



**Legislative Assembly for the  
Australian Capital Territory**

Standing Committee on Education and  
Community Inclusion

# **Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022–2023**

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory  
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

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Approved for publication

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Report 10  
10th Assembly  
April 2024



# About the committee

## Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion on 2 December 2020.

The committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Disability
- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- LGBTIQ+
- Multicultural Affairs
- Seniors
- Skills
- Sport and Recreation
- Veterans
- Women (including the Office for Women)
- Youth Affairs

You can read the full establishing resolution [on our website](#).

## Committee members

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Chair

Miss Laura Nuttall MLA, Deputy Chair (from 5 December 2023)

Mr Johnathan Davis MLA, Deputy Chair (to 12 November 2023)

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

## Secretariat

Katie Langham, Committee Secretary

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## About this inquiry

Clause 3 of the Committee establishing resolution refers all calendar and financial year 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*.

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# Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Long form
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIS	Australian Institute of Sport
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CSD	Community Services Directorate
Education	Education Directorate
EPIC	Exhibition Park in Canberra
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
I-Day	International Day of People with Disability
ISRP	Integrated Service Response Program
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
mHub	Multicultural Hub Canberra
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSW	New South Wales
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
UC	University of Canberra
UC Act	<i>University of Canberra Act 1989</i>
VET	Vocational education and training

# Recommendations

## Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue the trial of disability inclusion coaches and provide the committee a copy of any evaluation of the initiative.

## Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue construction of a second college for Gungahlin and include the following information in its Annual Report until construction is complete:

- Progress of construction, including any delays to completion; and
- Capacity levels at the existing Gungahlin College campus.

## Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the ACT Government expedite the trial of automatic opening and closing gates at ACT public schools and report on the outcomes of the trial in its Annual Report.

## Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the ACT Government review residency criteria with the view to expand eligibility for the Future of Education Equity Fund.

## Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Palestinian and Israeli communities in Canberra, and:

- review which ACT organisations and community centres receive funding under the Commonwealth Government social cohesion package to identify potential funding gaps;
- report back to the committee on the outcome of this review.

## Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further information to multicultural communities about the redevelopment of the Exhibition Park in Canberra precinct.

## Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the ACT Government, in consultation with Women's Health Matters and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, develop 'perceptions of safety' measures that reflect the experience of women in the ACT.

## Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to develop data metrics and report on the outcomes of this work in its Annual Report.

## Recommendation 9



The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further funding to the Integrated Service Response Program.

#### **Recommendation 10**

The committee recommends that the ACT Government consult with the ACT office of Australian War Widows Inc. on how best to commemorate War Widows Day in the future.

#### **Recommendation 11**

The committee recommends that, during the pilot of the new Seniors Card Program, the ACT Government work with the Supplier to better integrate the ACT Seniors Card with the MyWay system, and report on actions taken in its annual report.

#### **Recommendation 12**

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support and expand fee-free TAFE and report back to the committee on areas of unmet demand following completion of the first tranche of the three-year agreement.



# 1. Introduction

## Presentation of 2022–23 annual and financial reports

- 1.1. Annual and financial reports for the Territory were tabled on 24 October 2023 in the ACT Legislative Assembly.<sup>1</sup> A collated list of annual and financial reports is available [online](#).<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2. During its inquiry, the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the committee) examined all or part of the annual and financial reports for 2022–23 for the public sector agencies listed at Table 1.
- 1.3. The committee resolved to request the attendance of representatives from the University of Canberra. The university's annual report was presented in the Assembly in accordance with section 36 of the *University of Canberra Act 1989*.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1: Public entities examined during the inquiry

Entity	Portfolio responsibility
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	The ACT Government's central agency. Responsible for provision of strategic advice and support to the Chief Minister, the Directorate's Ministers and the Cabinet on policy, economic and financial matters, service delivery, whole of government issues and intergovernmental relations.
Community Services Directorate	Responsible for a wide range of human services functions in the ACT, including multicultural and community affairs; children and child development; youth and family support services and policy; therapy services; disability policy and services; homelessness; and community services.
Education Directorate	Responsible for the delivery of early childhood education and public primary, high school, and college education in the ACT. Contributes to the maintenance of standards in non-government schools and home education via accreditation and certification of senior secondary courses.
Major Projects Canberra	Responsible for managing all aspects of major projects invested in by the ACT Government. Established on 1 July 2019 to lead the procurement and delivery of the Territory's infrastructure program.
Canberra Institute of Technology	The largest publicly funded registered training organisation in the ACT, responsible for the delivery of vocational education and training.
University of Canberra	Responsible for providing tertiary education to domestic and international students across a wide variety of disciplines and provides facilities for post graduate study and research.

<sup>1</sup> ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 101, 24 October 2023, p 1466.

<sup>2</sup> CMTEDD, *Annual Reports*, 24 October 2023, [https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open\\_government/report/annual-reports](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/report/annual-reports) (accessed 1 December 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Legislative Assembly for the ACT, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 94, 31 August 2023, p 1382.

## Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.4. The committee held public hearings on 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23 and 24 November 2023. Witnesses who appeared before the committee are listed at Appendix A. Transcripts and footage from the hearings are available on the Legislative Assembly website.

## Questions taken on notice and Questions on notice

- 1.5. A total of 48 questions were lodged during the inquiry, as follows:
- 30 questions were taken on notice by Ministers and statutory office holders during the hearings.
  - 18 questions on notice were submitted by members of the committee and visiting Members of the Assembly following the hearings.
- 1.6. A list of questions (including the date the question was asked, the intended recipient, and the subject of the question) is set out in Appendix B. Also included is the date on which a response was received.
- 1.7. Responses to questions on notice and questions taken on notice are also available on the committee's website.
- 1.8. A breakdown of witnesses who appeared at the public hearings by gender identity is given at Appendix C.

## 2. Education Directorate

- 2.1. Education Directorate (Education) officials appeared on two days of public hearings for this inquiry.

### Early Childhood Development

#### Matters considered

- 2.2. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the committee on 13 November 2023, in her capacity as Minister for Early Childhood Development. The Minister was accompanied by representatives from Education and the Community Services Directorate. The following matters were considered:
- a) progress toward implementing free universal access to quality early childhood education for three-year-old children in the ACT from 2024;<sup>4</sup>
  - b) recruitment and retention of early educators in the ACT;<sup>5</sup>
  - c) pay and conditions for early educators in the ACT;<sup>6</sup>
  - d) the *Early Childhood Education Amendment Bill 2023*; <sup>7</sup> and
  - e) the Child Development Service.<sup>8</sup>

### Education and Youth Affairs

#### Matters considered

- 2.3. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the committee on 16 November 2023, in her capacity as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. The following matters were considered:
- a) education infrastructure projects in Gungahlin, including delivery of Shirley Smith High School and planning for a second college in Gungahlin;<sup>9</sup>
  - b) attraction and retention of teachers in the ACT, including the *Attraction and Retention Plan*;<sup>10</sup>
  - c) teacher staffing numbers and separations;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2023, pp 2–14.

