



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Public
Accounts and Administration

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Inquiry into Auditor-General Reports 10/2024: Safer Families Levy and 13/2024: Invoicing and Payment for Digital Health Record Hosting Services

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ACT
Government

ACT Government Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration Inquiry into Auditor-General Performance Audit Reports

10/2024: Safer Families Levy

Health and Community Services Directorate

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10/2024: Safer Families Levy

Background

The Safer Families Levy (the Levy) was introduced on 1 July 2016 to both raise awareness of family violence in the ACT community and to establish community supports to address domestic and family violence. From 2021-22, the ACT Government increased the Levy by \$5 per year over 4 years, taking the Levy to \$60 per household in 2025-26. The ACT Government will be increasing the Levy to \$70 per household in 2026-27. Over time, the use of the Levy has expanded and evolved in response to community need. For example, funding raised through the Levy now supports initiatives focused on addressing sexual violence, alongside its original purpose.

Importantly, the Levy only partially funds the ACT Government's investment in preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence. As outlined in the 2025-26 Budget, the ACT Government is investing a total of \$137 million over 4 years towards these efforts. Of this total, the Levy contributes approximately \$54 million.

In July 2023, the ACT Auditor-General commenced a performance audit on the Levy seeking to assess the effectiveness of the management of the Levy in funding activities to address domestic and family violence. The audit considered:

- how expenditure of the Levy is planned, monitored and reported;
- whether the expenditure is directed for the purposes provided for in the Levy's policy intent; and
- how the effectiveness of initiatives funded by the Levy is monitored and evaluated.

On 22 November 2024, the ACT Auditor-General released its Performance Audit Report – Safer Families Levy – Report No 10/2024 (the Report). The Report found that since its inception, all funds from the Levy have gone towards addressing domestic, family and sexual violence. It also found decisions to fund initiatives have been informed by sufficient research and assessment of community need and expected benefits at the initiative level.

The Report, however, also identified opportunities to strengthen management of the Levy. It made 4 recommendations to improve the planning, development, performance monitoring and public reporting on the administration of the Levy and the initiatives it funds. The ACT Government responded to the audit report in March 2025 and agreed to all recommendations. Since that time, the ACT Government has progressed implementation of the recommendations.

Implementation of Audit Report Recommendations

The ACT Government has progressed work to implement each of the four recommendations made in the Report.

Recommendation 1: ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy and Plan

To promote transparency and accountability in the funding of domestic and family violence initiatives through the Safer Families Levy, the Community Services Directorate should, as part of designing and implementing the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy and Plan work with other ACT Government agencies to:

- a. establish clear and easily accessible communication products that regularly update the community on initiatives funded through the levy, including their purpose and intended outcomes;*
- b. develop principles for funding initiatives under the levy and clearly communicate to the community services sector and broader community how these principles are being implemented; and*
- c. establish clearly documented feedback mechanisms for the community services sector and broader community to inform the planning and design of initiatives funded through the levy.*

Recommendation 1: Implementation update

The ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy

The ACT Government is committed to developing the Strategy to provide a whole of government, whole of community approach to preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence over the next 10 years. The ACT Government is currently undertaking a phased approach to consultation and development of the Strategy. This approach aims to centre victim-survivors, strengthen relationships with sector partners, and engage directorates to build consensus on deliverable actions.

The ACT Government is partnering with Women's Health Matters, an ACT community organisation, to pilot an intersectional and sustainable engagement model for consulting with adult victim-survivors on initiatives aimed at addressing domestic, family and sexual violence – the Victim Survivor Voices Project. Sisters in Spirit Aboriginal Corporation has also been funded to partner with Women's Health Matters on the Victim Survivor Voices project to uplift the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence and ensure First Nation's people's voices are strongly represented in the Victim Survivor Voices project consultations. In March 2025 the Victim Survivor Voices project began consultations with victim-survivors on the Strategy. This consultation will support centring of victim-survivors in the Strategy and its action plans.

In April 2025 the ACT Government engaged Impact Co., a values-based consultancy, to facilitate stakeholder engagement to support the development of the Strategy, the accompanying First Action Plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework. Formal consultation commenced in June 2025, engaging the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence sector, intersecting service sectors and stakeholders across government. This phase of engagement focuses on co-developing a shared vision, principles, and goals for the Strategy, and gathering insights on key priority areas. A stakeholder-validated Listening Report summarising the outcomes of this engagement will be provided. Further consultation is planned in 2025 to engage stakeholders on short-term actions to inform development of the First Action Plan.

Consultation is expected to conclude in late 2025, to support release of the Strategy in mid-2026.

Addressing Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Factsheet

The ACT Government published the [Addressing Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Budget Factsheet 2025-2026 \(Appendix A\)](#) on 24 June 2025. The factsheet articulates the ACT Government's investment in preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence by detailing newly funded initiatives in the 2025-26 Budget as well as continuing initiatives funded in previous budgets. The factsheet provides a description of each initiative and explains how the Safer Families Levy is allocated in line with the new Safer Families Levy Principles. The factsheet can be read alongside 'Appendix H – Safer Families' in the 2025-26 Budget Outlook, which provides more detailed financial information on what is funded through each initiative. Feedback from the domestic, family and sexual violence sector indicates the factsheet has been useful in providing more transparent information on funding allocated to address domestic, family and sexual violence. The ACT Government is committed to releasing a similar factsheet annually in the context of each ACT Budget.

