



**ACT**  
Government

**22**  
**23**

Australian Capital Territory

# Budget

Delivering for Canberrans:  
now and into the future

**Women's Budget  
Statement**

# Ministers' Foreword

The 2022-23 Women's Budget Statement is an opportunity to outline progress made by the Government towards ensuring that Canberra is a place where women and girls have equality, dignity, justice and respect. The Government remains committed to supporting women and girls<sup>1</sup> to fully participate in all aspects of life in the ACT. Significant progress has been made in workplace gender equity, the gender pay gap, representation of women on boards and committees, and parliamentary representation.

This year's Women's Budget Statement outlines Government initiatives that support women and girls in the ACT. It showcases existing ACT Government programs and services; and identifies where new investments in the 2022-23 Budget are expected to expand on efforts to improve the wellbeing of women and girls. Work is continuing to embed considerations of gender in policy development and decision-making, through the budget process and outside it.

Women's physical and mental health and wellbeing continues to be a priority for the Government. In this Budget, we continue to reduce inequity across the community by removing out-of-pocket costs of abortion services and improving affordability and access for both medical and surgical abortions.

We are also investing in measures that will increase women's workforce participation, which is a significant opportunity to increase economic equality while also increasing capacity to support the long-term sustainable economic growth of the Territory. This involves setting model standards within the ACT Public Service with programs like the *Women's Mentoring Program*, facilitating projects like Strathnairn Primary School being delivered by a female-led construction team, and supporting women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period with individual grants through the *Women's Return to Work* program.

Women make up over half of Canberra's homeless population, and the Government is also committing to continue specialist homelessness programs that commenced operation during the COVID-19 pandemic and further expand the capacity of frontline homelessness services.

It is essential that women and girls feel safe in order to fully and equally participate in our community. The ACT Government is funding a range of initiatives to address domestic and family violence and to prevent and respond to sexual assault.

In 2022-23 the Government is committing significant effort and resources towards measures to improve gender equity. The Government continues to work with key stakeholder groups in the region – with businesses and representative groups, unions, community organisations and Canberrans – to achieve equity, together.



**Andrew Barr**  
Chief Minister



**Yvette Berry**  
Minister for Women

<sup>1</sup> The Women's Budget Statement is about the impact of government expenditure on women and girls, terms we use inclusively to mean all people who identify as a woman or girl. Where relevant, the Women's Budget Statement may also consider how expenditure may impact gender diverse people.

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The Women's Budget Statement provides the opportunity for the Government to demonstrate to the community its gender responsive policies and highlight its work to improve the wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT. The Women's Budget Statement is prepared annually as an action under the First Action Plan of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.

Achieving gender equality requires strong and broad commitment and leadership across government and the community. It means having the whole community play their part, and it means working together, while also recognising and celebrating diversity.

We have taken a whole of government approach to understand the underlying causes and challenges women face. For example, we recognise that women's health and wellbeing is impacted by access to education, employment, income, and secure housing. Therefore, the actions taken by government, the non-government sector and within community to address women's health issues needs to extend beyond the health system.

While Canberra has shown the country how we stay strong together, we know that at the same time women have been particularly affected by the impacts of COVID-19. For many women, this impact has been felt through increased economic insecurity, taking on greater unpaid household and caring responsibilities, and being on the frontline through their work in the education and healthcare sectors.

Our focus in the ACT on wellbeing as a way of thinking about how we are doing, and as a way of informing our decision-making and investment, strengthens our city and our community.

## ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2016-26

The *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* (the Plan) sets out the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to work in partnership with non-government organisations, business and the broader community towards achieving gender equality for all ACT Women.

The Plan identifies the following priority areas for action:

- > Health and Wellbeing
- > Housing and Homelessness
- > Safety
- > Economic Security
- > Leadership

The Plan builds on work already underway to better understand the needs of women and how best to support them.

A key feature of the Plan is the utilisation of learnings from work already done across government and the community, as well as the enhancement of our understanding of what works to improve outcomes for ACT women and girls.

Wellbeing helps us to understand the importance of things like our relationship with our surroundings – both the natural and built environment – and our sense of social connection and belonging within our community. It also helps us to shine a light on the continued experience of women in the ACT.

The most recent University of Canberra *Living Well in the ACT Region* survey showed that women are less likely to have confidence that their voices and perspectives are being heard, and more likely to have poorer mental health outcomes, and to have lower satisfaction with their use of time, including their work-life balance.

