

**Opening Statement to the  
Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025  
by Rebecca Vassarotti MLA,  
Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services**

**2024**

- As the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, I am proud of the ACT Government's commitment to reducing homelessness in the ACT.
- Over the past year, cost-of-living pressures, and the ACT's growing population, have continued to place pressure on homelessness services as they work tirelessly to support Canberrans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- With more people in need than ever before, and with increasing complexity, it is critical to ensure services have the funding and support they need to respond effectively.
- The ACT Government has committed over \$140 million in total funding over the next four years for the specialist homelessness sector. This demonstrates the ongoing commitment to increase funding for the homelessness sector.
- The Government's investment has seen the rate of homelessness in the ACT continue to decline, decreasing from 48.7 per 10,000 in 2011 which was the second highest nationally, to 39.1 per 10,000 in 2021, which was the second lowest nationally. (Source 2021 Census).
- In the 2024-25 Budget, the Government committed to an additional \$6.5 million in new funding initiatives. This new funding addresses areas of need in the system, with targeted funding for priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The \$6.5 million in further funding, includes:
  - \$3.5 million over four years, to support the Youth Foyer.
  - \$660,000 over two years to support community inclusion at Oaks Estate.
  - \$300,000 for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations providing specialist homelessness services
  - \$540,000 to support the transition of the central intake service to a new provider
  - \$856,000 in hotel brokerage funding to support the central intake service and the domestic violence crisis service
  - \$671,000 to support the ongoing sustainability of funding to the sector.
- The total investment includes the PaGA commitment of \$18 million committed over 4 years .
  - This funding was used to expand specialist homelessness capacity through implementing new funding initiatives to both meet the increased demand for service provision and allow the sector to

continue their vital work in an environment of increased cost pressures.

<b>19/20 (\$'000)</b>	<b>20/21 (\$'000)</b>	<b>21/22 (\$'000)</b>	<b>22/23 (\$'000)</b>	<b>23/24 (\$'000)</b>	<b>24/25 (\$'000)</b>
\$24,441	\$26,914	\$33,366	\$35,698	\$36,042	\$36,645

- The Youth Foyer is a pro-active initiative based on Advantage Thinking (strength-based approach) that has been shown to break the cycle of homelessness. The Foyer provides stable housing and supports young people to engage with education and employment, connect with community and plan for their future. With the Foyer in place, the ACT Government is working to reduce the number of young people who go on to engage with other homelessness services.
- This additional investment draws on the findings of the commissioning engagement process held with the homelessness sector over the past few years to ensure we deliver a service system that is strong, sustainable and offers responsive accommodation pathways for Canberrans who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- The Government has seen more people applying for public housing than ever before and it is working hard to provide a home to Canberrans in need.
- Throughout the 2023-24 financial year, of all new allocations to public housing, 99.6 per cent were to those in greatest need. This includes those experiencing domestic and family violence and those who are experiencing homelessness.
- During the 2023-24 financial year there were 459 new allocations to public housing and 266 transfers between properties.
- 76 of the 459 new housing tenancies were households that identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- As more applicants are housed (who have demonstrated urgent, exceptional and critical needs) there has been a reduction in the Priority Housing Register (79 in 2023-24 compared to 137 in 2022-23).
- During the 2023-24 financial year Housing ACT also connected with tenants with over 10,000 client service visits and other community-based engagement such as community BBQs and meeting with the Tenant Consultative Group.