The Safer Families Levy Principles

The ACT Government has developed the [Safer Families Levy Principles](#) (the Principles) in consultation with key community sector organisations to govern Levy expenditure. From the 2025-26 Budget onwards, all new initiatives funded from the Levy must align with the Principles. The 7 Principles are:

- a. **Principle 1:** The purpose of the Levy is to prevent, reduce and respond to all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- b. **Principle 2:** The Levy provides only a partial offset to the funding required for domestic, family and sexual violence prevention, responses and reform.
- c. **Principle 3:** The allocation of funding under the Levy aligns with the priorities and needs identified in the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan) including its underpinning action plans and outcomes framework, and any current or future ACT strategies or plans addressing domestic, family and sexual violence.
- d. **Principle 4:** The Levy supports frontline initiatives and staff capability across community and government sectors to address domestic, family and sexual violence.
- e. **Principle 5:** The Levy allocates a meaningful proportion of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led programs, particularly Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic, family and sexual violence.
- f. **Principle 6:** The Levy needs to support new initiatives in response to existing system gaps and emerging need in the ACT community.
- g. **Principle 7:** There will be clear and transparent reporting on the allocation of the Safer Families Levy through the ACT Budget and annual Ministerial Statement in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Further detail and explanation of the Principles can be found in Appendix B. The Principles are published on the ACT Government website and the 2025-26 Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Budget Factsheet details how each new initiative aligns with the Principles.

Safer Families Ministerial Statement

The ACT Government has combined the Safer Families Ministerial Statement and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Ministerial Statement, delivered annually in the Legislative Assembly, into a single statement providing an annual update on progress to address domestic, family and sexual violence. On 24 June, the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence delivered the [Statement](#) for 2025. To ensure the Statement is easily accessible to the community, alongside it being made publicly available on Hansard, the Health and Community Services Directorate circulated a copy directly to community stakeholders.

Recommendation 2: Performance monitoring

The Community Services Directorate should:

- a. establish a common evaluation framework for initiatives funded through the Safer Families Levy that takes account of the need to evaluate the impact of each initiative as well as its impact across the suite of Safer Families initiatives within the Safer Families package; and*
- b. establish practices for regularly reporting on the performance of Safer Families initiatives to the Coordinator-General of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.*

Recommendation 2: Implementation update

A monitoring and evaluation framework (the Framework) is being developed alongside the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy. The Framework will establish a consistent approach to monitoring, reporting and evaluating reforms and initiatives to address domestic, family and sexual violence, including those funded by the Levy. The Framework will include monitoring and evaluation at a systems level and at a program/initiative level to ensure progress and impact is measured. Regular performance reporting to the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Coordinator-General will guide advice to government for future investment.

Recommendation 3: Biennial reporting by the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review

The Community Services Directorate should, as part of future biennial reports from the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Coordinator, establish processes to monitor and report on the implementation of the recommendations of past reports.

Recommendation 3: Implementation update

The ACT Government will table an additional Ministerial Statement responding to future biennial reports from the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Coordinator. The Ministerial Statement will also provide an update on the implementation of recommendations in past reports. The next Domestic and Family Violence Review biennial report is being prepared and is due to the Minister on 31 October 2025. It will include a status update on recommendations made in the previous 2023 biennial report. The biennial report is anticipated to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in early 2026.

Recommendation 4: Safer Families Levy public reporting

The Community Services Directorate should, in cooperation with the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and in consultation with the community services sector:

- c. review the current approach to financial reporting of initiatives funded through the Safer Families Levy to ensure there is comparable and informative reporting of how funds raised from the Levy are used; and*
- d. in conjunction with Recommendation 2(b), establish public performance reporting processes that show the planned and actual performance of initiatives along with analysis and explanation of any significant variations.*

Recommendation 4: Implementation update

The ACT Government has reviewed the approach to financial and performance reporting processes for initiatives funded from the Levy. From the 2025-26 Budget onwards, the ACT Government has committed to releasing an Addressing Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Factsheet, as outlined above. The factsheet provides a description of each initiative and explains how the Safer Families Levy is allocated in line with the Safer Families Levy Principles. The 2025-26 Factsheet ([Appendix A](#)) can be read alongside 'Appendix H – Safer Families' in the 2025-26 Budget Outlook, which provides more detailed financial information on what is funded through each initiative. The ACT Government will also explore providing additional information about initiatives funded from the Levy as part of regular ACT Rates notices sent to the community.

The monitoring and evaluation framework being developed as part of the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy will provide progress updates of initiatives against the Strategy. Alongside Annual Reports and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Ministerial Statement, this will provide clear and transparent reporting on the effectiveness of initiatives funded from Levy.