government Solicitor's Office
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JACS	Justice and Community Safety
LGBTIQ	Inclusive acronym encompassing all minority sexual and gender identities
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MOST	Moderated Online Social Therapy

NAPLAN	National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
OATSIA	Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QoN	Question on Notice
QToN	Question Taken on Notice
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
YAC	Youth Advisory Council

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RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

2.10 The Committee recommends the ACT Government ensure timely access to ACT Budget papers for community organisations and include in budget papers analysis of the impacts of tax and concessions policies on low-income people.

RECOMMENDATION 2

2.16 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that indexation for community sector funding at a minimum matches the indexation of their costs.

RECOMMENDATION 3

2.20 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commit to:

- a) increase the number of social housing dwellings in the ACT.
- b) take measures to support affordable rental housing.

RECOMMENDATION 4

2.24 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement early intervention programs to reduce engagement with the criminal justice system.

RECOMMENDATION 5

2.31 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) implement measures improve access for young disabled people in ACT Government schools.
- b) ensure that the disability education review process is accountable and transparent to disability stakeholders.
- c) respond to community concern about the use of specialist schools and specialist streaming and the desire to have students with disability fully included in mainstream schools.

RECOMMENDATION 6

2.38 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the Conflict Resolution Service has an adequate level of funding to enable family mediators to provide a timely response to families on their waiting list.

RECOMMENDATION 7

2.42 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase targeted mental health support for the “missing middle” age group.

RECOMMENDATION 8

2.46 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fund the embedded youth worker model whereby youth workers work alongside ACT Police.

RECOMMENDATION 9

2.49 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government take measures to remove siloing between education and community services and its impacts on family and adolescent support.

RECOMMENDATION 10

2.54 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) engages with the community sector to provide chrome books and data access to vulnerable families and young people.
- b) undertake an evaluation of online learning during lockdown, including an assessment of the social and economic impacts on young people and their families.

RECOMMENDATION 11

- a) explore options to enable more direct input and involvement from young people in the decision making of Government.
- b) consider exploring whether there is an approach to lowering the voting age that will in no way infringe on the principle of compulsory voting.

RECOMMENDATION 12

2.63 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government should invest in civics and democracy engagement for young people, including but not limited to Elections ACT and the Office of the Legislative's Assembly's Education Office.

RECOMMENDATION 13

3.13 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) expedite the feasibility study for further college capacity in north Canberra.
- b) build new northside college facilities in Gungahlin.

RECOMMENDATION 14

3.14 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a comprehensive breakdown of the \$99 million funding for school maintenance and infrastructure upgrades.

RECOMMENDATION 15

3.19 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate provision a service like the Muliyan Off Campus Flexible Learning Program for the northside.

RECOMMENDATION 16

3.25 The Committee recommends that the ACT Education Directorate provides quarterly updates to the Assembly on the work of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce.

RECOMMENDATION 17

3.26 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Teacher Shortage Taskforce with a view to funding all Taskforce recommendations in the 2022-2023 budget.

RECOMMENDATION 18

3.34 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide quarterly updates to the Assembly on:

- a) teacher employment casual to permanency conversion.
- b) progress towards the goal of establishing 400 new full-time teaching positions during the current term of government.

RECOMMENDATION 19

3.35 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) increase the number of registered teachers in ACT government schools.
- b) provide the full number of FTE registered teachers required to fully staff ACT government schools.
- c) provide to the Committee the number of job vacancies for school teachers across the entire government school system.
- d) ensure that teacher exit interviews are conducted and a full report delivered analysing the reasons staff leave teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 20

3.40 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore options to increase investment in training and recruiting more ATSI teachers and explore infrastructure needs.

RECOMMENDATION 21

3.45 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government

- a) Expedite its trial free breakfast and lunches in ACT schools.
- b) provide capital funding for school kitchen facilities for on-site preparation.
- c) provide secure employment for staff preparing food.

RECOMMENDATION 22

3.49 The Committee recommends that the ACT Education Directorate aim to accredit all ACT schools under the Moneysmart program by the end of the 2022-2023 financial year.

RECOMMENDATION 23

3.57 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invests in Child and Family centres at a level that keeps pace with ACT population increase and needs, and ensure equitable program offerings simultaneously on the north and south sides of Canberra.

RECOMMENDATION 24

3.63 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expand its only free public autism assessment to offer early intervention assessment and referral services, and multidisciplinary autism spectrum disorder assessment, to children and youth aged 0-18.

RECOMMENDATION 25

3.75 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fund the development of a second action plan as part of the Capital of Equality Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 26

3.81 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) reduce reporting requirements on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and allocate additional funding for secretariat support.
- b) provide the Assembly with a statement in six months on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations' views on:
 - i) the adequacy of funding, the nature of the consultation and how far their wishes were factored into the Government's approach.
 - ii) the appropriateness of reporting requirements including their suitability for the widely varying circumstances of different organisations.
 - iii) data gathering and whether it is experienced as invasive, and what changes will the Minister make to address this.
- iv) progress towards establishing a new Aboriginal community-controlled organisation.

RECOMMENDATION 27

3.84 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase funding including for treaty and the language centre in the 2022-2023 budget.

RECOMMENDATION 28

3.89 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase funding for highly effective programs including the Yarrabi Bamirr Justice Reinvestment Program with Winnunga, the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Women's Legal Service.

RECOMMENDATION 29

3.96 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) ensure that by the end of June 2022 Access Canberra shopfronts become dementia-friendly and ACT Government frontline workers receive dementia friendly training.
- b) implement dementia friendly training at public theatres, galleries and community centres for all ACT Government staff.
- c) investigate affordable housing options built purposely for senior Canberrans.
- d) incorporate seniors exercise parks into the Age-Friendly City Plan.

RECOMMENDATION 30

3.101 The Committee recommends that forward estimates be provided for:

- a) the disability and carers strategies announced in the budget, to provide certainty to the community of the government's intent to support their development and implementation.
- b) the ongoing implementation of the First Action Plan 2019-2023 of the Disability Justice Strategy and that information be provided about the allocation of the funding and its removal or re-allocation from the last budget cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 31

3.108 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue providing updates regarding the 2022 Multicultural Festival.

RECOMMENDATION 32

3.112 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) increase the number of affordable and accessible facilities for groups such as the community language schools.
- b) increase funding for community language schools in the 2022-2023 budget.

RECOMMENDATION 33

3.120 The CIT should develop a priority list of scheduled works relating to sustainability upgrades for CIT campuses.

RECOMMENDATION 34

3.123 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the breakdown for the money to be spent across the 4 packages for the Woden CIT and bus interchange.

RECOMMENDATION 35

3.128 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide specific and detailed information about JobTrainer funding.

RECOMMENDATION 36

3.132 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide measurables for the Migrant Skills program, including success rates for course completions for those brought to study in the ACT, and indications of what is considered a successful number of those staying in the ACT on completion of their courses.

RECOMMENDATION 37

3.137 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) increase funding for women's workforce participation.
- b) work towards consistency across the Womens, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Social Inclusion budget statements and ensure that the impact of various measures and initiatives on those specific groups is analysed.

RECOMMENDATION 38

3.142 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government assist 'Gunners Place' (the Gungahlin Youth Centre) in finding secure tenancy.

RECOMMENDATION 39

3.150 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue providing updates to the Gungahlin community regarding the repair of Gungahlin pool.

1 INTRODUCTION

PRESENTATION OF THE ACT BUDGET 2021-22

- 1.1 On 6 October 2021 the Appropriation Bill 2021-2021 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2021-2022 were presented in the Assembly,⁴ and the related Budget papers were published on the Treasury website.⁵
- 1.2 During this inquiry the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion was required to examine the expenditure proposals for the following outputs in the main appropriation bills for the Territory, as outlined in Budget Statements.
- 1.3 The following budgetary output classes and outputs, and their associated units, and Statements of Intent fall within the remit of the Committee's inquiry.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Output Class 1: Government Strategy
 - Output 1.1—Government Policy and Reform
 - Office of LGBTIQ Affairs
- Output Class 3: Economic Development
 - Output 3.3—Sport and Recreation
- Output Class 8: Property Services
 - Output 8.1—Property Service
 - Aquatic facilities management
- Output Class 3: Economic Development
 - Output 3.3—Sport and Recreation
 - Output 3.5—Skills

⁴ ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 25, 6 October 2021, pp 306–309.

⁵ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, *Budget Papers* (Web Page, 6 October 2021) <<https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget-2021-22/budget-papers>>.

- ACT Building Construction Industry Training Fund Authority (Statement of Intent)
- Output Class 1: Canberra Institute of Technology
 - Output 1.1 Provision of Vocational Education and Training Services
 - Canberra Institute of Technology (Statement of Intent) [including CIT Solutions Pty Ltd]
 - Output 1.1 Major Projects Canberra

Community Services Directorate

- Output Class 1: Strategic Policy, Inclusion and Participation
 - Output 1.1—Inclusion and Participation
 - Office for Women
 - Office for Seniors and Veterans
 - Office for Multicultural Affairs
 - Office for Youth.
 - Output 1.2—Office for Disability
 - Output 1.3—Strategic Policy
 - Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
 - Output 1.4—Quality, Complaints, and Regulation
- Output Class 2: Children, Youth and Families
 - Output 2.1—Child and Family Centres
 - Output 2.2—Child Development Services.

Education Directorate

- Output Class 1: Public School Education
 - Output 1.1—Public Primary School Education
 - Output 1.2—Public High School Education

- Output Class 2: Non-Government Education
 - Output 2.1—Non-Government Education.

