



ACT
Government

Australian Capital Territory

Budget 2021–22

Women's Statement

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Introduction

The Women's Budget Statement is a tool for the ACT Government to update the community on its gender responsive policies and highlight its work to improve the wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.

It is prepared annually as an action under the *First Action Plan 2016-19 of the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.

The Women's Budget Statement is an important way for the ACT Government to demonstrate the work it is undertaking to address gender inequalities in the ACT.

Canberrans continue to live in a very difficult time as we navigate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. In the ACT, women are feeling the burden of the pandemic through impacts to their safety (especially through an increased risk of domestic and family violence), mental health, employment, and housing security. Now, more than ever, there needs to be support for women and initiatives in

place to address systematic causes of gender inequality.

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 investment in the 2021-22 Budget is expected to expand on efforts to improve the wellbeing of women and girls.

The Women's Budget Statement is an important step on the journey towards understanding the way ACT Government policies and programs impact differently on all genders.

Key milestones

- › The ACT Government's Women's Budget Statement was reintroduced in 2019 to deliver on an important action of the *First Action Plan 2016-19 of the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.
- › The ACT Government developed the Gender Impact Analysis Tool to support analysis of the impact of programs and services on women, men, and gender diverse individuals in the ACT.
- › The ACT was the first parliament in Australian political history to have more women than men and continues to have the highest proportion of female politicians of any parliament in Australia.
- › The ACT Government announced its landmark Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, which will deliver a robust and evidence-based approach to prevent and respond to sexual assault in Canberra.
- › The ACT Government delivered its first Wellbeing Budget in 2021.

Wellbeing framework

The full participation of women and girls in all aspects of society is critical to the wellbeing of the ACT community.

The ACT Wellbeing Framework (the Framework) was introduced in 2020. It is made up of 12 wellbeing domains that reflect key factors driving the wellbeing of Canberrans. The Framework helps guide the government in developing and evaluating policies and programs and in decision making. This will help us make sure we are working towards outcomes that benefit the wellbeing of all Canberrans.

By recognising women as a priority cohort in the Framework, we can track the wellbeing of women and girls and continue to work towards removing barriers so women and girls can reach their full potential.

An effective and sustainable approach to developing a Women's Budget Statement needs to be underpinned by established processes and indicators.

The 2021-22 Women's Budget Statement has been structured to outline key results across the Framework's 12 wellbeing domains, and highlights where spending from the 2021-22 Budget is expected to further improve the wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT.

The Framework and the data collected against the domains is an important tool to inform development of the Women's Budget Statement, to measure the wellbeing of women and girls in the ACT, and will be an important mechanism to track and inform our investments and progress over time.

Health

By improving health outcomes for women and girls in the ACT, we can improve their overall wellbeing and their ability to participate fully in work, education, and community.

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.

The **Canberra Sexual Health Centre** is a free service that offers walk-in and booked appointments for sexual health, STI, HIV and related care. The centre welcomes lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex, and gender diverse people as patients.

The ACT Government also supports initiatives that improve the outcomes of specific women's health issues, like the **Canberra Endometriosis Centre** and **BreastScreen ACT**.

Mental health

Mental health plays a significant role in overall wellbeing. In the ACT, 52 per cent of women include mental health in their top three health issues, while 66 per cent of LGBQ women and 89 per cent of trans women report mental health in their top three health concerns. Women also experience eating disorders at higher rates than men.¹

The ACT **Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing** was established in 2018 to improve the ACT community's wellbeing and enhance its mental health service system through co-design with consumers, carers, clinicians, and the community.

The **Southside Community Step-Up Step-Down** facility provides specialist subacute care in a residential setting for people experiencing mental health issues.

The **Eating Disorders Program** is a community-based service that provides assessment and therapy programs for people with an eating disorder, with a focus on delivering therapies that are sensitive to age, gender, spirituality, and culture. The Eating Disorders Specialist Hub will provide assessment and evidence-based treatment for children, adolescents and adults who are experiencing an eating disorder.

Parenting

Approximately one in five Australian mothers will experience depression and anxiety while pregnant or in the 12 months after giving birth.² The ACT Government is committed to supporting parents during this time in their lives to improve health outcomes for the whole family.