<sup>5</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2023, pp 20–26.

<sup>6</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2023, pp 22–26.

<sup>7</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2023, pp 15–20.

<sup>8</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2023, pp 14–15.

<sup>9</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 59–61.

<sup>10</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 61–65.

<sup>11</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 65–68, 70.

- d) progress against the ACT Government commitment to hire more than 400 teachers and support staff for ACT public schools over the term of the government;<sup>12</sup>
- e) preschool and kindergarten enrolment numbers;<sup>13</sup>
- f) an update on actions taken in response to the Margaret Hendry School Special Purpose Review;<sup>14</sup>
- g) monitoring of school violence incidents;<sup>15</sup>
- h) the *Interim Suspension, Transfer or Exclusion of a Student in ACT Public Schools Policy 2023*;<sup>16</sup>
- i) progress against the Phased Implementation of Inclusive Education Coaches 2023–24 Budget item;<sup>17</sup>
- j) the *Inquiry into literacy and numeracy in ACT public schools*;<sup>18</sup>
- k) literacy champions;<sup>19</sup>
- l) school fences and public access to school grounds outside school hours;<sup>20</sup>
- m) the Future of Education Equity Fund;<sup>21</sup> and
- n) delays to the delivery of the Whitlam school.<sup>22</sup>

## Key issues

### Disability inclusion coaches

- 2.4. Under the *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024–2034*, the ACT Government committed to establishing school-based inclusion coaches to provide ‘coaching and support to staff in schools to strengthen inclusive education practice.’ The coaches will work with allied health and supports in Education, including a Senior Inclusion Coach.<sup>23</sup>
- 2.5. Nine million dollars was provided in the 2023–24 ACT Budget to engage eight inclusion coaches, with positions advertised on 16 November 2023. The committee heard successful

<sup>12</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 68–69

<sup>13</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 70–71.

<sup>14</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 71–73, 76–77.

<sup>15</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 73.

<sup>16</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 74–76.

<sup>17</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 77–79.

<sup>18</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 79–80.

<sup>19</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 80–81.

<sup>20</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 81–83.

<sup>21</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 84–85.

<sup>22</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 85–87.

<sup>23</sup> ACT Education Directorate, *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools First Action Plan 2024–2026*, p 8, [https://www.education.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/2338428/First-action-plan.PDF](https://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2338428/First-action-plan.PDF) (accessed 19 February 2024).

candidates will have expertise in working with children and young people with disability as well as an ability uplift capability and support staff across schools.<sup>24</sup>

- 2.6. The inclusion coach model will be piloted in the Tuggeranong school network in 2024 before expanding to other schools. Ms Deb Efthymiades, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform outlined the reasons for the trial location during her appearance before the committee:

Tuggeranong actually has the highest proportion of students with disability...this is notionally, a pilot, or a model like “test, try, learn” —there is some excellent practice in some Tuggeranong schools that we are seeking to build upon.

- 2.7. Evaluation of the trial in the Tuggeranong school network would support enhancements to the program when it is expanded across public schools in the ACT.

### Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue the trial of disability inclusion coaches and provide the committee a copy of any evaluation of the initiative.

## School infrastructure

- 2.8. ACT school infrastructure continues to be an area of focus for the committee, with its recent *Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT* examining the quality and capacity of ACT public schools, as well as community access to school facilities.<sup>25</sup> These themes also arose during public hearings for this inquiry.

### Gungahlin capacity increases

- 2.9. Education officials advised the committee of recent school infrastructure updates in Gungahlin, noting construction of the Shirley Smith School and upgrades to the Margaret Hendry School are now complete. Construction of a new high school at north Gungahlin is also underway, with the school expected to open in 2025.<sup>26</sup>
- 2.10. The Minister spoke to the ongoing capacity increases at Gungahlin College, advising four transportable classrooms had been delivered, providing eight additional learning spaces.<sup>27</sup> Engagement is occurring with the school community and stakeholders on additional socialising and study spaces to support the campus while design work is completed for a second college in Gungahlin.

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<sup>24</sup> Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 78; Ms Deb Efthymiades, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform, ACT Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 78–79.

<sup>25</sup> Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, *Report 9: Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT*.

<sup>26</sup> Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 59.

<sup>27</sup> Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 59.

- 2.11. In the 2023–24 ACT Budget, the government announced \$94,000 over four years to deliver a second college in Gungahlin, with completion due by the end of the decade.<sup>28</sup> The second college will be located on land already owned by the Education Directorate, adjacent to the Gold Creek senior school campus in Nicholls, and will provide an initial capacity for up to 800 students.<sup>29</sup>
- 2.12. Officials advised the committee that existing temporary infrastructure would be sufficient to meet predicted enrolment growth at the existing campus over the short term:
- We are continuing to anticipate growth; however, that growth has not been materialising. It has been incredibly stable. The extra relocatables and the social spaces and learning spaces that have gone in there will definitely see us through at least the next few years.<sup>30</sup>
- 2.13. The committee is encouraged by the work to progress construction on a second college and is of the view it will significantly address capacity concerns at the existing Gungahlin College campus. However, while Gungahlin College may continue to experience overcrowding until construction of the new school is complete, capacity levels should continue to be monitored to ensure transportable infrastructure sufficiently addresses enrolment growth throughout this period.

## Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue construction of a second college for Gungahlin and include the following information in its Annual Report until construction is complete:

- Progress of construction, including any delays to completion; and
- Capacity levels at the existing Gungahlin College campus.

## School fencing

- 2.14. During its hearing on 16 November 2023, the committee heard of community concerns regarding the installation of fencing at ACT public schools, and the limitations imposed on community access and use outside of school hours.
- 2.15. The Minister for Education and Youth Affairs advised fencing at ACT public schools serves multiple purposes, including enhancing the safety of students and protecting school infrastructure.<sup>31</sup>
- 2.16. Officials acknowledged the importance of enabling continued use of school facilities by the community and referred to a current pilot program is trialling PIN pad gate access at

<sup>28</sup> Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, [ACT Budget Statements F: Education Directorate](#), p 24.

<sup>29</sup> Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 60.

<sup>30</sup> Ms Deb Efthymiades, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform, ACT Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 60–61.