CONDUCT OF INQUIRY

- 1.4 The ACT Budget presentation and Estimates hearings were originally scheduled to occur in September 2021. Due to COVID-19 and emergency public health restrictions in the Australian Capital Territory the Assembly resolve to postpone the Treasurer's presentation of the main budget bill for 2021-22 to the Assembly until 6 October 2021 and Estimates hearings were held online from 15-29 October 2021.
- 1.5 The main appropriation bills for the Territory and revenue estimates by the Government in the annual budget were originally referred to the relevant standing committees for inquiry and report within 60 days of the presentation of the budget bills, on 5 December 2021.
- 1.6 On the 14 October 2021 the Manager of Government Business advised the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of his intention to move forward the date for standing committees to report on estimates.⁶ On 9 November the Assembly passed a resolution amending the Estimates Inquiry (Appropriation Bill 2020-2021) reporting date to 12 November 2021.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 1.7 The Committee held a total of five public hearings on 15 October, 18 October, 19 October, 20 October, 28 October, and 29 October 2021.
- 1.8 All hearings were conducted remotely using an online platform (Webex) in observance of COVID-19 public health directives.
- 1.9 At the hearings the Committee heard from ACT Government Ministers and officials, members of governing boards, and representatives from two community organisations.
- 1.10 A full list of witnesses who appeared before the Committee at the hearings is available at Appendix A.
- 1.11 The transcripts for these hearings are available on the Hansard page of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT's website.⁷ Footage of the hearings is available via video on demand on the Legislative Assembly website.⁸

⁶ Minister of Government Business, Letter to Clerk cc Chairs, 9 November 2021.

⁷ <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/default.htm>.

⁸ <https://aod.parliament.act.gov.au/>.

1.12 The Committee did not call for public submissions for these Inquires.

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE AT HEARING AND QUESTIONS PLACED ON NOTICE

1.13 A total of 70 questions were lodged during the inquiry. 17 questions were taken on notice by Ministers during the hearings, and 53 questions on notice were submitted by Committee Members and visiting MLAs following the hearings.

1.14 The questions and answers received are available at [Appendix B](#) and on the Committee's inquiry webpage.⁹

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

1.15 The report consists of four chapters and two appendixes:

- Chapter One—Introduction (the present chapter)
- Chapter Two – Community and Industry Representative Groups
- Chapter Three—ACT Government
- Chapter Four—Conclusion

⁹ <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/eci/act-budget-2021-22>.

2 COMMITTEE AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS

- 2.1 The Committee sought the views of community and industry representative groups on the ACT Budget 2021-22 by inviting them to complete a survey. The Committee for Economy, Gender and Economic Equality sent invitations to a large number of organisations and also invited contributions to the survey on the Inquiry website and via the Assembly Facebook page and Twitter feed. The Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion received two survey responses from two community organisations who had also previously submitted analyses of the ACT budget which they forwarded to the Committee.
- 2.2 On Friday, 15 June 2021, the Committee held a public hearing and heard from these two community and industry representative groups – the ACT Council of Social Service Inc and the Youth Coalition of the ACT - regarding their views on the ACT Budget 2021-22.

ACT COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

- 2.3 The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage and low-income citizens of the Territory. ACTCOSS states that its vision is to live in a fair and equitable community that respects and values diversity and actively encourages collaborations that promote justice, equity and social inclusion.¹⁰

MATTERS CONSIDERED

- 2.4 During the hearing, the Committee discussed the following matters discussed with ACTCOSS: Budget 2021-22 funding for the social services sector; timely access to ACT Budget papers for community organisations; indexation for community sector funding; investment in infrastructure support including public housing maintenance; inadequate ACT social housing dwellings; affordable community housing; affordable rental housing; investment in ACT community hubs and community facilities; gaps in youth homelessness services; Safe and Connected Youth program; disproportionate investment in reviews rather than implementation, including in education and disability access; lack of forward investment for disability health strategy; child and youth disability in ACT; 2021-22 ACT budget review into

¹⁰ ACT Council of Social Service, <https://www.actcoss.org.au/about/about-actcoss> - accessed 26 October 2021.

how public schools deliver inclusive education for children and youth with disabilities, including physical, digital and other access; meaning of ‘inclusive education’; early childhood education and preschool intervention strategies for children with developmental delays; early intervention mental health programs; early intervention criminal justice system programs: embedded youth worker model; COVID response measures for senior Canberrans, including mental health and digital adaptation support; increasing formal forums for youth engagement in democracy and political processes; lowering the voting age; youth unemployment and disproportionate youth impact of wage theft; investment in social support services; poverty, low income support and Jobseeker rate; continuing chronic underfunding of community services sector; lack of funding for carers and a carers strategy in the ACT; and income considerations, rates and utilities concessions.¹¹

KEY ISSUES

TIMELY ACCESS TO BUDGET PAPERS

- 2.5 The inquiry heard that despite the impacts of COVID 19 the budget process has remained open and transparent but that the consultation process should include timely access to budget papers.
- 2.6 The Committee was told by ACTCOSS that timely access to budget papers would best enable community organisations to understand how wellbeing indicators have been embedded in the budget design, to inform ACTCOSS’s input into the budget process.
- 2.7 The inquiry heard that despite the impacts of COVID 19 the budget process has remained open and transparent but that the consultation process should include timely access to budget papers.
- 2.8 The hearing heard that timely access to budget papers would best enable ACTCOSS to understand how wellbeing indicators have been embedded in the budget design, and specifically for community organisations, to inform ACTCOSS’s input into the budget process.
- 2.9 Compounding slow access to budget papers, this year’s budget did not include a taxation and socio-economic analysis (whereas past budgets have), impeding community organisations analysis of the impact of tax and concessions policies on low-income people in time Estimates hearings, Mr Craig Wallace, Head of Policy at ACTCOSS, informed the Committee.

¹¹ Committee Transcripts Tenth Assembly, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/default.htm#2_eci.

Recommendation 1

- 2.10 The Committee recommends the ACT Government ensure timely access to ACT Budget papers for community organisations and include in budget papers analysis of the impacts of tax and concessions policies on low-income people.**

INDEXATION GAP AND UNDERFUNDING

- 2.11 In its broad budget commentary ACTCOSS welcomed some investments in the community sector including towards indexation as limited alleviation of long standing and underlying stressors and structural pressures on the community services sector.
- 2.12 However, ACTCOSS told the Committee that the indexation increase should have been announced earlier and fails to increase overall funding needed for the sector to be sustainable over the next five to ten years.
- 2.13 Dr Emma Campbell, ACTCOSS's Chief Executive Officer, commented that:
- ‘The ACT government knew that wages had increased for frontline workers by 2.5 per cent following a determination by the Fair Work Commission and yet the indexation increase was well behind that—I think about 1.5 per cent. Whilst we welcome it, that is not an addition; that is just keeping up with the increase in wages.’¹²
- 2.14 Dr Campbell explained that a gap between the indexation given in the budget and the indexation experienced on cost of labour has a range of negative impacts on community organisations and compounds the consequences of historic underfunding.
- 2.15 These impacts include job cuts; offering temporary rather than secure employment; trained professionals leaving the sector and inability to attract new professionals due to poor wages and conditions; reliance on volunteers; cuts to services; financial loss and inability to invest in work, health and safety, training, or other support for the sector's workforce.

Recommendation 2

- 2.16 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that indexation for community sector funding at a minimum matches the indexation of their costs.**

¹² <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p. 4.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL HOUSING

- 2.17 The hearing heard that an increase in the number of social housing dwellings in the ACT is among the foremost policy changes needed to relieve poverty in Canberra, and that a main driver of poverty and homelessness is the lack of affordable private rental.
- 2.18 ACTCOSS observed that because Commonwealth income support payments such as Jobseeker have left many Australians well below the poverty line, the role of the ACT government is to support vulnerable families by ensuring that there is 'a decent level of social housing, that there are community services and community supports to help them when they fall through the gaps or they are unable to pay their rent or keep food on the table'.¹³
- 2.19 The ACT government can also alleviate the financial stress on very low-income families, the Inquiry heard, by a faster roll-out of the vulnerable household energy support scheme, and measures like making public transport free, the inquiry heard.

Recommendation 3

- 2.20 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commit to:**
- a) increase the number of social housing dwellings in the ACT.**
 - b) take measures to support affordable rental housing.**

EARLY INTERVENTION MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS

- 2.21 In the context of improved poverty-prevention and alleviation policy, ACTCOSS told the Committee the ACT government should be encouraged to focus on early intervention for families and children.
- 2.22 Early intervention programs can prevent challenges developing into mental health and criminal issues and embedded crises, Dr Campbell commented, noting that social determinants of health are main drivers of chronic illness and disease.
- 2.23 ACTCOSS cited budget measures considering rent relief for households experiencing mental stress as a sound example of early intervention programs.

¹³ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p.5.

Recommendation 4

- 2.24 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement early intervention programs to reduce engagement with the criminal justice system.**

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE DISABILITY EDUCATION REVIEW

- 2.25 The Committee invited ACTCOSS to define its conception of 'inclusive education' and what in its view are the goals the newly funded disability education review should achieve.
- 2.26 Mr Wallace emphasised that inclusive education must be human rights compliant by including all students with disability in mainstream education. He pointed to well-rounded research evidencing that all students, those with and without disability, benefit – in curriculum, socialisation, and career terms - from inclusive mainstream education.
- 2.27 Dr Killen defined as inclusive an education system in which all students 'have the opportunity and the right to participate in the same setting at the same time as their peers. That would mean in the same classrooms at the same time, in the same playgrounds at the same time as their peers'.¹⁴
- 2.28 The Committee heard that an inclusive approach to education was not evident in the ACT's high rates of segregated education and specialist schools and unit.
- 2.29 ACTCOSS also articulated wider concern in the community sector as to why - despite the well-known lack of disability appropriate physical and digital infrastructure in mainstream ACT schools - nearly half a million dollars was being spent on the disability education review, without articulation of new objectives, and given the urgent need for practical implementation of recommendations in the earlier Shaddock review.
- 2.30 Appropriate support assistance and individual learning plans, and an effective interface between the NDIS and the education system, is also needed, the inquiry was told.

