

2025

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

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

ACT Auditor-General's Report No.10 of 2024

Safer Families Levy

Government Response

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Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the ACT Auditor General's performance audit Report No. 10/2024 on the Safer Families Levy (the Report). On 22 November 2024, the Report was presented to the Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly, for out of session circulation to members.

The Report considered whether the Safer Families Levy (the Levy) is being managed effectively to address domestic and family violence (DFV). This included consideration of whether funding received through the Levy is being spent appropriately and in accordance with the policy objectives and intent of the Levy. In doing so, the ACT Audit Office considered processes established by the ACT Government to:

- recommend the funding of initiatives under the Levy; and
- monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes of initiatives funded under the Levy.

The Report has identified and made 4 recommendations in relation to the management of the Levy. The ACT Government agrees to all 4 recommendations. The Government's response to each recommendation is provided below.

Delivering the Report's recommendations will contribute to improved management of and increased public information about expenditure of the Levy, promoting transparency and accountability.

ACT Government Response to the ACT Auditor General's Performance Audit Report: Safer Families Levy

ACT Government Response to the Performance Audit: Safer Families Levy.

Recommendation	ACT Government Response	
<u>Recommendation 1: ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy and Plan</u> 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.	Agree	The ACT Government agrees with recommendation 1, to promote transparency and accountability in Levy funded initiatives, as part of designing and implementing the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy (Strategy). The ACT Government is committed to developing a 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. In March and April 2024, a draft Strategy was released for public consultation. While stakeholders expressed strong support for the Strategy's development, there were also calls for more in-depth consultation with victim-survivors and the domestic, family and sexual violence specialist services sector. The ACT Government will progress the development of the Strategy in close collaboration with victim-survivors and community stakeholders throughout 2025. In March 2025, the ACT Government, in consultation with sector stakeholders, developed 7 principles to provide guidance and governance on expenditure of funds raised through the Levy. The Safer Families Levy Principles are as follows: 1. The purpose of the Levy is to prevent, reduce, and respond to all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence. 2. The Levy provides only a partial offset to the funding required for domestic, family and sexual violence prevention, responses and reform. 3. The allocation of funding under the Levy aligns with the priorities and needs identified in the <i>National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032</i> including its underpinning action plans and outcomes framework, and any current or future ACT Strategies or plans addressing domestic, family and sexual violence. 4. The Levy supports frontline initiatives and staff capability across

		community and government sectors to address domestic, family and sexual violence. 5. The Levy allocates a meaningful proportion of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led programs, particularly Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic, family and sexual violence. 6. The Levy needs to support new initiatives in response to existing system gaps and emerging need in the ACT community. 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. The Safer Families Levy Principles support the intent of the Levy, to provide a source of funding to implement long-term system reforms and innovative frontline initiatives to address domestic, family and sexual violence in the ACT. The Safer Families Levy Principles will be used by Government to guide decision making during the Budget process. There will be clear communications to the community services sector on the final Safer Families Levy Principles, how they will be used by Government and how the community sector can use the Principles to inform their Submissions to Government during the Community Budget Consultation process. In accordance with recommendation 1(a), the ACT Government will establish clear and easily accessible communication products to update the community on the new Levy Principles and on funded initiatives. As part of implementing this recommendation, the ACT Government will release a Safer Families Levy information sheet in the context of the ACT Budget, commencing from 2025-26. The information sheet will clearly articulate the ACT Government's investment in responding and preventing domestic, family and sexual violence, including how Levy funding is used and a description of each initiative's purpose and intended outcomes. As the Report notes, the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic
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		Violence delivers the Safer Families Ministerial Statement and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Ministerial Statement annually in the ACT Legislative Assembly to provide updates on domestic, family and sexual violence reform. These statements will be combined in future to deliver one comprehensive Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Ministerial Statement annually in the ACT Legislative Assembly. This will allow for clearer, more detailed, coordinated and transparent reporting. The combined annual Statement will regularly update the community by including information on the implementation of domestic, family and sexual violence initiatives, including those funded through the Levy. To ensure the Statement is easily accessible to the community, alongside it being made publicly available on Hansard, the Community Services Directorate will circulate a copy directly to community stakeholders, through existing channels.
<u>Recommendation 2: Performance monitoring</u> 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.	Agree	The ACT Government agrees to this recommendation. A monitoring and evaluation framework (the framework) will be developed alongside the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy and in consultation with stakeholders. The framework will establish a consistent approach to how the ACT Government monitors, reports and evaluates ACT Government 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. Meaningful data and understanding of the effectiveness of programs/initiatives will form part of regular performance reporting to the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Coordinator-General to guide advice to government for future investment. The framework will complement the <i>National Outcomes Framework 2023-32</i> under the <i>National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32</i>.

<u>Recommendation 3: Biennial reporting by the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review</u> 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.	Agree	The ACT Government agrees that processes to monitor and report on the implementation of recommendations of past biennial reports should be established to strengthen accountability. To implement recommendation 3, the ACT Government will respond to future biennial reports from the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Coordinator by tabling a Ministerial Statement in the ACT Legislative Assembly. The Ministerial Statement will provide an update on the implementation of recommendations in past reports. The Community Services Directorate will also explore possible legislative reform to amend the <i>Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986</i> to include this as a requirement. In addition, future biennial reports will include a progress/status update on recommendations from past biennial reports.
<u>Recommendation 4: Safer Families Levy public reporting</u> The Community Services Directorate should, in cooperation with the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and in consultation with the community services sector: a) 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 b) 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.	Agree	The ACT Government agrees with this recommendation and will review the reporting of how Levy funds are used is comparable and informative. As mentioned in response to recommendation 1, the ACT Government will release an information sheet in the context of the ACT Budget, commencing from 2025-26, which clearly articulates the ACT Government's investment in domestic, family and sexual violence initiatives, including how Levy funding is used. The Government will also explore providing additional information about initiatives funded from the Levy as part of regular ACT Rates notices sent to the community. Alongside annual reporting, ACT Budget papers, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Ministerial Statement and Annual Reports, the monitoring and evaluation framework which will be developed as part of the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy will address planned and actual performance reporting of initiatives against the Strategy.