We know that an individual's wellbeing is connected to the community they identify with and their lived experience. We are currently working to better understand how gender influences our wellbeing overall as well as through the 12 areas of wellbeing the community identified as being most important – access and connectivity, the economy, education and life-long learning, environment and climate, governance and institutions, health, housing and home, identity and belonging, living standards, safety, social connection, and time.

This year's Women's Budget Statement highlights where the Government is taking action to support women and girls across all 12 areas of wellbeing, including in both programs and projects that are already underway, and areas where new funding has been committed in the 2022-23 Budget.

The wellbeing analysis undertaken in the 2022-23 Women's Budget Statement to understand the impact of proposals and initiatives from a wellbeing perspective also enables us to see how they align with the priority areas identified in the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.

## The Importance of a Gender Lens

The journey to gender equality is long and ongoing. It's important to continue to track our progress as community attitudes shift and as new ideas and ways of thinking emerge. The ACT Government is committed to investing in real change towards gender equality through initiatives that address the root causes of inequality, which span across the whole community.

## Gender Responsive Budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) involves incorporating a gender perspective in Budget planning, through analysing how Budget initiatives impact people of different genders in different ways and ensuring the allocation of resources through Budget processes contributes to gender equality.

## What we are doing

The ACT Government is actively working to ensure gender is considered in policy development and Budget processes under the Second Action Plan of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.

Both wellbeing and GRB approaches use a range of tools and practices to consider the impacts proposals have on women and girls. There is significant overlap between wellbeing budget practices and GRB tools and practices. A wellbeing budget approach considers the effects of proposals on the various elements that influence wellbeing, including the impact on gender equality.

# Health

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*:

- > Objective 1: Improving the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.

Health and wellbeing are fundamental to full participation in society. Women have unique and varied health needs and experiences, particularly those associated with reproductive and sexual health, as well as chronic illnesses – with some chronic illnesses exclusively affecting women and a higher prevalence of many autoimmune diseases among women.<sup>2</sup> The Government has made significant investments in a range of initiatives aimed at holistically supporting women's health and wellbeing.

Women continue to be more likely than men to provide unpaid childcare,<sup>3</sup> and mothers are at an increased risk of depression and anxiety, with approximately 1 in 5 Australian mothers experiencing depression and anxiety while pregnant or in the 12 months after giving birth.<sup>4</sup> The ACT Government is committed to supporting parents and carers to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the whole family and across our community.

## Mental health

Good mental health is intrinsically linked to overall wellbeing. While good mental health and wellbeing is important for everyone, women have diverse and unique stressors. A 2021 survey found that ACT women are more likely than men to self-report poor or fair mental health.<sup>5</sup> Women are impacted by perinatal and postnatal depression and anxiety, and mental health issues associated with gendered violence.

Since May 2020, over \$40 million has been provided to support mental health including for additional acute mental health inpatient beds at the Canberra Hospital, funding for a culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention program and funding to community organisations for mental health programs targeting early intervention.

2 Women's Centre for Health Matters, 'What conditions affect women?', <https://www.womenshealthmatters.org.au/womens-health-wellbeing/having-a-chronic-condition/>

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), 2021 Census data

4 PwC Consulting Australia, (2019), 'The Cost of Perinatal Depression and Anxiety in Australia', <https://www.perinatalwellbeingcentre.org.au/news/cost-of-perinatal-depression-and-anxiety-in-australia>

5 University of Canberra (2021), 'Living well in the ACT region' survey

## Continuing support

The **Women's Health Service** is a free service for women, run by women. It includes access to nursing, medical, nutrition, and counselling services for vulnerable women in the ACT.

**Maternal and Child Health Nurses** support new parents and carers with information and health advice. These Registered Nurses hold additional qualifications in maternal, child and family health.

The **Newborn Care Program** is a free group to help parents and carers prepare for life with a new baby, to strengthen relationships, build confidence, and create a support network.

**MindMap**, an online triage navigation portal to support young people in the ACT seeking mental health and wellbeing support, was launched in 2021.