¹⁴ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p. 6.

Recommendation 5

2.31 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) implement measures improve access for young disabled people in ACT Government schools.
- b) ensure that the disability education review process is accountable and transparent to disability stakeholders.
- c) respond to community concern about the use of specialist schools and specialist streaming and the desire to have students with disability fully included in mainstream schools.

YOUTH COALITION OF THE ACT

INTRODUCTION

2.32 The Youth Coalition of the ACT is the Territory's peak youth affairs body, responsible for representing and promoting the interests, rights, and wellbeing of the estimated 78,000 Canberrans aged between 12 and 25 and those who work with them. The Coalition's primary function is to develop and analyse Territory policy and program decisions which affect young people and facilitate collaboration between its community and government to ensure better outcomes for young Canberrans.¹⁵

MATTERS CONSIDERED

2.33 At the Committee hearing with the Youth Coalition, the following matters were discussed: Budget 2021-22 funding for youth initiatives; raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility; the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on youth, including youth employment; youth homelessness; early preventative intervention on mental health and criminal justice issues; Conflict Resolution Service waiting lists and underfunding; inadequate resourcing of Marymead's interim youth accommodation; embedding youth workers alongside ACT Police; Education Directorate engagement with community sector as pathway to provision of chrome books and data access to vulnerable families and young people; siloed education and community services and its impact on family and adolescent support; mental health

¹⁵ Youth Coalition of the ACT, *About*, website, <https://youthcoalition.net/about/>, accessed 30 October 2021.

support gap for “missing middle” age group; supporting youth engagement in governance; investment in involving young people in electoral processes and outcomes.¹⁶

KEY ISSUES

CONFLICT RESOLUTION SERVICE AND ACCOMODATION SUPPORT

- 2.34 The Youth Coalition strongly welcomed Budget funding for the Conflict Resolution Service’s Safe and Connected Youth accommodation and support program, which will also ‘help young people stay engaged in education, access mental health supports but, more importantly, improve family safety and functioning, which has a huge range of benefits.’
- 2.35 The Committee heard that Programs like Safe and Connected Youth ‘provide the foundations and the beginnings of a sector that will enable us to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility.’¹⁷
- 2.36 Dr Justin Barker told the hearing the Youth Coalition looks forward to continuing to work with the government and community sectors on these issues.
- 2.37 The Committee heard that inadequate funding for conflict Resolution Service services was causing long waiting lists and limiting availability of family mediators.

Recommendation 6

- 2.38 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the Conflict Resolution Service has an adequate level of funding to enable family mediators to provide a timely response to families on their waiting list.**

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GAP FOR “MISSING MIDDLE” AGE GROUP

- 2.39 The Inquiry was told that the community lacks ‘a sector that is rich in supporting kids in the middle years, between eight and 16 or 14. The middle years are normally considered up to 12, but we know that the gap is actually up to about 14 to 16.’¹⁸
- 2.40 The Youth Coalition explained to the Inquiry that supporting this age group was fundamentally linked to the intersecting needs for greater measures to address child and youth homelessness and mental health and raising of the minimum age of criminal responsibility conversation.

¹⁶ Committee Transcripts Tenth Assembly, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/default.htm#2_eci.

¹⁷ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p.8.

¹⁸ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p.13.

- 2.41 The main issues in mental health services that need to be fixed, the Youth Coalition advised the hearing, are: long waitlists or closed waitlists due to high demand; improving capacity of existing programs and filling service gaps for particular cohorts by introducing new services; and having a coordinated and integrated service system in clinical, acute, and therapeutic mental health services.

Recommendation 7

- 2.42 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase targeted mental health support for the “missing middle” age group.**

YOUTH WORKERS WORKING ALONGSIDE ACT POLICE

- 2.43 The Committee was told there is increasing recognition of the need for an embedded youth worker model, whereby youth workers accompany police to look after youth: ‘The police know that this is not a justice issue; they know that it is a community issue, and they need youth workers and the community sector to be able to support them.’¹⁹
- 2.44 The witness referred to the recent report by Dr Morag McArthur and academic and community partners to support his advocacy for an embedded youth worker model, following the success of the PACER model.
- 2.45 Dr Barker also commented that ‘what we are going to need to have is a group, a committee, an independent committee, that oversees and takes responsibility for young people in this age range ... so that we can continue to highlight any service gaps.’²⁰

Recommendation 8

- 2.46 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fund the embedded youth worker model whereby youth workers work alongside ACT Police.**

EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES: DIRECTORATE- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 2.47 The Committee was told that there are two main student cohorts who experienced particularly pronounced setbacks during the COVID-19 lockdown and who will need intensive future face-to-face school support: students who lack family and wider environmental supports to participate in schooling; and students without reliable or any internet access.

¹⁹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p. 14.

²⁰ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p. 9.

- 2.48 The Education and community sector remain quite siloed and there are not structures in place to allow the sector collaboration that would have support already at-risk students during the public health emergency, the Inquiry heard.

Recommendation 9

- 2.49 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government take measures to remove siloing between education and community services and its impacts on family and adolescent support.**

- 2.50 The Committee was told that young people have been profoundly but variously impacted by the move to remote learning. While some young people have been thriving during lockdown '[t]here are two main cohorts that have really struggled. One is those who lack the family supports and the environment to be supported to participate in school' and 'another group of kids that we continue to hear about who still do not have access to the internet.'²¹
- 2.51 A hand-in-glove collaboration between the Education Directorate and the community sector - who have outreach workers and provide a range of supports - would establish a path for the provision of chrome books and data access for vulnerable families and young people with limited or no internet access, the Inquiry heard.
- 2.52 Dr Barker told the Committee that 'the Education Directorate has Chromebooks and is extending access to data, which already existed and is in the budget, but we know that it is not getting to some people.'²²
- 2.53 Families who may not be comfortable approaching the Education Directorate could receive important education tools like Chrome books through community sector outreach including youth and social workers. Similarly, the Youth Coalition commented to the Inquiry that greater inter-sector communication could enable culturally and linguistically diverse families to access these educational tools and supports through Multicultural Hubs.

²¹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p.15.

²² <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p. 15.

Recommendation 10

2.54 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:**

- a) engages with the community sector to provide chrome books and data access to vulnerable families and young people.**
- b) undertake an evaluation of online learning during lockdown, including an assessment of the social and economic impacts on young people and their families.**

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL PROCESSES AND FORUMS

2.55 The Committee heard that the government could encourage young people's engagement in democracy, governance and in political processes by lowering the voting age. The Committee was also told about the importance of young people having an ongoing voice in the political process rather than agency being restricted to voting and surveys.

2.56 The Youth Coalition supports 'enabling young people to have a voice through different mechanisms ... like the Youth Advisory Committee and other advisory committees and youth services.'²³

2.57 Noting that different jurisdictions have different mechanisms and initiatives, the Youth Coalition encouraged investigating new forums for youth engagement in the democratic process.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

2.58 The Committee strongly encourages the Government to enable more youth engagement in political discussion, processes, and governance. While the committee supports exploring the idea of lowering the voting age it must not undermine the principle of compulsory voting.

Recommendation 11

2.59 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:**

- a) explore options to enable more direct input and involvement from young people in the decision making of Government.**
- b) consider exploring whether there is an approach to lowering the voting age that will in no way infringe on the principle of compulsory voting.²⁴**

²³ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci11.pdf>, p.

²⁴ Mr Peter Cain MLA dissented from Recommendation 11: b.

- 2.60 The Inquiry heard about the importance of investing in awareness raising to counter lack of political awareness and knowledge.
- 2.61 The Youth Coalition commented that lowering the voting age is a main method for engaging youth in the democratic process and increasing the salience of our democracy by making youth engage.
- 2.62 The Inquiry heard that in jurisdictions where youth and other groups were given ‘the option to vote they actually improve their political literacy’ and ‘start taking part in political debate’.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 2.63 The Committee encourages better resourcing of key institutions which support youth civic education and engagement.

Recommendation 12

- 2.63 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government should invest in civics and democracy engagement for young people, including but not limited to Elections ACT and the Office of the Legislative’s Assembly’s Education Office.**

3 ACT GOVERNMENT

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

- 3.1 The Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Ms Yvette Berry MLA and her supporting officials appeared before the Committee on Tuesday 19 October 2021 to answer questions related to the Education portfolio (including early childhood education) Output 1 Public School Education, and Output 2 Non – Government Education.
- 3.2 The Education Directorate is responsible for the delivery of public primary education (from Preschool to Year 6) in the Territory. The Directorate is also responsible for the regulation of early childhood education and care services.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

- 3.3 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs on the 19 October 2021: budget investment in Gungahlin schools and in a trial free breakfast and lunches program; teacher shortages and the new teacher shortage task force; teacher employment, job security and casual to permanent conversion; accountability indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; financial literacy programs in schools and the financial literacy of young people; P & C councils; school exit surveys; Garran Primary School upgrades; Muliyan school initiative; teacher-librarian funding; and the disability education reference group and disability review; and school bullying and violence.

KEY ISSUES

COLLEGE FACILITIES IN CANBERRA'S NORTH

- 3.4 During discussion of budget investments in Gungahlin schools, the Committee heard that 'Gungahlin is one of the fastest growing jurisdictions in the country' and that whereas in previous years one school was built every four years 'now, because of growth in our city, we are starting to see one new school being built every year. We are definitely seeing that in Gungahlin.'²⁵
- 3.5 The Committee heard that this year's budget announced \$118 million of funding to construct the expansion of Margaret Hendry school, and the new North Gungahlin High School in Taylor.