The **Newborn Care Program** is a free group session to help prepare parents for this new phase in their lives by strengthening relationships, building confidence, and creating a support network. **Maternal and Child**

Health Nurses are Registered Nurses with additional qualifications in maternal, child, and family health who support new parents with information and health advice.

The physical and mental impact of losing a baby in late pregnancy is profound. Acknowledging this, the ACT Government launched the **Safer Baby Bundle Initiative** in 2020. The initiative is a national package of education and awareness measures aimed at reducing the rate of still birth.

New investment

- › **\$50.1 million** over four years to deliver the first stage of a phased introduction of minimum nurse/midwifery-to-patient ratios at the Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, following approval of the new Nursing and Midwifery Enterprise Agreement.
- › **\$41.5 million** over four years to provide ten additional acute mental health inpatient beds at the Canberra Hospital in the refurbished Ward 12B and provide funding for additional High Dependency capacity at the Adult Mental Health Unit to meet increased demand for mental health treatment. The Government will also extend mental health surge capacity at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce by three months.
- › **\$2 million** over two years to continue the Mental Health Discharge Accommodation Program, which provides transitional, supported accommodation for people who have been discharged from a mental health acute inpatient unit and do not have safe, stable accommodation to exit into.
- › **\$2.2 million** over four years to provide ongoing funding for a culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Program that focusses on community-based suicide prevention, intervention, postvention and aftercare tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.
- › **\$260,000** to support the delivery of additional mental health services to Canberrans affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. This assistance builds on funding the Government provided to a range of

1 *Women's Budget Statement 2021-22*, Commonwealth of Australia, https://budget.gov.au/2021-22/content/womens-statement/download/womens_budget_statement_2021-22.pdf

2 *The Cost of Perinatal Depression and Anxiety in Australia*, 2019, Gidget Foundation, Perinatal Depression & Anxiety Australia (PANDA), Peach tree Perinatal Wellness, and Perinatal Wellbeing Centre, report prepared by PwC Consulting Australia, <https://www.perinatalwellbeingcentre.org.au/news/cost-of-perinatal-depression-and-anxiety-in-australia>

community-based mental health programs as part of the 2020-21 COVID-19 Mental Health Support Package and complements the additional support package funded through the 2021-22 COVID-19 Response Fund.

- › **\$8.5 million** over four years to provide funding to community organisations for mental health programs targeting early intervention, including the Moderated Online Social Therapy program (MOST), Catholic Care's Youth & Wellbeing program and the Parentline counselling service.
- › **\$15.3 million** over four years to deliver two additional Intensive Care Cots in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to meet increased demand.
- › **\$1.2 million** in 2021-22 to support the Home Assessment and Acute Response Team program, which provides home-based intensive treatment, care and support for people who are experiencing acute mental health concerns.
- › **\$623,000** over four years to maintain current peer-led training and education services, intersex-specific support and peer-led navigation and information services for trans and gender diverse Canberrans.
- › **\$913,000** over four years to provide ongoing funding for Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT to provide sexual health education, information, and support services for people with disability.
- › **\$360,000** to develop a detailed implementation plan and begin to deliver on the recommendations from the final report of the ACT Health Directorate's LGBTIQ+ Health Scoping Study.

Safety

Feeling safe in the community and at home is a basic human right. If women and girls cannot feel safe and be safe, then they cannot participate as equal members of the community.

Domestic, family and sexual violence

Women are significantly more likely to be a victim of domestic, family, and sexual violence than men. The ACT Government is committed to addressing these types of violence in our community.

The **Family Safety Hub** was designed to take a new approach to designing services, so they meet the needs of those affected by domestic and family violence.

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.

As with other forms of domestic and family violence, women are more likely to experience financial abuse than men. The ACT Government funds CARE Inc to provide the **Reach Out Program**, a wraparound service that directly supports persons who are experiencing economic abuse by providing access to legal assistance and financial counselling supports.

Domestic and Family Violence Training has been rolled out for all ACT public servants. It focuses on developing a shared understanding of domestic and family violence including the gendered nature of this violence on women and children.

The **Safe and Connected Youth Program** supports children and young people experiencing family and domestic violence or other family conflicts, including through respite accommodation for children and young people.