The **Eating Disorders Program** is a community-based service providing assessment and therapy programs for people with an eating disorder. Eating disorders disproportionately affect women and are associated with concerns about weight or body, which are linked to gendered beauty standards.<sup>6</sup>

## New investment

- > \$12.1 million over four years to commence delivery of **Maternity in Focus: The ACT Public Maternity System Plan 2022-2032** with funding to:
  - support system-wide workforce planning;
  - provide new training and scholarship opportunities;
  - commence a scoping study for a perinatal mental health wellbeing facility;
  - develop a consumer feedback tool;
  - evaluate Canberra Maternity Options Service; and
  - support ongoing implementation and oversight of the Plan.
- > \$4.6 million over four years, plus ongoing funding, to deliver safe and affordable services by **removing out-of-pocket costs of abortion services** and improving affordability and access for both medical and surgical abortions. The provision of Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives following an abortion will also be funded, as well as a communications package to improve accessibility of abortion services to people in the ACT.
- > The Government will significantly boost capacity at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce with the establishment of a Gestational Diabetes Mellitus service and delivery of three new Special Care Nursery cots – delivering **more maternity services for Canberra's northside**.

6 Women's Centre for Health Matters, 'What conditions affect women?', <https://www.womenshealthmatters.org.au/womens-health-wellbeing/having-a-chronic-condition/chronic-conditions/what-conditions-affect-women/>

# Housing and Home

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*:

- > Objective 4: Improving housing support and sustainability and reducing homelessness for women.

Appropriate, affordable, and stable housing is essential to ensuring equality across the community. Housing insecurity and homelessness continues to be a gendered issue in the ACT, impacted by factors such as the gendered superannuation gap and domestic and family violence. Notably, more than half of all Canberrans experiencing homelessness are women<sup>7</sup> and a lack of affordable accommodation is the primary reason that women return to abusive relationships.<sup>8</sup>

## Continuing support

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that our community has access to safe, suitable, and affordable housing, and in recent years we have made significant investments in this area, including programs to support women experiencing homelessness and housing stress. This has included public housing repairs and maintenance including domestic violence security works and disability modifications, affordable housing for older people who are on low incomes, and funding to expand the capacity of existing homelessness services, including specialist homelessness programs.

**Safer Families Assistance** provides \$2,000 to people affected by domestic and family violence to help with costs associated with maintaining or establishing a home in the ACT.

**MacKillop House**, in partnership with CatholicCare, houses women experiencing homelessness due to relationship breakdown, economic hardship, or domestic violence. MacKillop House is able to accommodate up to 25 single women and 6 women with children at a time.

7 Women's Centre for Health Matters, 'Housing and homelessness in the ACT', <https://www.womenshealthmatters.org.au/womens-health-wellbeing/housing-homelessness/>

8 YWCA, 'Essential to wellbeing: safe and affordable housing for women', <https://ywca-canberra.org.au/advocacy/policy-priorities/essential-to-wellbeing-safe-and-affordable-housing-for-women/>



The ACT Government has funded the construction of **Common Ground** in Dickson, which will support pathways into housing for women, with the future tenant cohort for Common Ground Dickson intended to include older women, single parents, and families with children.

In order to further **improve housing security and fairness for tenants**, the ACT Government has introduced reforms that better meet the needs of victims of domestic and family violence, including issues of economic control, and allow tenants to terminate a tenancy to move into social housing or aged care.

## New investment

- > \$250,000 to develop policy responses to **address housing affordability** in the ACT for low-to-medium income households.
- > \$29.8 million over three years to expand the **Growing and Renewing Public Housing program** by a further 140 public housing dwellings, delivering on the Government's commitment to 400 additional public housing dwellings. This initiative builds on funding provided in the original 2019-20 program of \$100 million over five years to deliver at least 200 more dwellings and renew a further 1,000 properties.
- > A further \$7.3 million over three years to continue **specialist homelessness programs** that commenced operation during the COVID-19 pandemic and further expand the capacity of frontline homelessness services in 2023-24 and 2024-25. The Government will also enhance the Specialist Homelessness Information platform and work with the homelessness sector to develop a shared practice framework and tools.

# Safety

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*:

- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.

Preventing gendered violence in all its forms is crucial to ensuring a gender-equal community. Threats to the safety of women and girls over their lifetimes are wide-ranging and include domestic, family and sexual violence, including sexual harassment in the workplace.