²⁵ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.17.

- 3.6 The expansion of Margaret Hendry will provide an additional 600 places for P to 6 students and is scheduled to open at the start of the 2023 school year.
- 3.7 North Gungahlin High School will provide 800 permanent spaces and a whole range of facilities for that community and is scheduled to open in the 2024 school year. Education officials also updated the Inquiry on the progress of Kenny High School with its anticipated opening in 2023.
- 3.8 These northside schools, like all new ACT public schools, will be built as energy efficient, zero-emissions, environmentally friendly schools.
- 3.9 The hearing was told, with regard to a feasibility study and ongoing planning works around new north-side college facilities, that '[t]here have already been some informal conversations that have commenced, but until we have had the deeper feasibility study and then we take those considerations back to government for decision we will not have a lot of extra publicly available information.'
- 3.10 Visiting members and the Committee welcomed the \$970,000 new budget investment in the Garran school modernisation planning and design process and planning for contemporary learning and other facilities.
- 3.11 The Committee heard that schools in Majura, Harrison, Macquarie, and Mawson School and are also suffering capacity and maintenance problems but had not received budget investment.
- 3.12 The minister and her officials advised that the budget 'sets up an increased upgrade program, with \$99 million over the four years going forward' and that '[t]he increased money will allow us to invest more money in improving the amenity, functionality and inclusivity of schools, as well as dealing with some major infrastructure items'.²⁶

Recommendation 13

3.13 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) expedite the feasibility study for further college capacity in north Canberra.**
- b) build new northside college facilities in Gungahlin.**

²⁶ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.39.

Recommendation 14

- 3.14 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a comprehensive breakdown of the \$99 million funding for school maintenance and infrastructure upgrades.**

MULIYAN FLEXIBLE EDUCATION PROGRAM

- 3.15 The Committee was told of the success of the Muliyan flexible education initiative, which provides education tailored to special needs children and young people. Muliyan is part of the Education Directorate's flexible education provision, the Inquiry heard, and received an increase in budget funding of \$1.98 million to provide for staffing.
- 3.16 Muliyan started as a trial with around 10 young people, increased to 20 and now has 30 students who are supported by a multidisciplinary group of professionals — teachers, allied health, psychologists, nurses, and youth and social workers. The Minister told the hearing that the effectiveness of Muliyan's alternative education provision had made a real difference to the life trajectory of its students.
- 3.17 Asked by the Chair if a Muliyan style flexible learning option might be provided in other locations, the Minister said that 'we are definitely looking at other opportunities, but we are still just working on making sure that we nail Muliyan to be the best it possibly can be.'²⁷

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.18 The Committee recognises the great merit of the Muliyan Off Campus Flexible Learning Program, both in itself and as a model for the development of similar flexible learning programs in other locations.

Recommendation 15

- 3.19 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate provision a service like the Muliyan Off Campus Flexible Learning Program for the northside.**

²⁷ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.43.

TEACHER SHORTAGES AND THE TEACHER SHORTAGE TASKFORCE

3.20 Minister Berry advised the Committee that the Teacher Shortage Taskforce for ACT public schools commenced on 2 September 2021 and will be in place until the end of Term 1, 2022.

3.21 It has five foci in addressing the teacher shortage crisis:

- attraction and retention processes
- teacher and school leader recruitment processes
- covering staff absences,
- utilising existing workforce and ensuring equity
- continuity of education (including the practice of splitting classes)

3.22 The Taskforce membership is comprised of:

- ACT Education Directorate Director-General (Chair)
- Deputy Director-General (Deputy Chair)
- Executive Group Manager, Business Services
- Executive Branch Manager, People and Performance
- Director School Improvement, Belconnen Network
- Senior Director, People Strategy
- Australian Education Union Secretary, ACT Branch
- Senior Industrial Officer, ACT Branch
- President, ACT Branch
- Organiser, North
- Organiser, South

3.23 The Taskforce will provide a progress report and recommendations on medium to long-term strategies for the teaching workforce to the ACT Government.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

3.24 The Committee sees merit in the Education Directorate partnering with the Australian Education Union to progress solutions to teaching shortages through the new Taskforce.

Recommendation 16

3.25 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Education Directorate provides quarterly updates to the Assembly on the work of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce.**

Recommendation 17

- 3.26 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Teacher Shortage Taskforce with a view to funding all Taskforce recommendations in the 2022-2023 budget.**

TEACHER NUMBERS, HOURS AND JOB SECURITY

- 3.27 In the context of a discussion of teacher job security, increasing hours and offering permanency to casual teaching staff the Minister affirmed the role of the Australian Education Union in 'ensuring that the industrial relations rights of the workforce remain true'.²⁸
- 3.28 The Committee was advised that the Education Directorate's stated commitment to increasing permanent job security for teacher's was implemented through the ACTPS Secure Workforce Conversion Policy (Conversion Policy) and ongoing teacher recruitment strategies.
- 3.29 The Committee was provided with some exact dates:
- 'In August 2021, there were 83 temporary classroom teachers that were identified under the Conversion Policy, the Directorate is currently undertaking the review and assessment of eligibility for permanent conversion for the identified staff members. Further, the Directorate is working with the ACT Public Service Secure Employment Team to progress identification of casual staff, including classroom teachers, covered under the Conversion Policy before the end of 2021.
- In addition to this, the Directorate continues to promote and support pathways to permanency for temporary or casual teaching staff through an internal ratings process in accordance with the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement and centralised classroom teacher pool managed by People and Performance Branch. As July 2021, the Directorate has made approximately over 800 invitations to temporary/casual classroom teachers with 36 registered temporary/casual teachers responding to the invitation and 26 staff members participating in the ratings process. Following the ratings process, there were 12 temporary/casual classroom teachers who were successfully rated as eligible for permanent conversion outside of a normal recruitment process.'²⁹
- 3.30 Discussing the 400 new full-time teaching jobs the ACT Government has stated it will establish during its current term of government, and in response to the expanding public education sector in the Territory, the Committee was advised that to date the government has provided

²⁸ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p. 21.

²⁹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Response to Question Taken on Notice, QTON No. 02, 19 October 2021.

funding to schools for the equivalent to 42.5 full time equivalent positions, including teaching and support staff, through the Equitable Enrolment Adjustment budget initiative. Additionally, the 2021-22 Budget provided additional resources through new initiatives including the Headstart pilot program and recruiting youth and social workers.

- 3.31 With reference to the ACT Government's statement, on 30 August 2021, that it is working with the Australian Education Union to address teacher shortages and under-resourcing, the Inquiry heard it was inconsistent for the phrase "growing the workforce" to have been removed from the most recent version of the Education Directorate's Future of Education Strategy.
- 3.32 The Committee also heard that the data collected in public schools exit interviews and surveys about why teachers leave public schools is not being sent to the Education Directorate. However, officials told the Inquiry that through the new Taskforce the Directorate is centralising the gathering of that material.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.33 The Committee is aware that it may take some time to establish the 400 new full-time teaching positions promised to occur during the current tenure of government, and to achieve a high rate of permanent job security for teachers. The Committee regards regular progress advice to the Assembly as one method to monitor progress towards these important goals.

Recommendation 18

- 3.34 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide quarterly updates to the Assembly on:**
- a) teacher employment casual to permanency conversion.**
 - b) progress towards the goal of establishing 400 new full-time teaching positions during the current term of government.**

Recommendation 19

- 3.35 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:**
- a) increase the number of registered teachers in ACT government schools.**
 - b) provide the full number of FTE registered teachers required to fully staff ACT government schools.**
 - c) provide to the Committee the number of job vacancies for school teachers across the entire government school system.**

- d) ensure that teacher exit interviews are conducted and a full report delivered analysing the reasons staff leave teaching.**

ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS FOR ATSI

- 3.36 The percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 10 public school students who proceeded to year 12 at a public senior secondary college this year was only 66%, which is four per cent short of the 70% target, the Inquiry heard.
- 3.37 The target for this year is 85 per cent ‘because the Minister has taken the policy position that we should have exactly the same aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as we do for non-Aboriginal students.’³⁰ The Committee heard the Government expects to achieve that parity rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students proceeding to year 12 through implementing its cultural integrity framework, which has three underpinnings: teaching with cultural integrity; engaging with students, families and community; and creating a school culture of respect.
- 3.38 Related practical measures include increasing the number of Indigenous education officers in schools to 20, both Indigenous education officers and the cultural integrity coordinators; developing professional learning; scholarships; and increased resources for teaching the Australian curriculum with integrity.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.39 The Committee welcomes the commitment to achieving parity between ATSI and non-ATSI students and is concerned to see emphasis on inclusivity that accounts for heterogeneity, consistent with the Future of Education Strategy.

Recommendation 20

- 3.40 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore options to increase investment in training and recruiting more ATSI teachers and explore infrastructure needs.**

FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH TRIAL IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 3.41 The Inquiry heard about budget investment in the free breakfast and lunch trial in ACT public schools, as part of the inclusive school communities’ commitments in the ACT Government’s Future of Education Strategy.

³⁰ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.12.

- 3.42 Details of the trial were communicated to the Committee, including the concept's origins in war-time Europe, its offering free breakfast and lunch three days per week, its being offered at five schools to around 1,500 students, and its two-year duration and commencement in 2022. The schools and students to be included in the trial will be selected next year.
- 3.43 Witnesses emphasized the trial would be adapted to the range of different circumstances in the selected schools, including with reference to different dietary needs and to whether food is prepared on site subject to varying schools' infrastructure. The Committee noted that trial funding does not include capital funding for cooking facilities.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.44 The Committee strongly supports the free breakfast and lunch trial. The Committee recognises the need for basic food support and would like to see this service expanded beyond three days a week and five schools as quickly as possible.