New investment

The 2021-22 Budget allocates \$35.9 million over four years to expand the ACT Government's evidence-based approach to addressing domestic and family violence. This investment will also support an enhanced focus on sexual assault prevention and response. This continued investment provides resourcing to address the widespread nature of domestic, family and sexual violence in the ACT and to provide a range of responses to make a difference for people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

- › **\$2.2 million** over four years for more frontline domestic violence and rape crisis services through the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre.
- › **\$4.1 million** over four years for the Health Justice Partnerships Program, which will provide free and confidential legal services in pre and post natal hospital settings, helping families to address the potential risk of family violence earlier.

- › **\$817,000** over four years for the private rental assistance program for people experiencing domestic and family violence to give vital financial assistance to women escaping family violence.
- › **\$675,000** over two years for the Safer Families Collaboration Program, to build stronger domestic violence knowledge and practice within the care and protection setting.
- › **\$790,000** over four years to scope and design domestic and family violence responses for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- › **\$249,000** for the Family Violence Safety Action Pilot, which is expanding information sharing and integrated practices for risk assessment and risk management of high risk domestic and family violence in the ACT.
- › **\$400,000** over four years to continue funding Women's Safety Grants.
- › **\$1.5 million** over four years for our landmark Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, which will deliver a robust approach to sexual assault in Canberra focused on prevention, response, law reform, and workplace safety.

To continue to invest strongly in appropriate responses to domestic, family, and sexual violence, the ACT Government will stage an increase to the **Safer Families Levy** of \$5 per year for four years, taking the Levy from \$30 per household currently to \$50 per household in 2024-25.

This will deliver a total of **\$30.3 million** over the next four years to enable expanded funding for vital domestic, family, and sexual violence initiatives for the ACT community. Significantly, this will allow for a comprehensive response to sexual assault in the ACT to be developed and implemented.

Other new investment expected to improve the safety of women and their children includes:

- › **\$6.5 million** to further develop the Child and Youth Record Information System (CYRIS) to ensure high quality information is available to comprehensively assess the risk experienced by vulnerable children and young people.
- › **\$2 million** to provide funding to community-based organisations operating in the legal assistance sector, including the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, Canberra Community Law, CARE Inc, Environmental Defenders Office, and the Women's Legal Centre ACT.

- › **\$6.8 million** over four years to provide funding to the Victim Services Scheme and the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme to strengthen counselling and financial assistance programs offered to eligible victims of crime.
- › **\$370,000** in 2021-22 to conduct an economic and actuarial assessment of the recommendations of the Projects Assisting Victims' Experience and Recovery (PAVER) review. The ACT Government will also scope ICT solutions to provide on-line information regarding victim rights information and services available under the Charter of Rights for victims of crime.
- › **\$1.3 million** over two years to support the continuation of the Therapeutic Care Court which was established within the ACT Children's Court in 2019-20.

Safety in the community

Many women still report feeling unsafe in areas across the ACT.

To increase women's safety and participation in public spaces, the ACT Government is committed to developing and implementing **Gender Sensitive User Design Principles**. This will assist with design and development of public urban spaces and infrastructure, and transport infrastructure including wayfinding.

This includes making footpath and lighting improvements to connect with public transport and avoiding the development of new bus stops in secluded areas. The ACT Government has a streetlight Energy Performance Contract to ensure ongoing operation and maintenance of its more than 800,000 streetlights.

The ACT Government funded Women's Health Matters to deliver the Canberra Safety Map for Women, which allows women to report areas in the community where they feel safe or unsafe. This information can then be used by the government to consider ways it can make the ACT feel safer and more useable for everyone.

New investment

- › **\$5 million** over four years to deliver active travel, road and public space improvements along Beltana and Kalaroo Roads in Pialligo in response to the area's growing status as a lifestyle and recreational precinct.

Economy

Economic disadvantage, poverty and low income, are more likely to be experienced by women than men. This can result in poorer health and wellbeing outcomes for women.³

In addition, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women in the ACT. Across Australia, women are more likely to have lost their jobs and are more likely to have taken on the bulk of unpaid work at home, including childcare.

Women are also more likely to be employed in frontline services, in hospitals, schools, in professional caring roles and in insecure, casual or part-time work.

The ACT Government is committed to improving the financial and personal wellbeing of women in the ACT by creating opportunities for women to enter or re-enter the workforce, including in traditionally male-dominated industries.