## Domestic, family, and sexual violence

Domestic and family violence significantly impacts women's social and economic participation. Research shows that domestic and family violence is likely to have a detrimental impact on women's health and careers.<sup>9</sup> Women in the ACT are three times more likely than men to experience intimate partner violence.<sup>10</sup> Women who experience domestic and family violence are more likely to have lower incomes, fragmented work history, and to be employed in part-time or casual work.<sup>11</sup>

## Continuing support

Through the **Safer Families Initiative**, the ACT Government funds several organisations and programs to address domestic, family and sexual violence. This includes:

- > frontline domestic violence and rape crisis services through the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre;
- > the *Health Justice Partnerships* program provides lawyers across Legal Aid and Women's Legal Centre to help women presenting in health and hospital settings;
- > the Family Violence Safety Action Pilot which expands integrated case work capacity and coordinated effort to meet increased demand on services to better respond to the needs of high-risk families; and
- > the *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program* which works in partnership with stakeholders and community in the development of a robust approach to sexual assault in Canberra that focusses on prevention, response, law reform and workplace safety.

9 Australian Human Rights Commission (2014), 'Factsheet: Domestic and family violence – a workplace issue, a discrimination issue', <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/fact-sheet-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace-issue>

10 Women's Centre for Health Matters, 'Women's Health Facts & Stats Canberra ACT'; Women's Health Facts & Stats Canberra ACT - Women's Health Matters ([womenshealthmatters.org.au](http://womenshealthmatters.org.au))

11 Costello, M, Chung, D and Carson, E, 'Exploring Pathways Out of Poverty: Making Connections Between Domestic Violence and Employment Practices' Australian Journal of Social Issues, 40(2), (2005), pp. 253-67

## New investment

- > \$9.6 million over four years to **respond to the recommendations in the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee's final report**, including:
  - broad consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and ensuring culturally informed implementation of the recommendations in the Report;
  - establishing an ongoing structured consultation program with victim survivors of sexual assault to continue to drive and inform reforms to the prevention of and response to sexual violence;
  - developing a long-term strategy for the prevention of sexual violence to change the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate sexual violence and implement tailored actions to reduce the risk and occurrence of sexual violence;
  - undertaking a Specialist Services Review of agencies and statutory bodies providing services related to sexual violence to identify where further investment and changes need to be made to address victim survivors' needs, operating practices, performance measures and standards, coordination systems and current funding arrangements;
  - providing a one-off research grant to undertake analysis to inform models of care in sexual assault forensic medicine in the ACT;
  - re-establishing the wraparound service model to provide intensive, effective care and support;
  - establishing Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) in the ACT to provide on-the-ground expert advocacy, system navigation and linkages to services and supports for victim survivors of sexual violence; and
- establishing a Multi-Disciplinary Centre (MDC) to co-locate specialist sexual violence response services.
- > \$5.9 million over three years to **transition the Family Violence Safety Action Pilot into an expanded program (FVSAP) to provide a dedicated response to high-risk situations of domestic and family violence**. The FVSAP provides intensive case management, case coordination and information sharing to support individuals and families at the highest risk of lethality from domestic and family violence. This initiative will be partially funded by the Safer Families Levy and builds on the funding provided for the *Family Violence Safety Action Pilot* through the 2021-22 Budget.
- > \$1.9 million over four years to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to scope, design and implement culturally appropriate and relevant community-led responses to domestic and family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- > \$1.8 million over two years to **establish domestic and family violence training and resources** to enhance integration and coordination across the domestic and family violence service system. This initiative will improve the capability of the domestic and family violence services sector to support the reduction and prevention of domestic and family violence and support victim survivors to heal and recover. The cost will be partially funded through the Safer Families Levy and partially funded by the Commonwealth under the *Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2021-23 National Partnership Agreement*.

- > \$620,000 over two years to **increase the capacity of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service** to meet the demand for emergency accommodation to protect victim survivors of domestic and family violence **and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre** to provide frontline rape crisis services. This initiative will be funded through the Safer Families Levy.
- > \$1.8 million over four years to **provide more resources to Legal Aid’s Family Violence Unit, the Older Person’s ACT Legal Service and Legal Aid’s helpline** to **strengthen Legal Aid’s capacity** to support vulnerable members of the community and manage the ongoing increase in demand for these services in the ACT.
- > \$3.8 million over four years for **the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team within ACT Policing** to increase the level of service to the community as part of ACT Policing and the Government’s continuing efforts to improve the justice system’s response to sexual assault.

## Safety in the community

Cities throughout the world are increasingly recognising that many public spaces are not welcoming or inclusive, particularly for women, girls, gender diverse and vulnerable people. In 2019, women in Canberra were approximately twice as likely as men to agree that it was unsafe to walk alone in their local neighbourhood at night.<sup>12</sup> How safe women feel directly impacts their use of Canberra’s public places, spaces and transport, so urban planning and design in the ACT is important to ensure the social participation of women. The ACT Government is committed to building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.