<sup>31</sup> Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 6 November 2023, p 81.



Charles Weston School. Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Support advised the pilot is set to expand:

...we have reached an agreement with [Aranda Primary School], as part of the installation of a school fence there, that there will be a number of community access points, with timed gates. Effectively, they can be programmed by the school to open and close at certain hours.<sup>32</sup>

- 2.17. The committee recognises the benefits fencing at schools provides for student safety and asset protection, and the need to balance these against the importance of maintaining community access and use of school infrastructure outside school hours. The trial of automated school gates is an encouraging step toward achieving this balance.

### Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the ACT Government expedite the trial of automatic opening and closing gates at ACT public schools and report on the outcomes of the trial in its Annual Report.

## Future of Education Equity Fund

- 2.18. The Future of Education Equity Fund was established in the 2021–22 ACT Budget with \$11.46 million to provide a one-off annual payment to eligible families with school-aged children living in the ACT. The payment helps to meet the cost of essential education expenses such as uniforms, excursions, activities, sporting equipment and music lessons.<sup>33</sup> Payment amounts are determined based on the student’s level of schooling, with families entitled to:
- \$400 for preschool students;
  - \$500 for primary school students; and
  - \$750 for high school and college students.
- 2.19. The committee heard that \$2.8 million had been provided in 2023, with ‘2,322 families and 4,777 students’ having received support through the fund.<sup>34</sup>
- 2.20. The Minister advised Education would undertake a review of how the fund has been used and seek community feedback over the next year to ensure it continues to meet the needs of families in the ACT.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 82.

<sup>33</sup> Eligibility is determined based on residency, enrolment status for the student, parental and financial responsibility for the student, and a means test. For further information about eligibility criteria, visit <https://www.education.act.gov.au/support-for-our-students/financial-and-resource-assistance-for-families> (accessed 19 February 2024).

<sup>34</sup> Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 84.

<sup>35</sup> Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 84.

- 2.21. Officials spoke to the eligibility criteria for the fund, noting most applicants who did not receive a payment did not meet the residency eligibility criteria. The committee was advised those that do not meet eligibility criteria may be able to access other supports through their schools or other community organisations.<sup>36</sup>
- 2.22. From the evidence provided to the committee, it is unclear whether ACT students who live in New South Wales (NSW) can access support under the fund.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends that the ACT Government review residency criteria with the view to expand eligibility for the Future of Education Equity Fund.

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<sup>36</sup> Ms Angela Spence, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery, ACT Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, p 85.

### 3. Community Services Directorate

- 3.1. Community Services Directorate (CSD) Officials appeared on three days throughout public hearing for this inquiry and appeared alongside the Education Directorate in relation to early childhood development (see paragraph 2.3).

### Multicultural Affairs

#### Matters considered

- 3.2. Ms Tara Cheyne MLA appeared before the committee on 14 November 2024, in her capacity as Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The following matters were considered:
- ACT Government and Commonwealth support for Israeli and Palestinian Canberrans;<sup>37</sup>
  - the securing Faith-Based Places grant program;<sup>38</sup>
  - reported burglaries at the Hindu Temple and Cultural Centre of the ACT in Florey;<sup>39</sup>
  - support provided by the ACT Government and Multicultural Hub (mHub) for refugees from the Middle East;<sup>40</sup>
  - services provided under, and the review of, the ACT Government multi-year contract with mHub;<sup>41</sup> and
  - the planned refurbishment of the Fitzroy Pavilion at the Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC).<sup>42</sup>

#### Key issues

#### Support for Israeli and Palestinian communities in the ACT

- 3.3. Considering the ongoing Hamas-Israel conflict, the committee sought an update from the ACT Government on support provided to Palestinian and Israeli communities in the ACT.
- 3.4. The Minister advised the committee that significant investment would flow through to the ACT through the federal government's \$50 million social cohesion package:

It is a \$25 million grant to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to immediately improve safety at Jewish schools and preschools across Australia, as well as \$25 million to Australian Palestinian, Muslim and other communities to support a range of safety, security, mental health, cohesion and education objectives.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, pp 29–31.

<sup>38</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, p 31.

<sup>39</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, pp 31–33.

<sup>40</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, pp 33–34.

<sup>41</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, pp 34–35.

<sup>42</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, pp 35–38.

<sup>43</sup> Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, p 30.

- 3.5. The committee heard that a decision on how that funding will be allocated is yet to be determined and that the ACT Government will review which organisations receive funding to identify any gaps.<sup>44</sup>
- 3.6. This funding is in addition to existing federal funding provided to target mental health and wellbeing support as well as protecting Australians from terrorist and violent extremist online content. The committee heard that ACT-specific support is available through the ACT Human Rights Commission and the Multicultural Participation Grants program.
- 3.7. Having a complete view of which ACT organisations will receive funding under the Commonwealth Government’s social cohesion package, will help to determine whether supplementary ACT Government support is required.

### Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Palestinian and Israeli communities in Canberra, and:

- review which ACT organisations and community centres receive funding under the Commonwealth Government social cohesion package to identify potential funding gaps;
- report back to the committee on the outcome of this review.

### Redevelopment of Exhibition Park in Canberra

- 3.8. Ahead of the 2020 election, ACT Labor announced an election commitment to a multi-purpose 10,000m<sup>2</sup> facility at EPIC, capable of accommodating up to 1,500 people for community use. The project would form part of broader refurbishment plans at EPIC and had an initial estimated cost of \$21 million.<sup>45</sup>
- 3.9. In June 2023, the ACT Government released its Infrastructure Plan *Entertainment, Arts & Sports Update* outlining plans to refurbish the Fitzroy Pavilion as the initial stage of the EPIC redevelopment.
- 3.10. During its public hearings on 14 November 2023, the committee heard that high build and operating costs identified during the design process had led to the decision to progress with refurbishing Fitzroy Pavilion:

In designing the new event building, it became apparent that, while a venue of this size could be subdivided, it would be very costly to build and operate, meaning higher costs for hirers, including those paying concessional rates.<sup>46</sup>
- 3.11. The Minister, advised community consultation had occurred on the Fitzroy Pavilion refurbishment, which would host ‘1,000 guests in a banquet seating arrangement, and 1,500 standing guests.’

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<sup>44</sup> Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2023, p 30.

<sup>45</sup> [LAB029-EPIC-Community-Facility.pdf \(act.gov.au\)](#) (accessed 1 March 2024).

<sup>46</sup> Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2024, p 37.