The **Future Skills for Future Jobs Grants 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**, which is led by the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union, involves collaboration and engagement with industry, unions, and key stakeholders across the ACT Government to support safe and inclusive workplaces in the construction industry, and to increase women's participation and retention in the industry.

The focus on improving the female participation rate is further supported through the implementation of the Procurement Values for gender balance in infrastructure tenders. Multiple projects have included specific targets and additional requirements for improved gender balance in the delivery of ACT Government projects. The CIT Campus Woden Project includes a specific requirement for increased female participation across the project that will be measured throughout the delivery.

The **Women's Return to Work Program** supports women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time due

to caring responsibilities. It helps them prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment with a one-off individual grant of up to \$1,000.

In 2020 and 2021, the ACT Government funded **GirlsRock** to deliver a suite of programs specifically targeted at girls and non-binary young people to empower them to perform and operate in the currently male-dominated field of contemporary music.

New investment

- › **\$420,000** to continue the Women's Return to Work Program, which supports women re-entering training or employment, for a further three years.
- › **\$6.2 million** in 2021-22 to extend the Jobs for Canberrans Fund.
- › **\$2 million** in 2021-22 to expand the Future Jobs Fund to provide grants to the higher education and research sector which will create and sustain jobs in growth industries.

Education and life-long learning

Equal access to education and development opportunities regardless of gender is an important aspect of gender equality. This includes supporting women and girls to engage in education that could lead to employment in traditionally male-dominated industries, like construction, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. It also means supporting and designing learning opportunities to cater to the diverse needs of women, girls, and gender diverse people in the ACT.

The **Women in Construction Pathways Program** is providing 40 school-based apprenticeships for ACT female students in years 10 and 11. The program encourages young women to consider non-traditional careers like those in trades and construction.

The **(Girls in) STEM Program** provides support for girls and young women to enter study and employment in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

CIT Yurauna Centre is CIT's dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre of Excellence. It is a student support

³ *Hidden disadvantage among women in the ACT*, 2018, Women's Centre for Health Matters Inc., <http://www.wchm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Hidden-disadvantage-among-women-in-the-ACT-final.pdf>

centre, providing tailored Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander courses, study support, and cultural advice.

Introductory English Centres are co-located in mainstream schools and provide support to newly arrived students with minimal English through intensive language teaching, prior to entry into mainstream schooling.

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.

Libraries ACT provides access to programs and events, and resources in physical and digital formats, including those of interest to women and girls.

New investment

- › **\$8.4 million** over two years (to be matched by the Commonwealth Government for a total of \$16.750 million) for the extension of the JobTrainer Fund.
- › **\$445,000** over four years to continue the School Legal Liaison pilot program to provide college students and their families with greater access to legal services and education on legal issues.
- › **\$2.1 million** over four years to provide a whole school approach to preventing domestic and family violence and reducing discrimination and harassment by creating a culture of gender equality and inclusion.
- › **\$12.5 million** over four years continue to the first phase of the *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT*.

Governance and institutions

The ACT Government is committed to improving how we analyse the impact of our programs and services on women and girls in the ACT.

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.

ACT Corrective Services

The ACT Government is dedicated to its Justice Reinvestment program, ‘Building Communities, Not Prisons’, which focuses on restorative practices and human rights, and is gender informed.

The number of women detainees in prisons in Australia is growing at a rate faster than that of men, and the challenges that women face are considerably greater than men, involving high levels of trauma including family and sexual violence. The impacts of women in custody are even further reaching if they are primary carers.

In 2018, the ACT Government introduced a **Women’s and Children’s Services Coordinator** to establish, support, review, and refine services for women detainees housed in the ACT Correctional Centre.

In June 2021, the **Walking with Women on a Pathway to Change** (Women Offenders Framework) was introduced to provide staff at the Alexander Maconochie Centre with best practice principles to better support women detainees.

New investment

- › **\$2 million** to revise the Children and Young People Act 2008 to ensure a quality legislative framework for the ACT’s child protection and family support system.
- › **\$10 million** over four years to provide continued funding for the ACT Data Analytics Centre, the ACT Data Lake, and the Data and Analytics Hub to support Government’s commitment to improve how we use, manage and govern public sector data as an effective tool to benefit the ACT community.
- › **\$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. This program improves the capacity of vulnerable witnesses to engage in, and be heard by, the criminal justice system, improving their access to justice and enhancing the fairness of the justice system.

