QON No. 24

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT

Inquiry into the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Jo Clay MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs

Reference: City and Environment Directorate

Hearing: 18 May 2026
In relation to: Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Public and community housing stock - needs and costs
Question received: 25 May 2026
Answer Due: 9 June 2026

Chart 48 on p 68 of the Eslake report sets out the Commonwealth Grants Commission's 'level of service' provision rations for the ACT.

1. The chart shows that the ACT spends more than the national average. What capital and services are covered in that category of 'housing'?
2. The chart shows that the ACT spends less than the national average on welfare. What capital and services are covered in that category of 'welfare'?
3. Are ACT costs high compared to other states and territories because land and construction costs are high, or because we are building more homes per capita, for some other reason?
4. How does the ACT's public housing stock per capita compare with other states?
5. How does the ACT's community housing stock per capita compare with other states?
6. How does the ACT's public and community housing stock compare with community need in the context of a waitlist of around 3,500 households and increasing homelessness?

Ms Yvette Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. The Eslake report correctly notes that service provision ratios are based on the Commonwealth Grants Commission's (CGC) assessments of how much the ACT would need to spend to deliver the average level of service.

   The Commission's assessments of 'average level of service' are based on additional criteria, such as socio-economic and regionality factors. The weighting of these factors results in the Commission assessing the ACT's expenditure needs as lower than actual expenditure in almost all expense assessment categories and lowers GST allocations to the ACT.

   The Commission's Housing 'average level of service' covers state and territory recurrent expenses on social housing services, housing assistance for people in private dwellings and grants to first homeowners. It does not account for capital expenditures.

   State and territory gross capital investment, including expenditure related to the delivery of social housing is included in the CGC's investment assessment. The investment assessment covers state and territory gross investment. It includes all investment by the general government sector as well as by housing and public transport public non-financial corporations.

   The Housing component of the investment assessment includes an evaluation of land and construction costs. Housing investment needs for a state or territory are assessed based on population and costs of social housing construction and land costs.

2. The assessment of the 'average level of service' for Welfare considers state and territory recurrent expenses for services for families and children, low-income households, disability services, and other programs to mitigate social exclusion. The assessment considers recurrent expenses on child protection and family services, state expenses relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), concessions, homelessness services, and other welfare.

   The Welfare assessment does not include capital expenditure. State and Territory gross capital investment is included in the CGC's investment assessment, this includes welfare-related investments.

3. The housing assessment covers state and territory recurrent expense and does not cover capital costs of building social housing such as land and construction costs.

   The major drivers of the housing assessment are socio-demographic composition (i.e., Indigenous status and socio-economic status) and remoteness or urban characteristics. The CGC methods assume that these drivers determine states' relative housing expense needs.

   The ACT is assessed to have lower spending needs, because of the ACT's classification as a major city with no 'remote' areas and relatively low levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

   The CGC's investment assessment considers capital expenditure costs. As outlined in the response to question 1., this includes an evaluation of input costs and socio-economic profiles. GST revenue is redistributed away from the ACT in the Housing component of the investment assessment.

Detail on the Commission's assessment by expenditure category are available on the CGC website: [2025 Methodology Review | Commonwealth Grants Commission].

The data underpinning the Chart 48 on p 68 of the Eslake report is available on the CGC website: [Tables, charts and supporting data | Commonwealth Grants Commission].

4. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Census of Population and Housing provides the most authoritative snapshot on population figures necessary to determine a per capita comparison across states. As such, the most accurate calculation occurs at Census intervals, the latest being 2021. Calculating proportional estimates in intercensal periods is less definitive as the total population is subject to change.

   The Report on Government Services (RoGS) provides the most appropriate basis for comparing public and community housing across jurisdictions. Using RoGS data aligned to the 2021 Census period allows for the most accurate between states.

   To this end, the following table provides the amount of housing type per 10,000 residents based on 2021 Census and ROGS data.

State/Territory	Public housing	State-Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing	Community housing	Indigenous community housing
NSW	119.5	5.6	65.8	4.5
VIC	97.4	-	22.9	2.6
QLD	99.1	6.1	21.7	9.9
WA	115.6	-	29.0	9.8
SA	176.8	7.6	68.6	3.8
TAS	123.4	3.9	123.2	1.6
ACT	239.5	-	21.4	-
NT	197.7	215.8	19.2	72.3

5. Refer answer to question 4.

6. While the table above illustrates the ACT has higher public housing stock per capita than other states and territories, the public housing waitlist does indicate there is unmet demand. The ACT Government is committed to delivering 5,000 additional public, community, and affordable rental dwellings in Canberra by the end of 2030, which includes growing the Housing ACT-owned portfolio to 13,200 dwellings.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT.

Signature: Date: 09/07/25

Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, Ms Yvette Berry MLA