...Venues Canberra, supported by the Community Services Directorate, hosted a range of groups about the design and functionality of the Fitzroy Pavilion...In the last few months, the ACT Multicultural Advisory Council and the National Multicultural Festival organisers have been consulted as well, in addition to those public sessions.<sup>47</sup>

- 3.12. The committee acknowledges the engagement that has already occurred regarding the redevelopment of the EPIC precinct, however, is conscious that many multicultural communities continue to have an ongoing interest in this project.<sup>48</sup>

### Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further information to multicultural communities about the redevelopment of the Exhibition Park in Canberra precinct.

## Women

### Matters considered

- 3.13. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the committee on 15 November 2024, in her capacity as Minister for Women. The following matters were discussed:
- a) the *Women's Plan Third Action Plan*, including work to increase participation of women in traditionally male-dominated industries through the Women in Construction pilot;<sup>49</sup> and
  - b) Women's Safety Grants and perceptions of safety reporting.<sup>50</sup>

### Key issues

#### Perception of women's safety

- 3.14. The ACT *Women's Plan 2016–26* sets out the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to work towards gender equality for all women in the ACT and sets out priorities areas to enhance economic status, social inclusion, safety and wellbeing of ACT women.<sup>51</sup>
- 3.15. Officials spoke to the work undertaken to enhance women's safety, including the Women's Safety Grants, with \$90,816 provided in 2022–23 to seven projects.<sup>52</sup> Other activities being explored includes a risk assessment and management framework for specific and

<sup>47</sup> Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 14 November 2024, p 37.

<sup>48</sup> Various Members of the Assembly have raised ongoing interest and concerns from multicultural communities within their electorates regarding the redevelopment of the EPIC precinct. See, for example; Legislative Assembly for the ACT, *Debates*, 20 September 2023, pp 3067–3080.

<sup>49</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 40–44, 47–48.

<sup>50</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2024 pp 44–46.

<sup>51</sup> Community Services Directorate, *ACT Women's Plan 2012–2026*, p 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ms Sanzida Akhter, Executive Branch Manager, Women, Youth and Multicultural Affairs, Communities, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2024, p 45.

mainstream government services, and a pilot of government gender-sensitive urban design guidelines.<sup>53</sup>

3.16. In 2022–23, CSD reported a slight downtrend in the proportion of women who feel safe walking by themselves in the ACT.<sup>54</sup> When asked about the trend, officials advised that the data could be influenced by a range of external factors and was within the expected five percent variable margin.<sup>55</sup>

3.17. The committee heard that the survey used to determine perceptions of safety in women and girls is a national survey developed by the police. Ms Jo Wood, Deputy Director-General explained:

The point about this national survey, which is related to social and policing services, is that we do not get to shape the questions. We do not get to go more granular, to understand what other factors are driving that feeling of lack of safety.<sup>56</sup>

3.18. The Minister advised that work had commenced with Women’s Health Matters to develop the Canberra Safety Map to better understand the perspective of women in the ACT.

3.19. The committee understands this work stalled following COVID,<sup>57</sup> however the ACT Government has commenced work with Women’s Health Matters to pilot women’s safety initiatives in the Canberra central business district, as well as ongoing engagement with Events ACT to implement women’s safety audits for all major events.<sup>58</sup>

3.20. The committee acknowledges the activities undertaken to address women’s perceptions of safety in the ACT through the *Women’s Plan 2016—26*. Having specific and granular data on the experience of women in the ACT will assist in developing the next plan.

## Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the ACT Government, in consultation with Women’s Health Matters and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, develop ‘perceptions of safety’ measures that reflect the experience of women in the ACT.

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<sup>53</sup> Ms Catherine Rule, Director-General, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2024, p 46.

<sup>54</sup> Community Service Directorate, *Annual Report 2022–23*, p 52.

<sup>55</sup> Ms Sanzida Akhter, Executive Branch Manager, Women, Youth and Multicultural Affairs, Communities, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2024, p 45.

<sup>56</sup> Ms Jo Wood, Deputy Director-General, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2024, p 46.

<sup>57</sup> Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Women, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, p 45.

<sup>58</sup> Sanzida Akhter, Executive Branch Manager, Women, Youth and Multicultural Affairs, Communities, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2024, p 46.

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

## Matters considered

- 3.21. Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA appeared before the committee on 15 November 2023, in her capacity as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. The following matters were considered:
- a) an update on the expansion of Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation in Wanniasa ACT;<sup>59</sup>
  - b) ACT Government support to the Aboriginal community-controlled sector;<sup>60</sup>
  - c) the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement on closing the Gap 2019–2028* annual reporting dashboard;<sup>61</sup>
  - d) delivery of the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement on closing the Gap 2019–2028 Impact Statement*;<sup>62</sup>
  - e) implementation of recommendations from the ACT Auditor-General Performance Audit Report No.6 *Implementation of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement*, including attendance at governance forums;<sup>63</sup>
  - f) progress toward increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within CSD;<sup>64</sup> and
  - g) work by the Aboriginal Service Development Branch to establish of new Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.<sup>65</sup>

## Key issues

### First Nations data

- 3.22. The *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028* (the Agreement) sets out the ACT Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.<sup>66</sup> The Agreement is implemented through themed action plans and an online reporting dashboard.<sup>67</sup>
- 3.23. During its public hearings, the committee raised concerns regarding the availability and timeliness of data entered into the dashboard, noting some information had not been updated since 2019–2021.

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<sup>59</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 49–51.

<sup>60</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 51–42.

<sup>61</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 52–53.

<sup>62</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, p 53.

<sup>63</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 53–55.

<sup>64</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, p 55.

<sup>65</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 56–57.

<sup>66</sup> ACT Government, *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028*, p 1.

<sup>67</sup> ACT Government, 'ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement, <https://www.act.gov.au/open/act-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-agreement> (accessed 1 March 2024).

- 3.24. The Minister and officials explained the frequency of dashboard updates was dependent on the availability and release of annual data:

The challenge for us, as the minister was saying, is that some data is available quite regularly and some data, against some of the indicators, is not available. We find this with Closing the Gap as well, where I think four of the actual key targets have not been able to be reported on at a national level because there is just no data actually available.<sup>68</sup>

- 3.25. Mr Brendan Moyle, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs advised CSD was reviewing data to ‘identify where there are data gaps.’ And where they could look ‘to actually collect that data.’<sup>69</sup>
- 3.26. The committee heard that engagement is occurring with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector to develop data metrics to support informed decision-making, as well as meet the government’s reporting requirements.<sup>70</sup>
- 3.27. This engagement is encouraging, and the availability of accurate and timely data will support effective oversight of progress against the government’s commitments under the Agreement.

### Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to develop data metrics and report on the outcomes of this work in its Annual Report.