- › **\$2.5 million** over four years to strengthen support to the ACT Legal Aid Commission to meet increased demand for the Commission's services, including its telephone advice service and services to support victims of family violence and elder abuse.
- › **\$576,000** over four years to meet the growth in demand for the Official Visitors Scheme. The Scheme provides independent oversight of services for vulnerable people in government institutions and community facilities who are dependent on service providers.
- › **\$311,000** in 2021-22 to provide funding for a temporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families Advocate, together with a support staff member, pending the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner.
- › **\$4.6 million** over four years to continue to deliver on the ACT's obligations under the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, which provides redress payments, counselling and psychological care to eligible survivors of child sexual abuse.
- › **\$3.2 million** over four years to proceed with the next stage of the Wellbeing Framework, including to support the development of an evidence base of wellbeing data in the ACT and to enable more effective targeting of Government policies, including through reporting on the wellbeing of specific groups and work towards progressing gender responsive budgeting. This funding includes a position 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*.

4 *Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market*, 2016, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/australian-unpaid-care-work-and-the-labour-market.pdf>

Time

In Australia, women spend substantially more time on unpaid care work than men. A 2016 study published by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, found that women spend 64.4 per cent of their average weekly working time on unpaid care work compared to 36.1 per cent for men. This means that for every hour Australian men commit to unpaid care work, Australian women commit one hour and 48 minutes.⁴

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'.

In the ACT, women are among the most likely to report low levels of quality time.

The amount of time a person has to themselves and the autonomy they have to choose what to do with that time directly affects a person's ability to access services, build and maintain relationships, work, learn, socialise, provide care, and heal.

The ACT Government's commitment to the **ACT Wellbeing Framework** will help us give further consideration to inequalities in unpaid work and the extent to which government initiatives support women to have improved autonomy over their time.

Housing and home

Access to safe, appropriate, and affordable housing is essential to women and girls' wellbeing.

Older women are one of the fastest growing groups experiencing homelessness in Australia; and households headed by single mothers face additional barriers in securing affordable housing. Additionally, when women flee domestic violence they are often forced to flee their homes and can be left with nowhere else to go.

The ACT Government provides funding for community organisations to deliver specific and targeted homelessness services, including:

- › YWCA Canberra's **Next Door**, a specialist service that assists older women to access and maintain affordable and safe homes in the ACT;
- › The **Homelessness Service for Asylum Seekers and their Families**, managed by the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services (MARSS Australia Inc.); and
- › OneLink's **tenancy and support for people experiencing homelessness throughout COVID-19**.

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

The **Affordable Rental Scheme** provides affordable housing for older people who are on low incomes by using a banded rent system that means tenants pay an affordable rate that reflects their capacity to pay.

In 2020, construction commenced on **Common Ground Dickson**. Common Ground is a model of multi-unit permanent supportive housing based on 'Housing First' principles designed to provide a long-term, high-quality housing option for people who are on low incomes, and a housing solution for people who experience chronic homelessness. The future tenant cohort for Common Ground Dickson is intended to include older women, single parents, and families with children.

New investment

- › **\$80 million** over three years to undertake additional public housing repairs and maintenance including kitchen upgrades, domestic violence security works and disability modifications.
- › **\$19 million** to support the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program.
- › **\$640,000** in 2021-22 to support initial works and planning and design for the first stage of a build-to-rent affordable rental project, co-located with Common Ground Gungahlin.

- › **\$8.6 million** over three years to expand the capacity of existing homelessness services, including specialist homelessness programs that commenced operation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- › **\$350,000** for enhanced Alexander Maconochie Centre infrastructure and wellbeing. This includes funding to explore options for long-term accommodation for women detainees.

Access and connectivity

Services and transport connect Canberrans with people, places, work, and vital support. For services and transport to be accessible, responsive, and tailored, the diverse needs and experiences of women and girls must be considered in planning.

Canberra is a multicultural city, with more than 54,000 women and girls in the ACT born overseas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were 1.6 per cent of the total population of women and girls in the ACT at the 2016 Census.