### Continuing support

The **ACT Women’s Safety Grants** provide funding to support innovative projects to advance priorities identified in the Third Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

### New investment

- > \$2.5 million to **support community safety** by designing and procuring an improved closed-circuit television (CCTV) solution for buses.
- > \$679,000 over four years has been provided for **ongoing support for the SafeHome Program**, which improves security for households that are victims or vulnerable to home burglary.

12 University of Canberra (2020), ‘Living well in the ACT region’ survey [https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/institutes/health-research-institute/files/files-living-well-in-the-act/Living-well-in-the-ACT-region\\_Part-1\\_Indicators\\_7Dec2020.pdf](https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/institutes/health-research-institute/files/files-living-well-in-the-act/Living-well-in-the-ACT-region_Part-1_Indicators_7Dec2020.pdf)

# Economy

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 2: Fostering gender equity in Canberra workplaces, including through improved gender equality in leadership and workplace participation.

The ACT has a highly gender-segregated workforce. Industries such as construction are highly male-dominated, while industries like education, health and aged care have higher concentrations of women workers. Continued industry segregation contributes to the gender pay gap as well as negatively impacting the development of inclusive workplace cultures.

The ACT Government is committed to addressing industry segregation and reducing the gender pay gap, improving workplace cultures and helping address workforce shortages to ensure the ACT economy continues to grow.

## Continuing support

The ACT Public Service (ACTPS) continues to ensure measures are taken to promote gender equality within the Service. As at 30 June 2021, 65% of the ACTPS were women, 53.3% of executive positions were held by women, and the ACTPS gender pay gap had reduced to a record low 0.8%. The ACT Government continues to support women into leadership in the ACTPS, including through the ACTPS **Women's Mentoring Program**.

The **Women's Return to Work** program supports women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period. It helps them prepare for and obtain employment with a one-off individual grant.

The Government continues to fund several initiatives to increase the number of women in the construction industry and has set a 10 per cent target for the proportion of women employed in the industry, supported by requirements through our Government procurement policies. In 2021-22, a position was funded in the Community Services Directorate to work on support for women in trades under the Second Action Plan of the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26.

- > *The Future Skills for Future Jobs Grants Program - Women in Construction Pathways Program* provides funding for innovative projects that promote market diversity and aim to increase the number of Australian Apprenticeship commencements in the ACT.
- > The Industry Coordination Project provides high-level collaboration and engagement with industry, unions and key stakeholders, and across the ACT Government to support safe and inclusive workplaces in the construction industry
- > The ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority funds a campaign to specifically target employers to encourage greater employment of women in male-dominated trade industries.

- > *The Women in Trades Grants Program* supports the implementation of Women in Trades Grants projects to assist women looking to take up a trade.
- > The Strathnairn Primary School development is open to tenderers with a 100 per cent women site management team and women's participation in each trade subcontractor. This will deliver on an action under the ACT Women's Plan Second Action Plan.

## New investment

- > \$6.6 million over four years to continue delivering **free access to public preschool** for Canberra's four year olds, providing 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year of free education for all four-year-old children living in Canberra. Increased support for children to attend school will reduce time spent caring for children at home, which disproportionately falls on women, and will support women to be able to re-enter the workforce.
- > \$13.9 million over four years to expand the **Flexible Work Program** and refurbish existing government office space in Gungahlin to create flexi hubs to support new ways of working, building on the funding provided for flexi hubs in Tuggeranong and Belconnen through the 2021-22 Budget initiative *Improving and upgrading government accommodation*. This program will allow ACT Public Service employees to commute to a flexi hub located in their nearest town centre. Making flexible working arrangements available to all staff is a powerful tool in promoting gender equality in the workforce. Flexible work arrangements promote both male and female workforce participation and increases the number of women in leadership roles.

# Time

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 1: Improving the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.
- > Objective 2: Fostering gender equity in Canberra workplaces, including through improved gender equality in leadership and workplace participation.
- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.

In 2021, almost one third of Australian women reported doing more than 15 hours of household chores throughout the week compared to just 13 per cent of Australian men.<sup>13</sup> In the ACT, women are more likely than men to be spending more time on childcare and housework than desired.<sup>14</sup> The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is a barrier to reaching gender equality in the paid workforce because it reinforces gender stereotypes of the female 'homemaker' and male 'breadwinner'.