## Disability

### Matters considered

- 3.28. Ms Emma Davidson MLA appeared before the committee, on 21 November 2023, in her capacity as Minister for Disability. The following matters were considered:
- referral and assessment processes for the Integrated Service Response Program;<sup>71</sup>
  - the Disability Reference Group and Disability Justice Reference Group;<sup>72</sup>
  - development of the second Action Plan for the *Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029*;<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Mr Brendan Moyle, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Strategic Policy, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, p 52.

<sup>69</sup> Mr Brendan Moyle, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Strategic Policy, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, p 52.

<sup>70</sup> Mr Brendan Moyle, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Strategic Policy, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 15 November 2023, pp 52–53.

<sup>71</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 103–106.

<sup>72</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 106–107.

<sup>73</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 107.



- d) consultation, development and funding for the implementation of the ACT Disability Strategy, including alignment with the *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT public schools 2024–34* and *Disability Health Strategy 2024–2033*;<sup>74</sup>
- e) ACT Government support for people who do not qualify for support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);<sup>75</sup>
- f) the increasing number, and demographics of, Territorians accessing the NDIS;<sup>76</sup>
- g) support provided through the International Day of People with Disability (I-Day) and Disability Inclusion grant programs;<sup>77</sup>
- h) specialist schools for deaf students in the ACT;<sup>78</sup>
- i) diagnosis and advocacy support for neurodivergent people in the ACT;<sup>79</sup> and
- j) action undertaken to develop an ACT Neurodiversity Strategy and establishment of an Office for Neurodiversity.<sup>80</sup>

## Key issues

### Integrated Service Response Program

3.29. The Office for Disability delivers the Integrated Service Response Program (ISRP), providing short-term coordination support for people in crisis. In 2022–23, the ISRP supported 100 participants through three streams:

- Referrals for short term crisis intervention to support access to NDIS and mainstream supports and services;
- Case coordination and funding for board and lodgings for children under 16-years who cannot live in the family home due to high disability support needs;<sup>81</sup>
- Funding support for people who do not meet NDIS requirements due to their visa status.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 107–109; 110–111; 112–113.

<sup>75</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 109–110.

<sup>76</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 111–112.

<sup>77</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 113–115.

<sup>78</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 115.

<sup>79</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 115–117.

<sup>80</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 117. See also ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings, No 97*, 14 September 2023, pp 1417–1421. The Motion moved by Mr Michael Pettersson MLA requires the ACT Government to report back to the Assembly by June 2024.

<sup>81</sup> This support is provided for under the *Memorandum of Understanding for the Implementation of Arrangements for Children with Disability Living in Accommodation outside the Family Home* between the Commonwealth Government (National Disability Insurance Agency) and ACT Government. For further information, see: [https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/1433990/19-426.pdf](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1433990/19-426.pdf) (accessed 6 March 2024).

<sup>82</sup> Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2022–23*, p 55.

- 3.30. A referral is required to receive an assessment and access support through the ISRP.<sup>83</sup> The Minister advised the average time taken to assess a referral to the ISRP in 2022–23 was three business days.<sup>84</sup> All assessments to the ISRP are actioned within 14 days.<sup>85</sup>
- 3.31. During the committee’s public hearings, Mr Nick Stathis, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability, Seniors and Veterans, and Social Recovery, advised cases referred to the ISRP are usually ‘quote complex situations’ involving multiple supports from different services.<sup>86</sup> The Minister explained:
- The ISRP has been able to help some people who otherwise would have been in real trouble. We are talking about a relatively small number of people but with really intense needs...there are many forms of disability where the person’s capacity might change over time and their support needs might shift. You can have someone who has been helped through the ISRP and has been okay for quite a while, and then something changes in their circumstances and they need some help again.<sup>87</sup>
- 3.32. The committee heard that the ISRP has received additional funding in the last two years to help assess and manage this complexity and now has three staff.<sup>88</sup>
- 3.33. Given the multifaceted circumstances experienced by people referred to the ISRP, and the ongoing challenges associated with navigating the NDIS, further funding would help ensure the ISRP continues to deliver timely support for Canberrans in crisis into the future.

### Recommendation 9

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide further funding to the Integrated Service Response Program.

## Veterans and Seniors

### Matters considered

- 3.34. Ms Emma Davidson MLA appeared before the committee on 21 November 2023, in her capacity as Minister for Veterans and Seniors. The following matters were considered:

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<sup>83</sup> Referrals can be made by a professional involved in a person’s care. For example, see: <https://www.act.gov.au/community/people-with-disability/get-short-term-disability-support-in-a-crisis> (accessed 6 March 2024).

<sup>84</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Disability, *answer to QTON 18: Integrated Services Response Program*, 21 November 2023 (received 4 December 2023), p 2.

<sup>85</sup> Mr Nick Stathis, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability, Seniors and Veterans, and Social Recovery, Communities, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 105.

<sup>86</sup> Mr Nick Stathis, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability, Seniors and Veterans, and Social Recovery, Communities, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 104.

<sup>87</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Disability, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 105.

<sup>88</sup> Mr Nick Stathis, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability, Seniors and Veterans, and Social Recovery, Communities, Community Services Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2024, p 104; Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Disability, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 105.

- a) the first commemoration of War Widows Day in the ACT;<sup>89</sup>
- b) ACT Government focus on, and support to, Seniors;<sup>90</sup>
- c) promotion and organisation of the Dementia-friendly film screening pilot in partnership with the University of New South Wales;<sup>91</sup>
- d) the Age-Friendly City Program, including implementation of the current *Age-Friendly City Plan* and planning for the next iteration;<sup>92</sup>
- e) assessment of applications, and support provided under the Seniors grant program;<sup>93</sup> and
- f) integration of ACT Seniors Cards with the MyWay system.<sup>94</sup>

## Key issues

### War Widows Day

- 3.35. On 28 June 2023, the Assembly passed a motion by the Minister designating 19 October as War Widows Day in the ACT.<sup>95</sup>
- 3.36. On 19 October 2023, the ACT Government, in partnership with Australian War Widows ACT, marked the first commemoration of War Widows Day in the ACT with a morning tea and performance by the Military Wives Choir at the Legislative Assembly.<sup>96</sup>
- 3.37. The Minister told the committee of the importance of supporting war widows, whose sacrifice, contributions and service have been significant to Australia’s history:

This support for war widows will continue to be needed. While ever we continue to have war, there will be people who are left behind and who are feeling that loss. Being able to recognise that and acknowledge the work that organisations like War Widows do to ensure that the welfare of those left behind continues to be supported is very important. It is not just about the social connection; it is also about their financial wellbeing and employment opportunities and looking after the children as well—and they have a very close working relationship with Legacy.<sup>97</sup>

- 3.38. When asked about future commemoration activities, the Minister advised the government would seek to work closely with Australian War Widows ACT.<sup>98</sup> Partnering with the war

<sup>89</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 118–119.