Recommendation 21

- 3.45 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government**
- a) Expedite its trial free breakfast and lunches in ACT schools.**
 - b) provide capital funding for school kitchen facilities for on-site preparation.**
 - c) provide secure employment for staff preparing food.**

FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

- 3.46 The Committee's line of questioning turned to the financial literacy of young people and concern that the 2021-2022 budget investment of \$346,000 for the Moneysmart teaching partnership was insufficient because it offers no increase from last year's budget, despite there being more students and schools involved this year.
- 3.47 The Minister's officials advised that as part of teaching financial literacy in the ACT public education system the Directorate has worked with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to establish the Moneysmart accreditation program, which has been available through ASIC for a number of years. The financial literacy Moneysmart accreditation program has two elements, one being a set of curriculum supports, and the other professional learning for teachers.
- 3.48 The Committee heard that there are no schools currently accredited under the Moneysmart program but that it is an 'aspiration' of the Directorate to have all ACT public schools accredited under the program.

Recommendation 22

- 3.49 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Education Directorate aim to accredit all ACT schools under the Moneysmart program by the end of the 2022-2023 financial year.**

MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- 3.50 The Minister for Early Childhood Development, Ms Yvette Berry MLA and her supporting officials appeared before the Committee on Tuesday 19 October 2021 to answer questions related to CSD 2.1 Child and Family Centres, and CSD 2.2 Child Development Services.
- 3.51 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister for Early Childhood Development on the 19 October 2021: CAYPELS scheme and budget investment in the Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service; Child and Family centres; waiting lists; prohibitive costs; and Child Development Service delivery of autism assessments.

CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES

- 3.52 With reference to the budget containing no predicted increase to the number of occasions of service to the child and family centres over the next five years, the Committee heard that the past two years have seen significant disruptions that have necessitated new modes of delivery including online platforms.
- 3.53 The Committee heard the Government is ‘trying to get a real sense of what that service demand will be into the centres in the forward years.’³¹
- 3.54 Asked what options are available if demand begins to outstrip capacity, officials told the hearing that the child and family centres are one-stop shops that provide multiple services and that community service deliverers have very well-established networks: ‘Families would not be left unserved; it would be about who else within that network could respond to the presenting need.’³²
- 3.55 Discussing Child and Family Centres and their services and waiting lists, the Committee was advised that a number of services including health and wellbeing clinics have no current waiting lists but that there are waits lists for some parenting groups.

³¹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.56.

³² <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.57.

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.56 The Committee is concerned that there has been no predicted increase to the number of occasions of service to the child and family centres over the next five years given population growth in the Territory.

Recommendation 23

- 3.57 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invests in Child and Family centres at a level that keeps pace with ACT population increase and needs, and ensure equitable program offerings simultaneously on the north and south sides of Canberra.**

AUTISM ASSESSMENT

- 3.58 The Committee heard that the ACT's only free public autism assessment program - the Child Development Service – solely offers an early intervention assessment and referral service for children aged 0-6 years, with eligibility extended up to 12 years for multidisciplinary autism spectrum disorder assessment.
- 3.59 In the ACT, the Inquiry heard, children and young people aged 12-18 can only access autism assessment in the private market, with a single assessment costing up to \$2000 and being prohibitively expensive for some families.
- 3.60 By contrast, the Committee was told, Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, and Western Australia provide free diagnostic services for young people up to the age of 16, 18 and sometimes older youth.
- 3.61 The Inquiry heard that the ACT Government's decision to cap autism assessment at age 12 is of increased concern at the present time when '[s]takeholders are saying that there is an increased number of teenagers seeking this assessment, but they cannot, because their family cannot afford it.'³³

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.62 The Committee is concerned that there are no free autism assessment services currently available for young people over the age of 12 years, exacerbated by the significant and for some families prohibitive cost of private market psychologist autism assessments.

³³ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci12.pdf>, p.61.

Recommendation 24

- 3.63 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expand its only free public autism assessment to offer early intervention assessment and referral services, and multidisciplinary autism spectrum disorder assessment, to children and youth aged 0-18.**

CHIEF MINISTER

- 3.64 Mr Andrew Barr MLA, in his capacity as Chief Minister, appeared before the Committee on 20 October 2021 to discuss LGBTIQ+ affairs and matters related to Output Class 1: Government Strategy (LGBTIQ+).
- 3.65 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Chief Minister: budget investment for 2021-22; budget of the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs including its grants programs; the Capital of Equality first action plan, and proposed second action plan; LGBTIQ+ health scoping strategy; Covid-29 impacts; shared election commitments of Greens and Labor to work with conversion practices survivors; Meridian and Pride Hub; and Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs engagement with the Education Directorate.

KEY ISSUES

BUDGET OF THE OFFICE OF LGBTIQ+ AFFAIRS

- 3.66 Officials told the hearing that the total 2021-2022 budget for the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs is \$810,000, with approximately 50% allocated for staffing and office expenses.
- 3.67 Mr Barr affirmed that the Office has sufficient funding of full-time equivalent positions to meet the goals of both the first and second Capital of Equality action plans within the designated times, despite COVID-19 impacts, including through service delivery partnerships.

CAPITAL OF EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

- 3.68 The Chief Minister told the Committee that ‘there has been a lot of work to progress the implementation of the actions under the first action plan’ but that a full update would be provided to the Assembly before the end of 2021.³⁴ The hearing was told progression of a few items had been delayed by COVID-19 but that the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act had been amended.

³⁴ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p.70.

- 3.69 Mr Barr advised that ‘delivery of the conversion practices ban, and priorities and actions through the Capital of Equality grants rounds have been met.’³⁵
- 3.70 The second action plan’s intended launch of the SpringOUT festival in 2021 was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and health measures but is scheduled for launch early in 2022, the hearing heard.

FUNDING PROGRAMS

- 3.71 The Committee was also advised that, of the 30 grants provided under the Capital of Equality grants program to date, 10 specifically target the following groups: People of colour – six grants; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - three grants; and People with disability – one grant.³⁶
- 3.72 Several questions were asked about funding for Meridian ACT. The Inquiry was told that Meridian’s funding had not increased in the 2020-2021 budget through the Office of LGBTIQ+ but that Meridian had receive a small amount of supplementary funding as part of the COVID-19 mental health package, with \$40,000 provided through the Health Directorate.
- 3.73 Mr Barr affirmed that the Office will continue to work with Meridian and has a funding commitment to them and, having provided establishment funding for Pride Hub, anticipates future funding for Pride Hub when a viable business model has been established.
- 3.74 Additionally, the Chief Minister told the Committee the appropriations include: \$624,000 over four years for a gender agenda; \$100,000 per year for the Capital of Equality Grants Program; \$90,000 over four years for festivals and events like YES! Fest; and \$230,000 over four years for SpringOUT.

Recommendation 25

- 3.75 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fund the development of a second action plan as part of the Capital of Equality Strategy.**

³⁵ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p. 74.

³⁶ Andrew Barr MLA, Chief Minister, Response to Question Taken on Notice, QON No. 12, 20 October 2021: <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/eci/act-budget-2021-22#tab1871409-5id>.

MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

- 3.76 Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA in her capacity as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs appeared before the Committee on 20 October 2021 to discuss CSD 1.3 Strategic Policy.
- 3.77 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Chief Minister: budget investment for 2021-2022; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations reporting requirements and secretariat support; the Our Booris, Our Way report and committee; the reconciliation fund; language centres; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's commissioner; children and families advocates; establishing a new Aboriginal community-controlled organisation; self-determination and treaty.

KEY ISSUES

OUR BOORIS, OUR WAY REPORT AND COMMITTEE

- 3.78 The Minister and her officials told the Committee that this budget delivers on the commitments that the government made in responding to the Our Booris, Our Way report, including secretariat support funding for the Our Booris, Our Way Steering Committee. This includes secretariat support for communications 'and any issues with the community and also discussions with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.'³⁷ Until the secretariat is recruited funding is being provided to 'assist both the secretariat as well as ourselves to manage further reporting requirements around Our Booris,' the Inquiry was told.³⁸
- 3.79 Officials told the hearing that '[w]e have quarterly reporting requirements to the implementation oversight committee of each and every recommendation' and that 'we have been also working with them extensively in terms of the development of data, in terms of the performance indicators.' This work includes tracking 'targets and expectations around the intent of a recommendation. We also have changed our reporting format, in consultation with the community, in terms of looking at data, specific to recommendation by recommendation.'³⁹
- 3.80 Officials also told the hearing that 'we are doing a whole lot of work in consultation with the committee around looking at establishing an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation as

³⁷ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p.77.

³⁸ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p.77.

³⁹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p.78.

part of the implementation and the recommendations; and that is lining up with what we need to do in terms of the next iteration of A Step Up.⁴⁰

Recommendation 26

3.81 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) reduce reporting requirements on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and allocate additional funding for secretariat support.
- b) provide the Assembly with a statement in six months on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations' views on:
 - i) the adequacy of funding, the nature of the consultation and how far their wishes were factored into the Government's approach.
 - ii) the appropriateness of reporting requirements including their suitability for the widely varying circumstances of different organisations.
 - iii) data gathering and whether it is experienced as invasive, and what changes will the Minister make to address this.
 - iv) progress towards establishing a new Aboriginal community-controlled organisation.