To support the delivery of culturally appropriate care in the ACT, the ACT Government published **Community Cultural Profiles**. These include information on migration history, communication issues, cultural health beliefs, and practices to support medical professionals to understand cultural needs and beliefs.

Childbirth classes in languages other than English are also available to support non-English speaking women and their partners. The classes are facilitated by a midwife with Mandarin and Arabic interpreters available.

The **Work Experience and Support Program** provides the opportunity for migrants and refugees to gain office skills and Australian workplace experience. Participants gain confidence to enter the paid workforce and develop important networks within the ACT Public Service.

The **Women's Information Service**, run by the ACT Office for Women, provides timely information and referral options for a range of issues including domestic violence, financial stress, access to housing, training and employment options, and available community supports.

New investment

- › **\$2.2 million** to provide more transport options for people in Canberra's growing regions, by delivering additional buses, drivers, and infrastructure to service the new suburb of Whitlam.
- › **\$17.7 million** over four years to deliver a city-wide package of active travel projects to strengthen opportunities for walking and cycling across Canberra. This will include construction of an off-road cycle path along a section of Sulwood Drive and improvement of Sulwood Drive/Manheim Street intersection; design and feasibility for the Garden City cycle route and cycle connectivity in Gungahlin; improvements to the existing active travel network through construction of new community paths and missing links; and increased investment in cycle path maintenance.
- › **\$28.8 million** over four years to upgrade 11 local shopping centres across Canberra to create more inviting and accessible public spaces; deliver new or upgraded play spaces for six Canberra suburbs, with improvements to be undertaken at play spaces in Kaleen, Ngunnawal, Chisholm, Gordon, Lyons and Aranda; deliver more dedicated dog parks, with two new parks to be established in the Lanyon Valley and Franklin; and undertake major improvements to the Tuggeranong Foreshore precinct from Reed Street South to Tuggeranong Town Park.
- › **\$1.6 million** over four years to provide grant funding to the ACT Disability, Aged Carer Advocacy Service and Advocacy for Inclusion to increase their capacity to provide targeted advocacy support and services to people with disability.

Living standards

In the ACT there are two and a half times more women than men who are sole parents on a low income.⁵ For this reason, mainstream ACT Government initiatives to support households to lower their utilities costs are expected to significantly benefit women.

The **Utilities Hardship Fund** assists Canberrans who need the greatest level of support in paying their utility bills by offering \$100 vouchers to eligible customers.

The **Sustainable Household Scheme** will provide Canberrans with access to zero-interest loans of between \$2,000 and \$15,000 to support eligible ACT households to live more comfortably, reduce emissions and their energy costs.

The **Sustainable Home Advice Program** helps ACT residents contact the Actsmart Sustainable Home Advice line for general information on how to reduce the cost of their electricity bills. Energy experts can also help compare the running costs of domestic appliances and provide simple tips to save energy.

The ACT Government will also support the transition of the **Canberra Relief Network** to a community-led model to provide planning, data collection and a streamlined response to food security beyond the public health emergency of COVID-19.

New investment

- › **\$1.1 million** to provide increased economic and social support in response to the impact of the current COVID-19 public health emergency on the community, particularly for Canberrans with a disability, older Canberrans and people experiencing financial hardship.
- › **\$9.4 million** over four years to establish a Future of Education Equity fund to provide grants to disadvantaged families to support them to meet their educational expenses. The Government will also deliver a two-year trial at five schools to provide breakfast and lunch for students three days a week.
- › **\$2.5 million** to provide land tax credits to residential landlords who reduce rent payable by tenants whose income has been affected by the current COVID-19 outbreak. To be eligible, landlords must reduce rent payable by their tenants by at least 25 per cent. Eligible landlords will be provided land tax credits of 50 per cent of the rent reduction up to \$100 per week from 1 August to 31 December 2021.