<sup>90</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 119–121.

<sup>91</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 121–122.

<sup>92</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 122–125.

<sup>93</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 125–126.

<sup>94</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 126–128.

<sup>95</sup> Act Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 90, 28 June 2024, pp 1304–1305.

<sup>96</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Veterans and Seniors Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 18.

<sup>97</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Veterans and Seniors Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 118–119.

<sup>98</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Veterans and Seniors Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 119.

widows community will ensure their feedback and guidance is incorporated in future commemoration activities.

### Recommendation 10

The committee recommends that the ACT Government consult with the ACT office of Australian War Widows Inc. on how best to commemorate War Widows Day in the future.

## Seniors Card

- 3.39. The ACT Seniors Card is available to permanent residents in the ACT aged over 60 years and working less than 20 hours per week in paid employment. 12,088 Seniors Cards were issued in 2022–23, providing discounts and savings on a range of goods and services across the ACT.<sup>99</sup>
- 3.40. During its public hearing, the committee examined the ability for Seniors Card holders to use their card to access discounts on public transport through the MyWay system. The committee queried the impact this combination had on the expiration of Seniors Cards, noting MyWay cards only remain valid for two years.<sup>100</sup>
- 3.41. The Minister clarified in her response to a Question Taken on Notice:
- MyWay cards remain valid for two years from the date of the last transaction at a MyWay console or validator. Once a card has expired, it cannot be reactivated and a new card will need to be issued. Any available travel balance on the expired card can be transferred to the new MyWay card. The Seniors Card itself does not expire, with individuals able to use it as a ‘flash card’ with program business partners.<sup>101</sup>
- 3.42. The Minister advised the government had commenced an independent review of the ACT Seniors Card Program to inform the future design and delivery options for the program.<sup>102</sup> The Minister noted a listening report released in April 2023 highlighted concessions as one of the most highly valued benefits, including the ability to obtain ‘discounted MyWay travel through the card’.<sup>103</sup>
- 3.43. Following the listening report, the committee understands a two-year pilot program will be established with the current Seniors Card Supplier to ‘try, test and learn’ from delivery of new program specifications. The Investment Plan notes CSD will work with the Supplier

<sup>99</sup> Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2022–23*, p 41.

<sup>100</sup> Ms Nicole Lawder MLA, Member of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, pp 127–128.

<sup>101</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Veterans and Seniors, *answer to Question Taken on Notice 22: Seniors Cards*, 21 November 2023 (received 4 December 2023), p [1].

<sup>102</sup> Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2022–23*, p 155.

<sup>103</sup> Ms Emma Davidson MLA, Minister for Veterans and Seniors, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2023, p 127.

throughout the pilot to ‘ensure and enhance accessibility and ease-of-use of the Seniors Card through transport ticketing reforms.’<sup>104</sup>

- 3.44. The committee acknowledges the activity underway to reform the Seniors Card Program and considers action should be taken during the pilot to address the administrative burden for holders of the combined MyWay Seniors Card.

### **Recommendation 11**

The committee recommends that, during the pilot of the new Seniors Card Program, the ACT Government work with the Supplier to better integrate the ACT Seniors Card with the MyWay system, and report on actions taken in its annual report.

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<sup>104</sup> ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Commissioning for Outcomes Investment Plan ACT Seniors Card Program*, February 2024, p 16.



## 4. Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- 4.1. Officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD), Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), and Major Projects Canberra appeared before the committee on three days throughout public hearing for this inquiry.

### Sport and Recreation

#### Matters discussed

- 4.2. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the committee, on 16 November 2023, in her capacity as Minister for Sport and Recreation. The following matters were considered:
- a) tennis facilities, including development of the Amaroo tennis centre;<sup>105</sup>
  - b) aquatic facilities in the ACT;<sup>106</sup>
  - c) expansion of and investment in basketball facilities in the ACT;<sup>107</sup>
  - d) ACT Government input to the *Independent review into the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Infrastructure*;<sup>108</sup>
  - e) the Club Enhancement Program;<sup>109</sup>
  - f) delivery and funding for the Throsby Home of Football<sup>110</sup>
  - g) the ‘one in one out’ policy following an incident at Dickson Aquatic Centre;<sup>111</sup>
  - h) an update on the *Sport and Active Recreation Infrastructure Plan Survey*;<sup>112</sup> and
  - i) ice facilities.<sup>113</sup>

### LGBTIQ+

#### Matters discussed

- 4.3. Mr Andrew Barr MLA appeared before the Committee, on 23 November 2023, in his capacity as Chief Minister of the ACT. The following matters were considered:
- a) evaluation and community feedback on the *Capital of Equality Strategy 2019-2023* and planning for the next strategy<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 88–89.

<sup>106</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 89, 101–102.

<sup>107</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 91–93.

<sup>108</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 93–94.

<sup>109</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 94–96.

<sup>110</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 96–97.

<sup>111</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 98–100.

<sup>112</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 100–101.

<sup>113</sup> *Proof Committee Hansard*, 16 November 2023, pp 101–102.

<sup>114</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 23 November 2023, pp 140–142.

- b) engagement with the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the collection of data in the Census on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables<sup>115</sup>
- c) involvement of the ACT Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Ministerial Advisory Council in the review of the *Capital of Equality Strategy 2019-2023* and development of the next strategy<sup>116</sup>
- d) Capital of Equality grants<sup>117</sup>
- e) perceptions of Canberra as an LGBTIQ+ friendly city<sup>118</sup>
- f) funding and resourcing of the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs.<sup>119</sup>

## Skills

### Matters discussed

4.4. Mr Chris Steel MLA appeared before the Committee, on 24 November 2023, in his capacity as Minister for Skills. He appeared alongside officials from CIT and Major Projects Canberra. The following matters were considered:

- a) construction of the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Woden project, including changes to the project scope<sup>120</sup>
- b) CIT staffing, including staff satisfaction and the interim Chief Executive Officer arrangement<sup>121</sup>
- c) Availability of prevocational courses at CIT, particularly trade courses<sup>122</sup>
- d) CIT partnership with BentSpoke Brewing under the Skill to Succeed Innovation grants program to deliver the ‘Brewed to Succeed’ pilot program<sup>123</sup>
- e) Participation rates for Vocational Education Training<sup>124</sup>
- f) Renewable and sustainable building training to support the *ACT Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030s*<sup>125</sup>
- g) Availability and uptake of fee-free TAFE.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>115</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 23 November 2023, pp 142–143.