Unpaid caring responsibilities is often a barrier to women's workforce participation. Women are more likely to be providing unpaid care for family, friends and neighbours, or for children who are unable to live with their families. 12.3 per cent of all women and 9.3 per cent of all men in Australia identify as a carer, and 7 out of 10 primary carers are women.<sup>15</sup>

The Government is committed to unpacking these gendered caring roles and giving women the choice to participate in paid work, should they wish to.

Women are also more likely than men to bear the mental load – the invisible and non-tangible tasks involved in coordinating the running of a household.

## New investment

- > \$825,000 over four years to further support the **ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028**, to improve supports and outcomes for carers. This includes funding for community-based initiatives, awareness-raising activities, peer-to-peer support groups for carers, and resourcing to support the continued operation of the Carers Strategy Governance Group.

13 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), 'Unpaid work and care', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/unpaid-work-and-care-census/2021>

14 University of Canberra (2021), 'Living well in the ACT region' survey

15 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019), 'Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018>

# Living Standards

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 4: Improving housing support and sustainability and reducing homelessness for women.
- > Objective 5: Developing appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies for women and girls, ensuring consideration of those from diverse backgrounds.

The Government is committed to ensuring all Canberrans can be economically secure, establishing equitable living standards across the community. The Government continues to invest in initiatives that are targeted for those experiencing disadvantage. Women and girls can be disproportionately affected by financial hardship when faced with compounding gendered issues, including greater caring responsibilities and insecure work. Across Australia, over 80 per cent of single-parent families, of which almost one third are experiencing unemployment, are single mother families.<sup>16</sup>

## Continuing support

By investing \$9.4 million over four years for the **Future of Education Equity Fund**, the Government will provide grants to disadvantaged families to support them to meet their educational expenses. The Government will also deliver a two-year trial at five public schools to provide breakfast and lunch for students three days a week.

In recognising that families experiencing disadvantage are often affected by gendered inequities including the devaluation of feminised industries, the Government is working to ensure these families do not face disadvantage when it comes to accessing a great public education. Especially when education is one of the great equalising influencers to ensuring opportunity for all students including women and gender diverse students.

## New investment

- > \$330,000 in grant funding over four years has been provided to **Roundabout Canberra** so they can continue to provide essential items for vulnerable families requiring assistance as part of the Government's health, education, and child protection services. These services will be supported by existing resources in the Community Services Directorate and Canberra Health Services.

<sup>16</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), 'Labour Force Status of Families', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-status-families/latest-release>



# Education and Life-long Learning

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.
- > Objective 5: Developing appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies for women and girls, ensuring consideration of those from diverse backgrounds.

Education has a transformative impact on individuals and communities. Education is central to the empowerment of women and girls and provides the key foundation for equal participation in the community and workplace. The ACT Government supports and designs learning opportunities to cater to the diverse needs of women and girls in the ACT.

The ACT Government is committed to tackling harmful stereotypes and expectations about gender roles and responsibilities through a range of community and school-based cultural change and primary prevention programs.

Women comprise approximately 75 per cent of the teaching workforce in the ACT, and a significant proportion of the part-time education workforce, meaning that initiatives to support safety and connectivity for school staff are likely to benefit women.

## Continuing support

In last year's Budget, the ACT Government committed \$2.1 million over four years to support **gender equality in ACT Schools**. The commitment provides a whole-of-school approach to preventing domestic and family violence and reducing discrimination and harassment by creating a culture of gender equality and inclusion. This includes gender equality coaching, professional learning and the provision of materials to support inclusion.

The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) framework provides an evidence-based approach to enable all our schools to be safe and supportive learning environments for all of our students. Over the next two years, the ACT Government is committed to supporting all schools to be implementing the PBL framework. PBL has a longitudinal research base in achieving positive outcomes for students and school (and system) improvement, including lower rates of minor and major inappropriate behaviours. Creating a supportive learning environment is crucial to preventing gender biases and stereotypes, promoting the inclusion of all genders from a young age, which leads to cultures of acceptance and equality.

As an action under the Second Action Plan 2020-22 of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-22*, the Government is developing several eLearning modules focusing on **Gender Equality, the Gender Equality Strategy, Gender Impact Statements, Flexible Working, and Bias in Recruitment**. The eLearning modules on flexible working and workplace rights will have a particular impact on women's economic security, providing increased knowledge and understanding of rights and entitlements at work.

The **Audrey Fagan Program** consists of initiatives aimed at providing women with education, mentoring and networking opportunities. Through the program, eligible women can access enrichment grants, guidance and support to become a board member or director. This program includes a **Leadership and Communications Program** for women wanting to gain confidence, enhance their leadership skills, and to better their public speaking skills.

