

2023

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

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
REPORT 8 - INQUIRY INTO ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2021-22**

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

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

July 2023

Introduction

On 11 February 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the 2 December 2020 Resolution of Establishment (clause 3) referring the Annual and Financial Reports to the relevant Standing Committee for inquiry and report by 9 April of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

The 2021-22 Annual and Financial Reports were reviewed by the relevant Standing Committees, and each Committee held hearings and reported separately.

The below Government Response addresses the recommendations which relate to the 2021-22 Annual and Financial Reports.

The following Annual and Financial Reports or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the Committee):

- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- Community Services Directorate;
- Education Directorate; and
- Canberra Institute of Technology.

Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion – Report 8 - Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-22

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE (AGREED/AGREED IN-PRINCIPLE/EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY/NOTED/NOT AGREED)
<p>Recommendation 1 That the ACT Government ensure that programs designed for delivery at Child and Family Centres are consistently and equally available at all Centre locations.</p>	<p>NOTED All Child and Family Centres aim to deliver services with consistency and equality across the Canberra community.</p> <p>Child and Family Centres also plan services based on community demand, specific local needs and in response to the demographic profile of the areas served by each centre. For example, the Belconnen centre runs a South Sudanese playgroup, whereas the Tuggeranong centre runs a Multicultural playgroup. Sometimes staffing also impacts which services can be delivered across the centres.</p> <p>The ACT government is currently working to develop a holistic network of service delivery for children and families that responds to local need and ensures services are relevant and targeted to serve the communities they are located in and support through outreach.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 That the ACT Government provide public updates on the free-meal program in schools.</p>	<p>EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY The ACT Government is committed to helping all children and young people participate in programs and activities that support their educational and wellbeing needs. That includes ensuring those in need have access to adequate nutrition.</p> <p>As part of the 2020-21 budget, the ACT Government committed \$1.462m to a trial of Meals at School at five ACT public schools by providing students with access to free breakfast and lunch for up to 120 days (three days per week throughout the school year). Implementation will be staggered from Term 3 2023 to Term 4 2024 and allow for schools to implement provision of meals over their preferred timeline.</p> <p>The five identified schools will take part in an 18-month Meals at School pilot, which will provide breakfast and lunch for all students for up to three days per week throughout the school year.</p> <p>The ACT Government will provide updates on the Meals at School program through the Education Directorate Annual Report.</p>

<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>That the ACT Government continue to invest in government schools.</p>	<p>EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY</p> <p>The ACT Government continues to invest in safe and fit-for-purpose educational infrastructure and agree it is integral to ensuring that ACT public school students continue to have access to facilities that encourage learning and belonging within inclusive school environments.</p> <p>The Education Directorate administers the annual capital works program and coordinates and manages statutory and high-risk maintenance activities in addition to providing technical support to schools for repairs and maintenance activities.</p> <p>There are three main infrastructure funding streams managed by the Education Directorate as capital works and recurrent funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Projects – incorporates the construction of new schools and major works to existing sites such as large-scale expansions or modernisations to existing schools; • Public Schools Infrastructure Renewal Program – includes improvements and upgrades to schools such as classroom renovations, the installation of new fit-outs and safety and security improvements; and • Repairs and Maintenance – supports schools in ensuring compliance with key asset obligations. Manages preventative maintenance contracts and provides response coordination for critical asset-related events.
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>That the ACT Government support the professional development of educators.</p>	<p>EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY</p> <p>The ACT Government recognises that targeted and high-quality professional learning is inextricably linked to school improvement. All ACT public schools have a professional learning plan that is closely aligned with their school improvement journey.</p> <p>Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are being implemented across and within ACT public schools. School leadership professional learning programs continue to focus on providing differentiated supports for schools to strengthen their Professional Learning Communities. This will occur through universal leadership offerings, selected initiatives, and targeted school support as well as across-school network PLC platforms.</p>

	<p>The Education Directorate provides opportunities for PLCs across school networks and within individual schools including Instructional Mentor-facilitated PLCs, SLC middle leadership forums in networks and at schools, and with targeted groups such as Literacy Champions and Inclusion Groups.</p> <p>New educators (with less than three years professional practice) to the ACT public education system are provided with a five-day New Educator Induction week followed by a three-year New Educator Support Program. The New Educator Support Program offers a three-year Professional Learning Framework with opportunities targeted to help New Educators develop their pedagogy and behaviour management, and transition from Graduate to Proficient. All Education Directorate staff are also required to complete online training modules that relate to key obligations and regulations.</p> <p>All staff have access to an online platform – HRIMS Learning – to be able to search for, and to access, both online and face-to-face training sessions. The Education Directorate have employed a category in HRIMS Learning so that teachers can search for Teacher Quality Institute accredited courses to assist them in maintaining their professional learning and registration.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 That the ACT Government, as a matter of priority, assist in the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisation.</p>	<p>EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY The ACT Government has committed to supporting the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisation under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 That the ACT Government continue to provide updates on its annual National Multicultural Festival.</p>	<p>AGREED The ACT Government will continue to provide updates on the annual National Multicultural Festival.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 That the ACT Government continue to progress its work towards ‘advanced’ Welcoming City accreditation.</p>	<p>AGREED The ACT Government will continue to provide updates on the progress of the ‘advanced’ Welcoming City accreditation.</p>

<p>Recommendation 8 That the ACT Government institute War Widows Day.</p>	<p>AGREED The Minister for Veterans and Seniors moved a motion that was passed in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 28 June 2023 to designate 19 October each year as War Widows Day in the ACT.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 That the ACT Government update the Assembly on progress with the action from the Age-Friendly City Plan of piloting a targeted campaign of local businesses to provide employment opportunities for older Canberrans.</p>	<p>AGREED The ACT Government will continue to provide updates on the progress of the Age-Friendly City Plan, including an update on progress of this specific action in due course.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 That the ACT Government update the Assembly on progress in reviewing the Seniors Card Program.</p>	<p>AGREED IN-PRINCIPLE On Tuesday 18 April 2023, the Listening Report from the review of the ACT Seniors Card Program was published on the YourSay platform, providing the community with detail on information gathered during the consultation period. As part of the ACT Government’s Commissioning for Outcomes approach for the community services sector, a collaborative workshop will be held in the coming months, with identified stakeholders, to inform the future service design and delivery options for the ACT Seniors Card Program.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 That the Minister for Seniors and Veterans liaise with the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and advise the Assembly whether the Flexible Bus Service will remain free.</p>	<p>AGREED IN-PRINCIPLE The ACT Government recognises the need for accessible transport for the most vulnerable members of the community. The ACT Government is also considering the feasibility of on-demand transport services in the ACT. Initially the ACT Government is implementing a new online booking and management system to improve the Flexible Bus Service which will be evaluated.</p> <p>There are no plans to charge fees for the Flexible Bus Service at this point in time.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12 That the ACT Government reintroduce certified Auslan courses through the Canberra Institute of Technology.</p>	<p>NOTED CIT will work with Skills Canberra to explore the viability of establishing Auslan courses. Deaf Services Australia has a Training Initiative Funding Agreement (TIFA) to deliver Auslan in the ACT.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13 That Skills Canberra include on the ACT Skills Need List:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all certificate levels of Auslan • Diploma of Interpreting (Auslan). 	<p>AGREED Skills Canberra will include these courses on the ACT Skills Needs List.</p>