



ACT
Government

Australian Capital Territory

Budget 2023–24

Social Inclusion Budget Statement

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Produced by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Enquiries about this publication should be directed to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

GPO Box 158, Canberra City 2601

act.gov.au

Telephone: Access Canberra - 13 22 81

Acknowledgement of Country



The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.



Accessibility
Ph 13 22 81



Interpreter
Ph 131 450

As our city grows, the ACT Government is committed to ensuring Canberra remains a welcoming, vibrant, and inclusive community in Australia. We are continuing to invest in delivering high quality services and infrastructure that will support wellbeing across the Territory, now and into the future.

Canberra is growing faster than any other city in Australia, and for good reason. We have a unique and beautiful natural environment, with an increasingly diverse economy and stable employment opportunities.

However, we know that many people are feeling pressured by the rising cost of living, driven by inflation and rising interest rates. As in other states and territories, we are facing challenges around our housing and our health systems.

This Budget recognises and responds to these challenges with responsible investment in measures that support Canberrans. We are continuing to provide targeted support to those most in need, while setting Canberra up for the years ahead.

Guided by our Wellbeing Framework, the ACT Government remains focused on ensuring that all Canberrans are connected to the social, economic, and cultural life of the city.

Through this budget, we aim to ensure everybody across our community feels safe, enjoys a sense of belonging, has access to vital services, and can enjoy the things in life that matter most.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The 2023-24 Budget demonstrates the Government's focus on improving policy, services and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, building on our commitments under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Budget Statement provides information on relevant Budget initiatives.

Multicultural communities

Canberra celebrates its cultural and linguistic diversity. Earlier this year the ACT Government passed the *Multiculturalism Act 2023*. The Multiculturalism Act commits the ACT Government to deliver on the Charter for Multiculturalism to ensure the Territory continues to grow as an inclusive and welcoming jurisdiction which values and promotes cultural and linguistic diversity.

Cultural identity, belonging and social connection are being supported with an additional \$3.3 million in funding for the National Multicultural Festival over the next two years, bringing total investment to almost \$7 million. The festival is an inclusive and safe event that celebrates diversity and promotes social cohesion in the ACT community.

This initiative builds on recent Government investment in the 2022-23 Budget of \$1.0 million for the 25th Anniversary of the National Multicultural Festival celebrated in 2023, which set a new benchmark for the celebration.

The Government has committed \$430,000 in 2023-24 to assist asylum seekers and those fleeing global crises. This includes \$180,000 to continue providing support for the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian fund which assists asylum seekers with an ACT Services Access Card and their families with essential living costs. \$250,000 continues funding for the family settlement assistance grants program, delivered by the Red Cross, to support individuals and families arriving in Canberra after fleeing global crises. These important services contribute to the wellbeing outcomes of identity and belonging and living standards.

LGBTIQ+

In 2022, the Government launched the *Capital of Equality Strategy* Second Action Plan, reflecting the Government's commitment to ensuring Canberra continues to be the most LGBTIQ+ welcoming and inclusive city in Australia.

The 2023-24 Budget commits \$9.8 million in funding over four years to enhance health services for LGBTIQ+ Canberrans. The Government will provide funding to implement the critical recommendations of the LGBTIQ+ Health Scoping Study (2021), including establishing a Canberra Health Services Adult Gender Service, staffed by specialist clinicians, and funding for Meridian to deliver LGBTIQ+ community health services.

The Adult Gender Service will be complemented by the boost to paediatric services at the Canberra Hospital (further outlined below), which includes funding to establish a new multi-disciplinary Paediatric Gender Service for younger Canberrans at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

We are continuing to implement reforms funded in the 2022-23 Budget to protect the human rights of children born with variations in sex characteristics, which were recently enshrined in nation-leading legislation passed in the ACT.

Children and young people

This year's Budget delivers a range of initiatives promoting health, safety and belonging for Canberra's children, young people, and their families.

The Government is continuing to invest in early childhood education and access to life-long learning. Funding of \$56.1 million over four years in this Budget ensures that, from January 2024, all three-year-olds in the ACT will be able to access one day per week, or 300 hours per year, of free quality early childhood education through public preschools.