TREATY, THE RECONCILIATION FUND, AND LANGUAGE CENTRES

3.82 Asked about the reconciliation fund allocation of \$150,000 in the last budget, the Minister told the Committee that there was not yet a structure in place to administer the fund, that treaty discussions have been delayed for multiple reasons, and that:

Part of the work that we have been doing is to support the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to think about what a treaty would mean for the ACT and what the treaty process might look like. To support that conversation and a conversation with a broader group of traditional custodian families for the ACT, that money was allocated in the last budget to bring on a facilitator to facilitate those conversations with a wider range of traditional owners. We also needed someone to manage that process within the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.⁴¹

3.83 The Committee was also told that some expenditure from the fund would be directed to treaty and the language centre to support healing and reconciliation in the ACT.

⁴⁰ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p. 78.

⁴¹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p.78.

Recommendation 27

3.84 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase funding including for treaty and the language centre in the 2022-2023 budget.

3.85 With reference to the \$311,000 provided to fund a temporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families advocate and support member, the Minister commented that there is an ongoing conversation about whether policy and development responsibility for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner sat best within the Human Rights Commission or within another portfolio.

3.86 The Inquiry also heard that budget priorities for 2021-2022 include policy reform to enable self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and establishing local priorities by working with local communities.

3.87 Responding to questioning, the Minister reiterated that the government is engaging in ongoing albeit delayed communications with ATSI local leaders regarding their unanimous call, in April 2021, for a commission of inquiry into the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT justice system.

3.88 Minister Smith also told the Committee that:

‘[T]here have been some really excellent programs implemented, like the Yarrabi Bamirr Justice Reinvestment Program with Winnunga, the Aboriginal and Legal Service and the Women’s Legal Service. That has really supported families with a member in the justice system and kept other family members out of the justice system and, indeed, out of the child protection system, as well. There has been some really good work across the board. But there are also a lot of gaps, and we recognise that. There is a lot of work still to do and a lot of systemic issues that we really need to get to the heart of.’⁴²

Recommendation 28

3.89 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase funding for highly effective programs including the Yarrabi Bamirr Justice Reinvestment Program with Winnunga, the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Women’s Legal Service.

⁴² <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci13.pdf>, p.83.

ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR SENIORS, VETERANS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 3.90 Minister Emma Davidson MLA, in her capacity as Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, appeared before the Committee on 28 October 2021 to discuss CSD 1.1 Inclusion and Participation (seniors and ageing policy; veterans).
- 3.91 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investment for 2021-2022; Age Friendly City Plan; dementia-friendly infrastructure and training; public transport; urban planning and design; age discrimination; elder abuse'; Afghanistan veterans; and mental health.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

AGE FRIENDLY CITY PLAN

- 3.92 The Minister told the Committee that the Age Friendly City Plan is being done collaboratively by a range of directorates including SVFCS and stakeholders and emphasized the value of the work Access Canberra has been doing on the dementia friendly Access Canberra in Belconnen.
- 3.93 The Age Friendly City Plan is informed by extensive community consultation and 'includes information around social inclusion, access to services, public transport, age friendly urban planning and design, and also addresses age discrimination and elder abuse', officials told the hearing.⁴³ Additionally, they advised that the roadmap has four key areas of work being progressed over the four-year plan, with 20 of the 33 plan actions underway.
- 3.94 Access Canberra have made some progress on work around dementia assistance training and investigating what services would be needed for frontline staff to support ongoing dementia friendly services.
- 3.95 Officials told the hearing that in April 2021 Access Canberra undertook community consultation including to progress dementia training for frontline staff, and dementia friendly infrastructure that would include features like quiet waiting area options with, for example, lower lighting and no televisions.

⁴³ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci14.pdf>, p. 85.

Recommendation 29

3.96 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) ensure that by the end of June 2022 Access Canberra shopfronts become dementia-friendly and ACT Government frontline workers receive dementia friendly training.**
- b) implement dementia friendly training at public theatres, galleries and community centres for all ACT Government staff.**
- c) investigate affordable housing options built purposely for senior Canberrans.**
- d) incorporate seniors exercise parks into the Age-Friendly City Plan.**

MINISTER FOR DISABILITY

3.97 Ms Emma Davidson MLA also appeared in her capacity as Minister for Disabilities before the Committee on 28 October 2021 to discuss CSD 1.2 Office for Disability CSD 1.4 Quality, Complaints and Regulation.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

3.98 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investment for 2021-22; and staffing in the Offices for Multi-cultural affairs, Women and Disability, the National Disability Insurance Scheme; the Disability Justice Strategy; .

DISABILITY STRATEGY

3.99 The Committee heard that while the Disability Justice Strategy is mentioned in a few areas of the budget papers actual spending on forward estimates for this strategy is not set out in the budget.

3.100 Asked to identify the forward estimates for developing the national disability strategy officials replied that a new iteration of the ten-year strategy is expected to be agreed by the Prime Minister this calendar year and indicated government decisions about matters such as forward estimates to deliver that strategy would then be possible.

Recommendation 30

3.101 The Committee recommends that forward estimates be provided for:

- a) the disability and carers strategies announced in the budget, to provide certainty to the community of the government's intent to support their development and implementation.
- b) the ongoing implementation of the First Action Plan 2019-2023 of the Disability Justice Strategy and that information be provided about the allocation of the funding and its removal or re-allocation from the last budget cycle.

MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

3.102 Minister Tara Cheyne MLA, in her capacity as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, appeared before the Committee on 29 October 2021 to discuss matters related to CSD 1.1 Inclusion and Participation.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

3.103 The Committee Discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investment for 2021-2022; 25th anniversary of the National Multicultural Festival; community language schools; Multicultural Bill and submissions; the Multicultural Recognition Act and the Discrimination Act; the Human Rights Commission; and Harmony Week.

KEY ISSUES

2022 MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

3.104 Minister Cheyne told the Inquiry that 2022 is the 25th anniversary of the National Multicultural Festival and that this is the largest event in the ACT event calendar with more than 200,000 people expected to visit the festival.

3.105 The Minister commented that, given COVID-19 impacts, 'our key responsibilities are first determining whether the festival can be held safely and effectively, and that is the conversation that we are having across government, most notably unsurprisingly with the office of the Chief Health Officer.'⁴⁴ The Minister also noted that she looks forward to the reconvening of the 25th anniversary celebrations community panel reference group.

⁴⁴ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p.97.

3.106 The Committee heard that the Minister and her office are working with the Chief Health Officer and colleagues across government to provide certainty on the timing and format of the Multicultural Festival, as they also do for New Year's Eve, for Australia Day, and Canberra Day.

3.107 Performing a critical support role during the public health emergency by working with multicultural communities was also a focus of the Minister's account of the funded work of the Office of Multicultural Affairs during the hearing.

Recommendation 31

3.108 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue providing updates regarding the 2022 Multicultural Festival.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE FUNDING AND FACILITIES

3.109 During a discussion of ACT community language schools the hearing heard the language schools have been without a funding increase for almost a decade and that per capita funding lags behind other states and territories.

3.110 The Minister told the Committee that the ACT Government has recently undertaken a review of ACT community language schools and associated funding arrangements, and is due to write an initial response about the review and the government response by the last sitting day of 2021. The Minister advised the hearing that:

'What I can tell you is that the current ACT government investment in community language schools is \$275,000 annually. This is a grant program. It provides a per student grant to assist with community language school fees. As you mentioned, it is lower than in some other jurisdictions and we did undertake this review as part of the second action plan under our multicultural framework. It really is to ensure that we are continuing to meet the needs of the Canberra community and that future investment delivers those positive outcomes.'⁴⁵

3.111 The Office of Multicultural Affairs is also working with the Education Directorate to expand community language group access to public education spaces, the hearing was told.

Recommendation 32

3.112 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) increase the number of affordable and accessible facilities for groups such as the community language schools.**

⁴⁵ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p.99.

b) increase funding for community language schools in the 2022-2023 budget.

MINISTER FOR SKILLS

- 3.113 Minister Chris Steel MLA in his capacity as the Minister for Skills appeared before the Committee on 29 October 2021 to discuss matters related to Output Class 3: Economic Development: Output 3.5: Skills ACT Building Construction Industry Training Fund Authority (Statement of Intent); Output 1.1: Provision of Vocational Education and Training Services Canberra Institute of Technology (Statement of Intent); and Output 1.1 Major Projects Canberra.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

- 3.114 The Committee discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investment for 2021-2022; sustainability upgrades at Bruce CIT; social cost of carbon; Migrant Skills program; migration caps; international students; the job trainer program; transition to environmental sustainability; and transition to digital modes.

KEY ISSUES

CIT SUSTAINABILITY UPGRADES

- 3.115 The Committee heard that a large portion of Government 'screwdriver-ready funding' for facility upgrades was directed to sustainability upgrades at Bruce CIT. Its CEO Leanne Cover said there has been a strong focus on sustainability and renewable energy replacement for Bruce campus for the last 15 years:
- 3.116 The hearing was told that '[t]here are a number of built infrastructure assets at the Bruce campus which assist in terms of renewable energy sources', and that these include solar panels, water storage and water capture, and light fittings to reduce outputs.⁴⁶
- 3.117 CIT is working with the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate on carbon emissions reduction areas, the Committee heard, including replacement of gas-operated boilers. CIT is also participating in the Origin Energy smart charging tile, with electrical charging stations being installed at Bruce, Reed and Fyshwick campuses to support electrically powered vehicles.

⁴⁶ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p. 115.

3.118 The Inquiry also heard there is limited expenditure at the Reed campus, in contrast to investment in Bruce, Fyshwick and Woden campuses.

3.119 The social cost of carbon will also be a significant factor, Minister Steel said, in ‘the way that we assess various projects and inform decision-making going forward. But there is still a fair bit of work to be done to bring that process down’, including developing guidelines.⁴⁷

Recommendation 33

3.120 The CIT should develop a priority list of scheduled works relating to sustainability upgrades for CIT campuses.

WODEN CIT AND BUS INTERCHANGE FUNDING

3.121 In the context of discussion of new investments made in this budget for an expansion of programs or services at the CIT site in Tuggeranong, Minister Steel affirmed that there is a future for the CIT Tuggeranong site after the CIT Woden expansion is complete and online. He reminded the Committee that Labor made an election commitment to provide extra training at CIT Tuggeranong to support the drivers and mechanics who currently work at the Tuggeranong depot and at the Belconnen depot.