## New investment

- > \$1.1 million to **establish a Safe@School taskforce** to undertake a system-wide safety review to strengthen the safety culture within ACT public schools for teachers and students and provide additional resourcing for training, communication, and project management to support the teaching workforce, which has a high concentration of women.

# Governance and Institutions

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 2: Fostering gender equity in Canberra workplaces, including through improved gender equality in leadership and workplace participation.
- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.

The Government is committed to ensuring women and girls can have their say, connect with, and be part of key government processes. A 2021 survey found that women are less likely than men to have confidence that they can get involved in the decision-making processes in the ACT.<sup>17</sup> It is critical that we retain a government and institutions that respect human rights, are responsible, reliable, have integrity, are open, and are fair.

## Continuing support

The **Women in Emergency Services Strategy** aims to increase the number of women in emergency services and in leadership roles in the ACT emergency services.

The **Indigenous Women's Leadership** program provides leadership training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in custody in the ACT to empower them to take a leadership role in the lives of their families and community.

**Walking with Women on the Pathway to Change (the Women Offenders Framework)** was launched in 2021, to provide staff with best practice principles to better support female detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

The Government has funded the **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Model** aimed at facilitating an efficient, effective and integrated reform model for delivering rehabilitative programs and services for offenders in custody that connect through to post detention and return to the community. The IOM has an immediate focus on women offenders and builds on the existing ACT Corrective Services frameworks, including the Rehabilitation Framework and Women Offenders Framework.

The ACT Government has provided \$3.5 million over two years to continue the **ACT Intermediary Program** for vulnerable witnesses, which commenced in January 2020 as part of the ACT Government's response to key criminal justice recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Vulnerable witnesses include victims of sexual offences who are overwhelmingly women and girls.

17 University of Canberra (2021), 'Living well in the ACT region' survey

## New investment

- > \$11.5 million over four years to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT criminal justice system, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are over-represented in the justice system in the ACT.<sup>18</sup>
- > \$3.1 million over three years to **assist the ACT's community based legal assistance sector**, to respond to the legal needs of Canberrans seeking access to justice, including support for Care and Protection Law and Advocacy Services and Care ACT for its Mobile Debt Clinic. This will work to provide legal assistance to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, which predominantly affects women and children. One in six women have experienced sexual or physical violence from a former or current partner, compared with one in sixteen men.<sup>19</sup>

18 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 'Prisoners in Australia', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/prisoners-australia/latest-release#aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-prisoners>

19 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019—In brief. Cat. no. FDV 4. Canberra: AIHW

# Access and Connectivity

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.
- > Objective 5: Developing appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies for women and girls, ensuring consideration of those from diverse backgrounds.

Planning, mobility and service systems allow us to move around our liveable city and access the types of places and services we need, when we need them. Supporting access and connectivity means ensuring that those who require additional support to gain independence can access responsive, tailored services, and that the needs of women and girls are considered in planning processes.

## Continuing support

The **ACT Women's Participation Grant Program** provides funding for innovative projects that promote the health and wellbeing of ACT women and girls. This could include proposals that have a direct impact on women's health (including mental health) and wellbeing; activities that address the social determinants of health; and/or projects that lead to better understanding and/or better outcomes for women who experience multiple forms of discrimination due to intersecting factors such as poverty, disability, age, trauma and/or language barriers.

The ACT Government is funding the **Women's Legal Centre** to employ a solicitor to support women experiencing employment and discrimination issues, and who have been impacted by COVID-19.

This role helps, for example, vulnerable women to negotiate access to work-from-home arrangements that were not otherwise supported by their employers.

# Environment and Climate

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.
- > Objective 5: Developing appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies for women and girls, ensuring consideration of those from diverse backgrounds.

As our climate changes, the risk of extreme events, such as fires, floods and storms, will escalate. These climate related hazards often exacerbate gender inequalities, resulting in higher workloads for women, occupational hazards indoors and outdoors, psychological and emotional stress, and higher mortality compared to men.<sup>20</sup>

## New investment

- > \$3.8 million over three years to support **continuation of the Office for Climate Action**, to enable ongoing coordination and implementation of the Government's climate action agenda. Prioritising this work will help to redress the gendered consequences that can arise from the effects of climate change, including the potential for onus to fall on women to carry added emotional and mental loads in response to extreme events.