<sup>116</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 23 November 2023, p 143.

<sup>117</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 23 November 2024, pp 143–145.

<sup>118</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 23 November 2024, p 145.

<sup>119</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 23 November 2023, pp 145–146.

<sup>120</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, pp 147–150.

<sup>121</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, pp 150–151.

<sup>122</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, pp 152–153.

<sup>123</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, pp 153–155.

<sup>124</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2024, pp 155–157.

<sup>125</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, pp 157–158.

<sup>126</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, pp 158–160.



## Key issues

### Fee-free TAFE

- 4.5. The fee-free TAFE initiative commenced from January 2023 under a 12-month Skills Agreement between the Commonwealth and ACT governments. It provided over \$16.5 million for the ACT skills and training sector, supporting over 2,500 fee-free TAFE places at CIT in 2023.<sup>127</sup>
- 4.6. Officials from the Canberra Institute of Technology advised the first year of the initiative had been ‘very successful’:
- ...we absolutely met our commitment in delivering those 2,530 places. We actually have commenced with slightly more students than that, which is fantastic. We had, overall, 155 enrolments in pre-apprenticeship programs; 187 enrolments in other short courses; 90 enrolments were specific to the care industry and an additional 90 in aged care qualifications; over 2,000 enrolments in full qualifications and over 100 enrolments in foundation skills courses.<sup>128</sup>
- 4.7. The committee heard enrolments spanned a range of topics, with popular courses including cybersecurity, business, early childhood education, community services, mental health, project management.<sup>129</sup>
- 4.8. Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Skills, advised the ACT Government had entered a three-year agreement with the Commonwealth Government to deliver a further 3,600 fee-free TAFE places.<sup>130</sup>
- 4.9. The committee understands the number of courses available for fee-free TAFE enrolments in 2024 is smaller than those available in 2023. Ongoing monitoring of course uptake will be important to ensure CIT can appropriately manage unmet demand and prioritise prospective students that meet priority cohort criteria.<sup>131</sup>

### Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support and expand fee-free TAFE and report back to the committee on areas of unmet demand following completion of the first tranche of the three-year agreement.

<sup>127</sup> The Hon Brendan O’Connor MP, Minister for Skills and Training, The Hon Chris Steel MLA, ACT Minister for Skills, ‘[ACT signs up to deliver Fee-Free TAFE](#)’, *Joint Media Release*, 4 December 2022.

<sup>128</sup> Ms Josephine Anderson, Executive Director, Education Futures and Students, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, p 159.

<sup>129</sup> Ms Josephine Anderson, Executive Director, Education Futures and Students, Canberra Institute of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, p 159.

<sup>130</sup> Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Skills, *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2023, p 158.

<sup>131</sup> For further information on priority cohort criteria, see: [https://cit.edu.au/study/fee\\_free\\_tafe](https://cit.edu.au/study/fee_free_tafe) (accessed 6 March 2024).



## 5. University of Canberra

### Matters discussed

- 5.1. Officials from the University of Canberra (UC) appeared before the committee on 22 November 2023. The following matters were considered:
- a) UC submission to the independent review into the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) infrastructure and potential impacts on UC of relocating the AIS to Queensland<sup>132</sup>
  - b) the sale of UC land to Peet Holdings Ltd for development of approximately 1,200 private residences<sup>133</sup>
  - c) occupancy rate and cost of UC on-campus student accommodation<sup>134</sup>
  - d) graduate numbers and average HECS debts for undergraduate and postgraduate Education courses<sup>135</sup>
  - e) actions taken to address recommendations of the Scott Review<sup>136</sup>
  - f) entry pathways to education degrees for post-graduate and mature students<sup>137</sup>
  - g) activities to address incidents of sexual violence on university campuses.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2023, pp 129–130.

<sup>133</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2023, pp 130–134

<sup>134</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2023, pp 134–135.

<sup>135</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2024, pp 135–136.

<sup>136</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2023, p 136.

<sup>137</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2023, pp 136–138.

<sup>138</sup> *Committee Hansard*, 22 November 2023, p 138.



## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The committee thanks everyone who participated in, or otherwise assisted, this inquiry. This includes the ACT Government Ministers, directorate officials, and statutory officers. The committee wishes to extend its appreciation to the Hansard and Broadcasting teams of the ACT Legislative Assembly.
- 6.2. The committee makes 12 recommendations.

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

2 April 2024

# Appendix A: Witnesses

## 13 November 2023

### Executive

- Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Early Childhood Development

### Community Services Directorate

- Ms Catherine Rule, Director-General
- Mrs Jessica Summerrell, Executive Branch Manager, Support Services for Children, Communities

### Education Directorate

- Ms Jane Simmons, Deputy Director-General
- Ms Deb Efthymiades, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform
- Mr Sean Moysey, Executive Branch Manager, Education and Care Regulation Support

## 14 November 2023

### Executive

- Ms Tara Cheyne MLA Minister for Multicultural Affairs

### Community Services Directorate

- Ms Catherine Rule, Director-General
- Ms Sanzida Akhter, Executive Branch Manager, Women, Youth and Multicultural Affairs, Communities

## 15 November 2023

### Executive

- Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Women
- Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

### Community Services Directorate

- Ms Catherine Rule, Director-General
- Ms Jo Wood, Deputy Director-General
- Ms Anne Maree Sabellico, Executive Group Manager, Children, Youth and Families
- Ms Anita Perkins, Executive Group Manager, Communities
- Ms Jacinta Evans, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy

- Mr Chris Simpson, Executive Branch Manager, Aboriginal Service Development, Children, Youth and Families
- Mr Brendan Moyle, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Strategic Policy
- Ms Sanzida Akhter, Executive Branch Manager, Women, Youth and Multicultural Affairs, Communities

## 16 November 2023

### Executive

- Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Sport and Recreation

### Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Mr Josh Rynehart, Acting Executive Group Manager, Property and Government Insourcing, Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy
- Mr David Jeffrey, Senior Director, Planning and Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation

### Community Services Directorate

- Ms Catherine Rule, Director-General

### Education Directorate

- Ms Katy Haire, Director-General
- Ms Deb Efthymiades, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform
- Ms Jane Simmons Deputy Director-General
- Mr Mark Huxley, Executive Group Manager, School Improvement
- Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services
- Ms Angela Spence, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery
- Mr Daniel Ackland, Executive Branch Manager, People and Performance

