



Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026–2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026–2027

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: YWCA

Redirected to:

Reference: Community Day

Hearing: 3 July 2026

In relation to: Women's Safety

Question received: 3/07/2026

Answer Due: 22/07/2026

- (1) The budget papers contain a strategic objective of 42 per cent of women feeling safe when walking by themselves in their neighbourhood at night, with no target for further improvement beyond this figure year on year. What's your view on this target, and the fact the Government is not aiming to improve on it moving forward?
- (2) What should the Government do to help more women feel safe walking alone at night?

[Frances Crimmins]: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

In YWCA Canberra's 2025 *Our Lives: Women in the ACT* survey of nearly 2800 responses, 31 per cent of respondents across Canberra reported feeling safe in public spaces after dark over the preceding 12 months. Responses to the 2023 iteration of our survey found 30 per cent of respondents felt safe in public spaces after dark.

While the Government's target itself may indicate moderate numbers of women in Canberra do not feel safe in public at nighttime their findings are supported by our own survey which also indicates that shifting targets may not be an achievable outcome. Further, we do not think that setting a

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progressive target on intrinsic human behaviour, particularly the behaviour of women to be alert and aware of their surroundings at nighttime is a recommended approach to monitoring public safety.

With this in mind, it is important to remember that women are statistically more likely to experience violence in their home by someone they know. When discussing what the government can do to increase public safety at night, the dialogue must also consider what they are walking home to and whether systems respond appropriately.

Violence against women regardless of whether it takes place inside or outside the home involving a known or unknown perpetrator is a systemic issue that cannot be solved by routine public infrastructure. While upgrades to public infrastructure should be routinely undertaken with safety in mind, improved lighting and surveillance alone will not eliminate violence against women nor erase feelings of unease when in public spaces at nighttime.

Future urban investment that is sensitive to gender sensitive design is always welcome but should not be seen as a panacea to gender-based violence.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates



Signature:

Date: 21 July 2026

By the Chief Executive Officer, YWCA