3.122 The Minister also spoke about investment in:

‘the training that [drivers] need to be able to work on our new electric bus fleet. And that is going to form a really important part of the procurement for those new buses which ... has already started. So we are keen to use those regional campuses, if they are close, for example, that one is very close to the bus depot, so it makes a lot of sense to have the training delivered there. So there will be, I think, further opportunities to use those spaces, but also use them in different ways in the digital environment as well.’⁴⁸

Recommendation 34

3.123 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the breakdown for the money to be spent across the 4 packages for the Woden CIT and bus interchange.

⁴⁷ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p. 117.

⁴⁸ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p. 119.

JOBTRAINER PROGRAM

3.124 Budget investment in the JobTrainer Program was discussed in detail during the hearing.

3.125 With direct reference to the budget, the Committee noted that extension of the JobTrainer Program will continue provision of 'free courses over the next two years to support young people to gain critical skills and assist them in the employment market with the provision of two and a half thousand additional training places.'⁴⁹

3.126 The Minister discussed two-part funding for the JobTrainer initiative for 2021-2022, noting the upcoming second round will be delivered differently because it will be through the Skilled Capital Program:

'Similar to the first round, it will be targeted at young people and those who are not in work, so job seekers. But it also has an additional element to it for the specific qualifications in digital skills, disability, early childhood and aged care, where the eligibility requirements are more relaxed, so everyone can take up those qualifications. And they will constitute the first round.'

3.127 The Committee heard that, as of 30 September, there have been enrolments in 95 different courses under JobTrainer.

Recommendation 35

3.128 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide specific and detailed information about JobTrainer funding.

MIGRANT SKILLS PROGRAM

3.129 Discussing the plan to utilise skilled migrants to address the skills shortage, Minister Steel explained to the Committee that the Labour Government has:

through the critical skills needs list, identified a range of areas where the ACT requires people to undertake various roles. And the ACT government can, as a result, have people come and nominate all those specific visa classes to come over here to the ACT, to perform those roles. So that has been going on for some time. But obviously, with the migration cap, and the effective stoppage of migration over this period, that has been very challenging, in terms of bringing people.

⁴⁹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p. 111.

3.130 Officials explained that the 2014 territory migration agreement provides the ACT with flexibility around nominating skilled migrants, with 2000 visa places in 2021-22.

3.131 The Committee also heard that overseas delegations have undertaken activities to attract students to Canberra and ‘have got quite a lot of international students here in the ACT, and to be able to convert them, to be able stay here is a fairly important target. So we do a lot of work there as well.’

Recommendation 36

3.132 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide measurables for the Migrant Skills program, including success rates for course completions for those brought to study in the ACT, and indications of what is considered a successful number of those staying in the ACT on completion of their courses.

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

3.133 Minister Yvette Berry MLA, in her capacity as Minister for Women, appeared before the Committee on 29 October 2021 to discuss matters related to CSD 1.1 Inclusion and Participation.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

3.134 The Committee discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investment for 2021-22; tender grant processes; women’s board representation; CFMEU donations; and the women’s workforce participation program.

KEY ISSUES

WOMEN’S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION FUNDING

3.135 The Minister told the hearing that the \$560,000 in the budget to support women’s workforce participation ‘is an extension of an existing program over the next four years’ and that the success of participation grants for women:

‘... is shown in the examples that are provided by women who have been able to access those grants to return to the workforce, often for women who have been out of the workforce for a longer period of time, or have been victims of domestic and family violence, or have been raising a family at home and have not been able to have the

opportunities to do the sort of professional development that maybe their other colleagues have been able to do.’⁵⁰

3.136 The participation grants provides funds for women to gain skills and resources including a licence, car lessons, IT, phones, Internet access, computers, and clothing, and that alongside the grants participating women can access wraparound supports such as, for example, food vouchers and travel options. The Committee heard from the Minister that ‘what we are hearing from women who have been involved in that grants process, that has been a significant lift in their opportunities and chances to return to the workforce.’

Recommendation 37

3.137 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government:

- a) increase funding for women’s workforce participation.**
- b) work towards consistency across the Womens, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Social Inclusion budget statements and ensure that the impact of various measures and initiatives on those specific groups is analysed.**

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

3.138 Minister Yvette Berry MLA, in her capacity as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, appeared before the Committee on 29 October 2021 to discuss matters related to CSD 1.1 Inclusion and Participation for youth.

MATTERS CONSIDERED

3.139 The Committee discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investment for 2021-22; youth at risk; private rental; a Gungahlin youth centre; and permanent Northside facilities for at risk youth.

KEY ISSUES

NORTHSIDE YOUTH FACILITIES

3.140 With reference to the ACT Government’s aim, stated in the budget outlook, of ensuring that the youth sector is resourced to meet the needs of young people, families and the community, a discussion ensued in the hearing as to what was or could be done by the Government to

⁵⁰ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p.137.

provide permanent facilities for at risk youth on the north side of Canberra, particularly as the population increases.

- 3.141 Minister for Youth Ms Berry MLA told the hearing that ‘a community service organisation that is funded to provide support services to young people is funded’ and that ‘then those community organisations will want to try and access property across a various range of different areas in the ACT. Whether that is a privately rented property, or a property that is rented off the ACT government’.⁵¹

Recommendation 38

- 3.142 **The Committee recommends that the ACT Government assist ‘Gunners Place’ (the Gungahlin Youth Centre) in finding secure tenancy.**

MINISTER FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

- 3.143 The Minister for Sport and Recreation, Ms Yvette Berry MLA, and her supporting officials, appeared before the Committee on 29 October 2021 to answer questions related to Output Class 3: Economic Development Output 3.3: Sport and Recreation (Community sports infrastructure and sport and recreation) and Output Class 8: Property Services Output 8.1: Property Services (Aquatic facilities management).

MATTERS CONSIDERED

- 3.144 The Committee discussed the following matters during the appearance by the Minister: budget investments; Gungahlin Leisure centre; pool repairs; construction and repair delays due to Covid-19; compensation for pool operators; outsourcing of facilities; and an ice skating rink for Tuggeranong.

KEY ISSUES

GUNG AHLIN LEISURE CENTRE

- 3.145 During a detailed discussion of Output class 3, economic development, and Output class 8, property services in relation to aquatic facilities management, the Minister provided the committee with an update on repairs to Gungahlin pool.

⁵¹ <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p. 148.

- 3.146 The Minister told the hearing that the Government is trying to keep the community updated on repairs to tiling damage and the leakage in the pool because of its importance for community leisure.
- 3.147 The Committee heard that the \$360,000 that has been provided in the budget for upgrades to acoustics and lighting at the centre will result in a pool facility superior to the pre-damage pool.
- 3.148 The Inquiry also heard that despite construction projects being severely impacted by COVID-19, on the 18th of this month 'work commenced back on site at the Gungahlin leisure centre with the contracted tiler and also, the project manager, the lead contractor, builder, who will continue starting the works.'⁵²

COMMITTEE COMMENT

- 3.149 The Committee is aware Gungahlin residents are disappointed at being left without easy access to a pool facility, particularly coming into summer. Regular updates from the ACT Government on repair work to the Gungahlin pool and an anticipated re-opening date would be appropriate and appreciated by the Committee and Gungahlin constituents.

Recommendation 39

- 3.150 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue providing updates to the Gungahlin community regarding the repair of Gungahlin pool.**

⁵² <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/comms/eci15.pdf>, p.150.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The analysis in this report is unavoidably abbreviated because the Assembly's resolution to bring forward the reporting date from 5 December to 12 November left the Committee with ten business days to draft, deliberate and present the report. That ten-day period was also consumed by the high administrative demands of the Estimates fortnight and also overlapped with the demands of an Assembly sitting week.
- 4.2 The Committee regrets that it was not possible for its report deliberations to be informed by answers to all questions on notice lodged during the inquiry and that the deliberation time was truncated, with the reporting date preceding the due date for some questions on notice.
- 4.3 The Committee commends the resumption of a Community Day in the Assembly Committees' budget estimates inquiry schedule. The Committee wishes to thank ACTCOSS representatives Dr Emma Campbell, Craig Wallace and Gemma Killen, and Dr Justin Barker representing the Youth Coalition of the ACT.
- 4.4 The Committee thanks everyone who participated in and assisted this inquiry, particularly given the additional demands and disruption to the normal Estimates process necessitated by the public health emergency.
- 4.5 In particular, the Committee thanks the Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA; Minister Yvette Berry MLA (in her capacities as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation); Minister Chris Steel MLA (in his capacity as Minister for Skills); Minister Tara Cheyne MLA (in her capacity as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs); Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA (in her capacity as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs); Minister Emma Davidson MLA (in her capacities as Minister for Disabilities and Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services), and their officials for attending hearings and cooperating with the inquiry process.