⁵ *Hidden disadvantage among women in the ACT*, 2018, Women's Centre for Health Matters Inc., <https://www.womenshealthmatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Hidden-disadvantage-among-women-in-the-ACT-final.pdf>

- › **\$250,000** in 2021-22 to extend the ACT Hardship Fund, which provides financial assistance to individuals who are unable to work while waiting on the result of a COVID-19 test and meet eligibility criteria.
- › **\$509,000** in 2021-22 to provide funding to the Community Services Directorate pandemic response team to continue implementation of the ACT Government Community Recovery Roadmap as part of the ongoing whole of government response to the pandemic.
- › **\$120,000** in 2021-22 to support the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian program to provide financial assistance of up to \$2,000 for clients who hold an ACT Services Access Card and to support the resettlement of refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants living in the ACT.

Environment and climate

With more women in the ACT sole parents and on low incomes than men, the ACT Government is creating opportunities for women to reduce their cost of living while also supporting the environment and climate.

A **Big Canberra Battery** will be built in the ACT as part of the government's priority to become a net zero emissions city. The battery will aim to put downward pressure on electricity prices in the ACT as more households move to renewable energy and electric vehicles.

The **Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme** places a requirement on electricity retailers to achieve energy savings in households and small to medium businesses. A target has also been placed on them to ensure a proportion of the savings are delivered to low income households.

The **Home Energy Efficiency Program** offers practical ways for low income households in the ACT to reduce energy and water bills.

New investment

- › **\$3.1 million** to continue the Solar for Low Income program to provide subsidies of up to \$2,500 for eligible low-income homeowners for the installation of rooftop solar systems.

Social connection

Being connected with family, friends, and community is important to the overall wellbeing of Canberrans. Sport provides opportunities for us to connect through participation in local sporting activities and by supporting elite teams.

In Australia, women are under-represented in organised sport—as participants, coaches, officials, administrators, and board members—when compared to men.⁶

The ACT Government continues to support sporting initiatives that provide opportunities for women from all backgrounds to participate, connect, and have an active lifestyle.

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

provides financial assistance to individuals, clubs, and organisations in the ACT to support participation, education, and training activities that enhance sport and recreation opportunities for women and girls in the ACT.

The **Sport and Recreation Operational Program** subsidises operational costs to assist peak body organisations to work in partnership with the ACT Government to develop participation opportunities in sport and physical recreation in the ACT.

The **Healthy Canberra Grant: Meet and Move** program offers grants to community organisations to improve the health of Canberrans and minimise the risk of them developing chronic diseases. The program connects families to physical activity and play options in their local area, playgrounds, local parks and bushland.

The **Performance Sponsorship Program** provides support for Canberra's national league sporting teams to not only compete in their respective competitions, but to actively engage in the community through various sport and non-sport related activities.

New investment

- › **\$950,000** to continue to invest in sport and recreation facilities through providing lighting and amenity upgrades at Mawson Playing Fields and Kambah District Playing Fields, and cricket facility upgrades at Melba and Taylor.

⁶ 'Women in Sport', 2021, Clearinghouse for Sport, <https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/kb/women-in-sport>

- › **\$1.6 million** over four years to continue to support elite women's sport in the Territory by providing ongoing funding to the Canberra Capitals and Canberra United.

Identity and belonging

Being able to express identity and fully participate in society are key factors of wellbeing.

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grants Program** is open to all eligible Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT. Since the program has been administered, grant funding has been allocated to many women and girls for the purpose of undertaking education and training, participating in leadership programs and undertaking cultural activities that have led to business opportunities.

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

The **Participation (Women's) Grants** support projects that have a direct and positive impact on women. Funded projects include those that advance gender equality in the ACT; or promote better outcomes for women who experience multiple forms of discrimination caused by intersecting factors like poverty, disability, age, violence, trauma, cultural background, or language barriers.

The **Ministerial Advisory Council on Women** brings together women with a diversity of experience to assist the ACT Government develop and implement policies that are relevant to women in the ACT. The Council represents a wide range of women's views and is a valuable link between ACT women and the ACT Government.

New investment

- › **\$200,000** in 2021-22 to commission artwork by a female or non-binary artist celebrating women and/or non-binary individuals.
- › **\$1 million** over four years to provide additional resources to the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner to respond to an increasing number and range of complaints regarding discrimination and sexual harassment, access to health services, accommodation and housing, services for older women, abuse, neglect and exploitation of older women and women with a disability.

Contact

We value your feedback.

Please provide feedback on this year's Women's Budget Statement by emailing the Office for Women at women@act.gov.au or call 6207 0592.