<sup>20</sup> International Panel on Climate Change (2022), 'Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability', [https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGII\\_FinalDraft\\_FullReport.pdf](https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FinalDraft_FullReport.pdf)

# Social Connection

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 1: Improving the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.
- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.
- > Objective 5: Developing appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies for women and girls, ensuring consideration of those from diverse backgrounds.

The Government is committed to ensuring women and girls are connected and supported within our community and have opportunities to come together in areas such as sport, culture, spirituality, religion and the arts.

Participating in sport is a crucial part of maintaining women's physical and mental health, however, women have lower levels of participation compared to men.<sup>21</sup> Rates and patterns of participation in sport not only differ between genders, but also fluctuate over the life course. In Australia, 55 per cent of women participate in sport-related activities, compared to 70.5 per cent of men.<sup>22</sup>

## Continuing support

The **Elders Family and Culture Program - Mothers of Aboriginal Children** is run quarterly and encourages mothers to build a strong connection with their children through cultural activities.

The **Financial Counselling Service** is funded to deliver an integrated financial counselling service to ensure low income and vulnerable consumers are treated fairly and to support them to overcome debt through

counselling, advocacy and raising community awareness. This can help mediate the financial inequalities that women face as a result of the gender pay gap.

### The **Women's Sport and Recreation Participation and Leadership Program**

provides financial assistance to eligible individuals, clubs and organisations to support participation, education and training activities that enhance participation opportunities for women and girls in the ACT and advocates for women and girls to take on leadership roles in the sector.

The ACT Government is undertaking a program of works within sportsground pavilions to provide a better amenity for women and girls, consistent with the **Female Friendly Change Rooms @ Sporting Facilities** Guidelines. More than 20 pavilions have been upgraded in recent years to meet the guidelines. Changes include the installation of privacy screens on all showers and toilets, removal of urinals, and adding baby change tables and bench sinks.

21 University of Sydney SPRINTER Research Group (2018), 'Women and Girls in Sport, Active Recreation and Physical Activity: A Participation Review', <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-04/women-in-sport-sprinter-evidence-review.pdf>

22 Clearinghouse for Sport (2021), 'Participation statistics and trends', <https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/kb/sport-participation-in-australia/participation-statistics-and-trends>

# Identity and Belonging

Initiatives under this domain align with the following priorities in the Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26:

- > Objective 1: Improving the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.
- > Objective 3: Building a community where women and girls are safe and supported to participate.
- > Objective 5: Developing appropriate and accessible services, programs and policies for women and girls, ensuring consideration of those from diverse backgrounds.

The Government is committed to ensuring women and girls can express identity, feel a sense of belonging and participate fully in society. This year, the Government is investing in new systems and additional care to improve support and decision-making in the health care of people with variations in sex characteristics and their families.

## Continuing support

The **ACT Government Diversity Register** connects women and other diverse candidates with information about opportunities and appointments to Government, business and community boards, councils and committees. Approximately 900 ACT women are currently registered with the Diversity Register.

The **Women's Cultural Art Program** is an ACT Corrective Services program tailored to suit artists of all skill levels. The program enables participants to work at their own pace and produce quality artwork which they can either sell through the ACTCS Indigenous Detainee Art Catalogue or gift out of the facility to family and friends.



## New investment

- > \$1 million over four years to enhance actions under the **Capital of Equality Strategy** to improve the wellbeing and circumstances of LGBTIQ+ Canberrans, their families and communities through the implementation of a range of programs including an expansion of the Capital of Equality Grants Program and increased resourcing for the existing Supporting and Strengthening ACT LGBTIQ+ Communities Program. The Second Action Plan under the Strategy spans from 2022 until December 2023 with flagship actions that include:
  - Supporting local LGBTIQ+ community projects through the *Capital of Equality Grants Program* with an additional \$500,000 over the next two years;
  - Co-designing a gender-focused health service with NGOs and LGBTIQ+ stakeholders;
  - Implementing reforms to embed inclusion and equality for trans, gender diverse, queer and intersex people in ACT legislation; and
  - Establishing a whole of government data collection framework for sex, gender, sexual orientation and sex characteristics.
- > \$1.4 million over the next four years for a range of **supports for people with variations in sex characteristics**, including psychosocial care, peer led supports, training and education and regulatory functions.
- > \$3.4 million over four years to deliver a range of **diversity and inclusion programs** within the ACT Public Service to ensure the service continues to be progressive and inclusive.