Michael Pettersson MLA

Chair

November 2021

APPENDIX A – WITNESSES

OCTOBER 2021

➤ ACTCOSS – ACT Council of Social Services

- Emma Campbell
- Craig Wallace
- Gemma Killen

➤ Youth Coalition of the ACT

- Justin Barker

❖ 19 OCTOBER 2021

➤ **Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Early Childhood Development**

❖ Education Directorate

- Haire, Ms Katy, Director-General
- Simmons, Ms Jane, Deputy Director-General
- Efthymiades, Ms Deb, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform
- McMahon, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery
- Oldfield, Ms Meghan, Executive Group Manager, Business Services
- Huxley, Mr Mark, Executive Group Manager, School Improvement
- Gotts, Mr Robert, Executive Branch Manager, Analytics and Evaluation
- Moysey, Mr Sean, Executive Branch Manager, Early Childhood Regulation and Non-Government Schools
- Parkinson, Mr Andrew, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure and Capital Works
- Le, Ms Thao, Chief Financial Officer, Strategic Finance and Procurement
- Watson, Mr Martin, Executive Director, Board of Senior Secondary Studies
- McAlister, Ms Coralie, Chief Executive Officer, Teacher Quality Institute

❖ Community Services Directorate

- Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General
- Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19
- Sabellico, Ms Anne Maree, Deputy Director-General
- Calder, Ms Robyn, Executive Group Manager, Corporate Services
- Banka, Mr Basu, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Services
- Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy
- Chandler, Ms Cathy, A/g Executive Branch Manager, People Management Branch
- Pappas, Ms Helen, Executive Group Manager, Children, Youth and Families

- Plater, Ms Janet, A/g Executive Branch Manager, Children and Families, Children, Youth and Families
- Thompson, Ms Melanie, Senior Manager, Child Development Services, Children, Youth and Families
- Nolan, Mr Gerard, Centre Manager, Child and Family Centres, Children, Youth and Families.

20 OCTOBER 2021

➤ **Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Chief Minister**

❖ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Leigh, Ms Kathy, Head of Service, Director-General
- Croke, Ms Leesa, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Cabinet
- Mehrton, Mr Andrew, Executive Branch Manager, Social Policy Branch, Policy and Cabinet
- Morgan, Mr David, A/g Chief Financial Officer, Strategic Finance

➤ **Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs**

❖ Community Services Directorate

- Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General
- Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19
- Sabellico, Ms Anne Maree, Deputy Director-General
- Calder, Ms Robyn, Executive Group Manager, Corporate Services
- Banka, Mr Basu, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Services
- Charles, Ms Lisa, Executive Branch Manager, OATSIA
- Chandler, Ms Cathy, A/g Executive Branch Manager, People Management Branch

28 OCTOBER 2021

➤ **Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability**

❖ Community Services Directorate

- Rule, Ms Catherine, Director General
- Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19
- Sabellico, Ms Anne Maree, Deputy Director-General

- Calder, Ms Robyn, Executive Group Manager, Corporate Services
- Banka, Mr Basu, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Services
- Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Group Manager, Inclusion and Participation
- Summerrell, Ms Jessica, Executive Branch Manager, Social and Community Inclusion, Inclusion and Participation
- Dunne, Ms Ellen, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability, Inclusion and Participation
- Gibson, Ms Tracy, Executive Branch Manager, Quality, Complaints and Regulation
- Harkness, Ms Tracy, Senior Practitioner, Quality, Complaints and Regulation

29 OCTOBER 2021

➤ **Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Multicultural Affairs**

❖ Community Services Directorate

- Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General
- Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19
- Sabellico, Ms Anne Maree, Deputy Director-General
- Calder, Ms Robyn, Executive Group Manager, Corporate Services
- Banka, Mr Basu, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Services
- Chandler, Ms Cathy, A/g Executive Branch Manager, People Management Branch
- Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Group Manager, Inclusion and Participation
- Summerrell, Ms Jessica, Executive Branch Manager, Social and Community Inclusion, Inclusion and Participation

➤ **Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Skills**

❖ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development
- Starick, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Policy and Strategy / Economic Development
- Andersen, Ms Josephine, Executive Branch Manager, Skills Canberra, Economic Development

❖ ACT Building Construction Industry Training Fund Authority

- Young, Mr Michael, Chairman of the Board
- Carter, Mr Glenn, Chief Executive Officer

❖ Canberra Institute of Technology

- Sloan, Mr Craig, CIT Board Chair
- Cover, Ms Leanne, Chief Executive Officer
- Clements, Ms Alice, A/g Executive Director, Industry Engagement and Strategic Relations

- Whale, Mr Andrew, Executive Director, Education and Training Services

❖ Major Projects Canberra

- Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer
- Hall, Mr Damon, Executive Group Manager, Project Development and Support
- Strachan, Mr Shaun, Deputy Chief Projects Officer
- Ford, Mr Wayne, Project Director, Canberra Institute of Technology Campus—Woden, Major Projects Canberra
- Navarro, Ms Tania, Senior Director, Communications and Engagement, Project Development and Support
- Pulford, Ms Nikki, Executive Branch Manager, Ministerial, Governance and Corporate Support, Project Development Support

➤ **Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Women, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Sport and Recreation**

❖ Community Services Directorate

- Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General
- Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19
- Sabellico, Ms Anne Maree, Deputy Director-General
- Calder, Ms Robyn, Executive Group Manager, Corporate Services
- Banka, Mr Basu, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Services
- Chandler, Ms Cathy, A/g Executive Branch Manager, People Management Branch
- Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Group Manager, Inclusion and Participation
- Summerrell, Ms Jessica, Executive Branch Manager, Social and Community Inclusion, Inclusion and Participation

❖ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development
- Bailey, Mr Daniel, Executive Group Manager, Operations / Economic Development
- Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation / Economic Development
- Jeffrey, Mr David, Senior Director, Sport and Recreation / Economic Development
- Miners, Mr Stephen, Acting Under Treasurer
- Tanton, Mr Graham, Executive Group Manager, Shared Services and Property
- Nakkan, Mr John, Executive Branch Manager, ACT Property Group

❖ Major Projects Canberra

- Piani, Mr Adrian, Chief Engineer / Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery Partners

APPENDIX B – QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE/QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions taken on Notice 15 October 2021

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
1	15.10.21	Chair	Youth Coalition	Youth democratic engagement	N/A

Questions taken on Notice 19 October 2021

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
2	19.10.21	Davis	Education	Teacher Shortage Task Force	01.11.21
3	19.10.21	Hanson	Education	Teacher FTE shortfall	01.11.21
4	19.10.21	Hanson	Education	School infrastructure	01.11.21
5	19.10.21	Cain	Education	Budget statement language and priorities	01.11.21
6	19.10.21	Kikkert	Early Childhood Development	Child and family Centres	01.11.21
7	19.10.21	Cain	Early Childhood Development	Early childhood services	01.11.21
8	19.10.21	Kikkert	Early Childhood Development	Autism assessment	01.11.21
9	19.10.21	Cain	Education	Disability education review	01.11.21
10	19.10.21	Kikkert	Early Childhood Development	Autism and school psychologists	01.11.21
11	19.10.21	Kikkert	Early Childhood Development	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome	01.11.21

Questions on Notice 20 October 2021

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
14	20.10.21	Clay	CSD - ATSIA	Gender Impact Analysis	09.11.21
15	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	ATSI Agreement	03.11.21
16	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA (JACS)	ATSI Commissioner	N/A
17	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	ATSI Policy and Engagement	N/A
18	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	ATSI Projects	03.11.21
19	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	Gugan Gulwan Staffing Support	N/A
20	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	Healing and Reconciliation Fund	N/A
21	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	New Facility for Gugan Gulwan	04.11.21
22	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	Proposed Commission of Enquiry	N/A
23	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	Support for the Out Booris our Way Implementation Oversight	03.11.21
24	20.10.21	Kikkert	CSD - ATSIA	Treaty Process	04.11.21

Questions on Notice 25 October 2021 (**these questions were redirected from to ECI from an EGEE hearing. There was no ECI hearing held on 25 October*)

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
33	25.10.21 (EGEE)	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Home of Dragon Boat Racing (venue)	09.11.21
34	25.10.21 (EGEE)	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Gungahlin Tennis Centre	09.11.21
35	25.10.21 (EGEE)	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Home of Football Throsby	09.11.21
36	25.10.21 (EGEE)	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Indoor Sports Facilities	09.11.21
37	25.10.21 (EGEE)	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Women's Elite Sports	09.11.21

Questions on Notice 28 October 2021

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
25	28.10.21	Milligan	CSD - Disability	Office of Disability ACT Carers Strategy	N/A
26	28.10.21	Milligan	CSD - Disability	Office of Disability Justice Strategy	N/A
27	28.10.21	Milligan	CSD - Disability	Office of Disability Purchase of assistive technologies	N/A
30	28.10.21	Clay	CSD - Disability	Gender impact Analysis	08.11.21

Questions on Notice 29 October 2021

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
28	29.10.21	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Indoor Sports Facilities	09.11.21
29	29.10.21	Milligan	Sports and Recreation	Stromlo Leisure Centre	09.11.21
31	29.10.21	Clay	CSD - Women	Women Gender Action Plans and gender impact analysis tool	N/A
32	29.10.21	Clay	CSD – Multicultural Affairs	Multicultural Affairs gender impact analysis	N/A
38	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	ACT Public Services	N/A
39	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Female Commuters	N/A
40	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Health ACT	N/A
41	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Gendered urban design	N/A
42	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Gender impact statement	N/A
43	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Procurement Strategies	N/A
44	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Gender equity and education	N/A
45	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Crime Prevention Code	N/A
46	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Gender Equity	N/A
47	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	CALD information packs	N/A
48	29.10.21	Lawder	CSD - Women	Active Travel	N/A
49	29.10.21	Kikkert	Education and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs)	Community Space for Youth	N/A

No.	Hearing date	Asked by	Directorate/ Portfolio	Subject	Answer date
50	29.10.21	Kikkert	Education and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs)	Funding for Youth Initiatives	N/A
51	29.10.21	Kikkert	Education and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs)	Youth Access to the MOST Platform	N/A
52	29.10.21	Kikkert	Education and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs)	Youth and Social Workers	N/A
53	29.10.21	Kikkert	Education and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs)	Youth Homelessness	N/A