The Safe at Schools Taskforce is being supported by \$3.0 million over four years to undertake a system-wide safety review to strengthen the safety culture within ACT public schools for teachers and students.

To support better health outcomes for children and young people, this budget includes funding to significantly expand paediatric services for children and young people at Canberra Hospital, delivering a better emergency department experience, establishing a new paediatric hospital in the home service, and boosting the number of paediatric nurses.

The Budget also includes nearly \$2.7 million over four years for the Child Development Service (CDS) and the Children and Young Person Equipment Loan Scheme (CAYPELS) to be redesigned as a more integrated and collaborative model within the Early Childhood Early Intervention system of care. The Autism Spectrum Disorder assessment service is also being expanded, building on recent Government actions in this area.

In 2023-24, \$2.2 million in funding is being provided to a range of programs to support youth mental health, including MindMap Online Youth Navigation Portal, Stepping Stones, the Youth Aware of Mental Health Program and WOKE.

As part of our ongoing commitment to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, this Budget delivers new funding of \$3.3 million over four years to support a Child Safe Standards Scheme for the ACT. The Scheme will support organisations working with children and young people to develop holistic and child-friendly approaches to safety and wellbeing. It will be implemented through a staged approach by the ACT Human Rights Commission, with an initial focus on building knowledge and awareness of the Child Safe Standards within organisations.

The Government will also invest more than \$110 million over four years to deliver improved therapeutic residential care for the ACT's most vulnerable young people who cannot remain safely with their families and are not able to be placed in foster or kinship care. The model delivers a therapeutic approach to respond to the complex impacts of abuse, neglect, and separation. The Government will also establish the role of Chief Practitioner to oversee practice development, training and quality improvement for the child protection and family support sector in the ACT.

The Government is also investing almost \$10.4 million to establish a new service response to support the raising of the minimum age of criminal responsibility to ensure that young people who are engaging in, or are at risk of engaging in, harmful behaviours get the support and response required.

Women

The 2023-2024 Budget includes investment to support women, including significant resources to prevent and respond to domestic, family, and sexual violence.

The Women's Budget Statement provides further information on initiatives being funded in the 2023-24 Budget to improve the wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.

Older Canberrans

We remain committed to ensuring that Canberra is an age-friendly city through the ongoing implementation of the *Age-Friendly City Plan*.

The Government is providing funding for programs focused on the wellbeing of older Canberrans, including support for dementia-friendly events, pilot programs for a seniors' art festival and the Gold Soul Program to build future workforce capacity in ageing through intergenerational connection.

More than \$1.4 million over two years has been committed to commence work on the establishment of a new Centre of Excellence for older Canberrans, to develop a model of care for different levels of Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms in Dementia, and to continue the SPICE program (Sustainable, Personalised Interventions for Cognition, Care, and Engagement), which provides allied health-led support for people living with dementia and their carers.

Disability

Work is continuing to develop the *ACT Disability Strategy* to improve the lives of more than 80,000 Canberrans with disability.

Extensive community consultation was undertaken 2022 and the ACT Disability Strategy Consultation Listening Report has now been released. Work continues with the ACT Disability Reference Group to guide the creation of a new 10-year ACT Disability Strategy and action plan which will set out how the Territory will work toward becoming a more inclusive community for people with disability over the next 10 years.

Our ongoing progress towards social inclusion for people with disability is also reflected in the development of a Second Action Plan for the Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029.

The Government is extending support for the implementation of the Disability Justice Strategy by committing \$553,000 over two years to continue Disability Liaison Officers' availability to deliver additional assistance to people with disability who have experienced victimisation.

Buildings and equipment will also be upgraded across the Canberra Institute of Technology campuses to improve facilities and support disability access.

Carers

Implementation of the *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028* continues to support improved community awareness of the value and contribution of carers.

Work to implement the Carers strategy and actions funded in 2022 is continuing and many of the initiatives in this year's Budget will contribute to improved outcomes for carers.

Veterans

An estimated 22,000 veterans live in the ACT. We also recognise the important role of families in providing support for veterans.

As part of this commitment, the ACT Government is investing \$170,000 in a wellbeing framework for veterans and their families. Resources are also being provided for an expo-style event for veterans to enhance collaboration among ACT veteran support organisations.