### ACT Teacher Quality Institute

- Ms Lyndall Read, Chief Executive Officer

### Board of Senior Secondary Studies

- Mr Martin Watson, Executive Director

## 21 November 2023

### Executive

- Ms Emma Davidson, Minister for Disability, Minister for Veterans and Seniors

### Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Mr Geoffrey Rutledge, Deputy Director-General, Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy

### Community Services Directorate

- Ms Jo Wood, Deputy Director-General
- Ms Anita Perkins, Executive Group Manager, Communities
- Mr Nick Stathis, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability, Seniors and Veterans, and Social Recovery, Communities

## 22 November 2023

### University of Canberra

- Professor Lucy Johnston, Acting Vice-Chancellor
- Professor Michelle Lincoln, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic
- Mr Jonathan Pheasant, Chief Operating Officer and Vice-President, Operations
- Ms Karma Auden, Chief Financial Officer
- Ms Nisha Lad, Director, External Engagement

## 23 November 2023

### Executive

- Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Chief Minister

### Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Ms Wilhelmina Blount, Executive Group Manager, Policy and Cabinet Division
- Mr Andrew Mehrton, Executive Branch Manager, Social Policy

## 24 November 2023

### Executive

- Mr Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Skills



## Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- Ms Kareena Arthy, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development

## Canberra Institute of Technology

- Ms Kate Lundy, Chair, CIT Board
- Ms Christine Robertson, Interim Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Meghan Oldfield, Executive Director, Corporate Services
- Ms Josephine, Executive Director, Education Future and Students

## Major Projects Canberra

- Ms Gillian Geraghty, Chief Projects Officer
- Mr Martin Little, Deputy Chief Projects Officer
- Ms Rebecca Power, Project Director, CIT Woden Project

## Appendix B: Questions on notice and taken on notice

### Questions taken on notice

No.	Date	Asked by (MLA)	Asked of (Directorate/Portfolio)	Subject	Response received
1	13/11/2023	Hanson	Education Directorate	ACT Government 3 year old partnered preschool program waiver	27/11/2023
2	13/11/2023	Lawder	Education Directorate	Universal quality early childhood education for 3-year-olds initiative	27/11/2023
3	13/11/2023	Hanson	Education Directorate	4-year-olds accessing government preschool centres	27/11/2023
4	13/11/2023	Hanson	Education Directorate	Education Early Childhood Amendment Bill	27/11/2023
5	13/11/2023	Hanson	Education Directorate	Education Early Childhood Amendment Bill Consultation	27/11/2023
6	13/11/2023	Hanson	Education Directorate	Early Education staff training scholarships program	27/11/2023
7			Withdrawn		
8	15/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement AR dashboard	27/11/2023
9	15/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	Women in Construction grant reporting	28/11/2023
10	15/11/2023	Lawder	Treasury	Proportion of procurements with a Gender Equality Strategy	30/11/2023
11	16/11/2023	Lawder	Education Directorate	Teacher separation reasons	27/11/2023
12	16/11/2023	Lawder	Education Directorate	FTE teacher separations	
13			Withdrawn		
14	16/11/2023	Hanson	Education Directorate	Margaret Hendry School	28/11/2023
15	16/11/2023	Milligan	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	Discretionary Fund	29/11/2023

16	16/11/2023	Lawder	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	Dickson Pool One in One Out Policy	01/12/2023
17	21/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	ISRP assessment period	01/12/2023
18	21/11/2023	Pettersson	Community Services Directorate	ISRP wait times	04/12/2023
19	21/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	Disability Reference Group	01/12/2023
20	21/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	Disability Inclusion Grants Program	04/12/2023
21	21/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	Age-Friendly City Program	04/12/2023
22	21/11/2023	Lawder	Community Services Directorate	Seniors Cards	30/11/2023
23	22/11/2023	Lawder	University of Canberra	Sale of Land to Peet Holdings	30/11/2023
24	22/11/2023	Hanson	University of Canberra	Teacher education graduates	30/11/2023
25	22/11/2023	Hanson	University of Canberra	Probationary teacher registration	30/11/2023
26	22/11/2023	Hanson	University of Canberra	Undergraduate ATAR requirement	30/11/2023
27	22/11/2023	Hanson	University of Canberra	Scott review recommendations	30/11/2023
28	24/11/2023	Lawder	Major Projects Canberra	CIT Woden Project	30/11/2023
29	24/11/2023	Lawder	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	CIT CEO	30/11/2023
30	24/11/2023	Lawder	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	CIT annual staff survey	04/12/2023
31	24/11/2023	Clay	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	Pre-vocational courses	04/12/2023
32	24/11/2023	Clay	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	Industry consultation	04/12/2023

## Questions on notice

No	Date	Asked by (MLA)	Addressed to (Minister)	Subject	Response published
1	20/11/2023	Clay	Minister for Early Childhood Development	CDS referrals from CFC Worker at Gordon Primary	29/11/2023
2	20/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Early Childhood Development	Public Autism Assessments at the Child Development Service	29/11/2023
3	20/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Early Childhood Development	Expanded CDS Service Pathway	29/11/2023
4	20/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Early Childhood Development	Playgroup for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families	29/11/2023
5	20/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Early Childhood Development	Hours of Service at Child Development Service	29/11/2023
6	22/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Resolving Historic Issues Relating to Claims of Traditional Custodianship	04/12/2023
7	22/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	2023 Impact Statement	30/11/2023
8	22/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Supporting Implementation of the Uluru Statemen	30/11/2023
9	22/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Supporting the Development of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)	12/12/2023
10	22/11/2023	Kikkert	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement Annual Reporting Dashboard	30/11/2023
11	15/11/2023	Milligan	Minister for Education and Youth Affairs	Nicholls College	07/12/2023
12	23/11/2023	Clay	Minister for Education and Youth Affairs	Climate Change education	07/12/2023
13	23/11/2023	Clay	Minister for Education and Youth Affairs	Upgrades to outdoor areas at Public Schools	07/12/2023
14	23/11/2023	Clay	Minister for Education and Youth Affairs	Inclusion strategy and supports for students with disability in ACT public schools	07/12/2023

15	15/11/2023	Milligan	Minister for Sport and Recreation	Aquatic centres	05/12/2023
16	20/11/2023	Milligan	Minister for Sport and Recreation	Aquatic centres	05/12/2023
17	15/11/2023	Milligan	Minister for Skills	Skilled Migration	12/12/2023
18	15/11/2023	Milligan	Minister for Skills	Skilled Migration	12/12/2023

## Appendix C: Gender distribution of witnesses

Beginning in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Committees are collecting information on the gender of witnesses. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.

<b>Gender indication</b>	<b>Total</b>
Female	28
Male	16
Non-binary	0
Gender neutral	0
No data	0