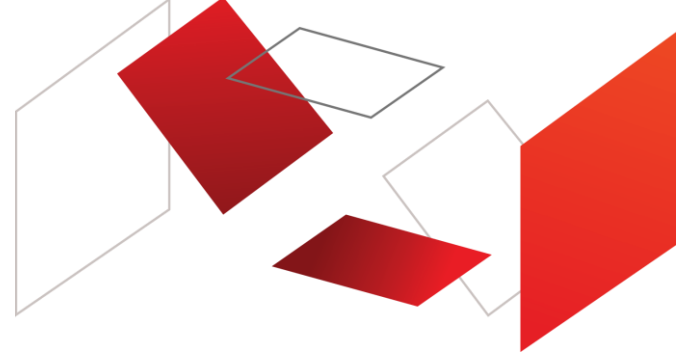




ACT  
Shelter

Working together for housing justice



# ACT Budget Submission 2026-27

## ACT Shelter Pre-Budget Submission (part 1) Sustaining the ACT's peak body for housing justice

*December 2025*

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### Introduction and overview

Housing sits at the centre of the ACT Government's social, economic and community wellbeing agenda. Delivering fair, effective and durable housing reform and investments – across social and affordable housing, homelessness services and prevention, urban planning, and the private rental market – requires informed policy design, strong sector collaboration, and sustained engagement with the people most affected. For over 50 years, ACT Shelter has played a vital role in supporting this work as the ACT's independent peak body for housing justice.

ACT Shelter now faces a critical and unsustainable funding shortfall. Without an increase in core funding in the 2026-27 Budget, ACT Shelter will not remain viable in its current form, placing at risk the Territory's only organisation dedicated to providing independent, whole-of-system housing policy leadership. This submission seeks an additional **\$198,000** in ongoing peak body funding, bringing ACT Government support to the minimal level required to enable ACT Shelter to operate as a credible, effective and sustainable peak body.

This request represents a modest and strategic investment for government, but it is fundamental to ACT Shelter's survival – and to the strength of the ACT's housing policy ecosystem.

This submission is the first instalment of ACT Shelter's contribution to the 2026-27 ACT Budget process. In early 2026, ACT Shelter will provide a second, more detailed submission outlining a broader package of budget measures to improve housing equity and affordability, and to reduce and prevent homelessness across the ACT. However, without action to address ACT Shelter's own funding viability, our capacity to undertake that work – and to support the Government's housing objectives more broadly – will be fundamentally compromised.

# The role and value of ACT Shelter

ACT Shelter is the only ACT-based peak body that brings together tenants, consumers, community housing providers, homelessness services, advocates and allied organisations to advance housing justice across the system. We also draw on a wider national network of housing expertise through our membership of the national Shelter movement, our active collaboration with the National Association of Renters' Organisations, and engagement with the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. We provide government with independent, evidence-informed advice; support coordination and collaboration across a complex service landscape; and seek to elevate the voices of people directly affected by housing stress, insecurity and homelessness.

At a time of complex and pressing housing challenges and significant policy reform, this role is more important than ever. Well-designed policy saves public money, avoids unintended consequences, and improves outcomes for individuals and communities. ACT Shelter's contribution strengthens policy design, implementation and legitimacy, and supports government to deliver on its housing commitments.

In 2025, ACT Shelter marked its 50th anniversary – an important milestone that underscored the organisation's enduring contribution to better housing outcomes in the ACT. Yet this legacy, and our capacity to continue serving the community, is under threat.

## Funding context

Historically, ACT Shelter's core funding from the Community Services Directorate has been insufficient to sustain the operations of a viable peak body. In 2020–21, this was partially ameliorated through a three-year '*Strengthening Systemic Advocacy – Housing and Homelessness*' grant, which brought ACT Shelter's total annual funding from the ACT Government to between \$365,000 and \$398,000. This additional funding enabled the organisation to increase its effectiveness and impact and meet basic operational and staffing costs.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
TOTAL FUNDING FROM ACT GOVERNMENT (CSD) (Peak Body Program funding + Strengthening Systemic Advocacy grant)	<b>\$398,002</b>	<b>\$379,936</b>	<b>\$364,599</b>

This supplementary funding expired on 30 June 2024, reducing ACT Shelter's annual funding from the ACT Government from \$365,000 to \$192,000. To maintain operations in 2024-25 and 2025-26, ACT Shelter has operated at a significant deficit and drawn on limited organisational reserves. Without a scaling back of operations, these reserves were set to be exhausted in 2025–26. To avert insolvency, staffing has been reduced to 1.7 FTE and in-kind support has been sought to support operational needs – a situation that has placed significant stress on staff. Staff workloads are unsustainable, organisational resilience risks being eroded, and the capacity to respond to the growing demand for policy input has been constrained.

While cashflow pressures will intensify toward the end of the financial year, the modest and time-limited Community Sector Funding boost from the ACT Government and a one-off external donation have helped avert insolvency in 2025-26. However, these measures do not

address the underlying structural shortfall in funding. Without additional funding, ACT Shelter will struggle to maintain operations or meet its responsibilities as the ACT's housing peak.

## Comparative underspend

Compared with housing peak bodies in other states and territories, ACT Shelter receives significantly lower levels of government funding, even after adjusting for population size (see [Appendix](#) below). Unlike many jurisdictions, the ACT also lacks separate, government-funded peak bodies dedicated solely to tenants, homelessness or community housing, further concentrating system-wide responsibilities within ACT Shelter. Despite this, ACT Government funding for ACT Shelter is well below that provided to other ACT community sector peak bodies, notwithstanding the scale and complexity of housing and homelessness challenges and housing's central role in social and economic outcomes. The current funding arrangement therefore represents a clear and persistent underspend relative to both need and expectation.

## What adequate funding would enable

Restoring ACT Shelter's funding would enable the organisation to deliver targeted, high-value work that strengthens housing policy design, improves system coordination, and supports better outcomes for people most affected by housing stress and homelessness. In particular, adequate funding would allow ACT Shelter to:

- **Strengthen the housing and homelessness evidence base** by analysing and synthesising existing ACT, ABS, AIHW and service-level data to identify emerging trends, unmet need and policy gaps. This work would support better targeting of programs, improve data consistency and definitions across the system, and contribute to a robust monitoring and benchmarking framework to support the ACT Government's obligation to progressively realise the human right to adequate housing. It could also include focused analysis of the private rental market and affordable housing supply to inform more effective policy responses to growing rental stress and the growing gap between social housing income thresholds and the income entry level for affordable housing eligibility.
- **Support coordinated responses to chronic and complex homelessness** by facilitating cross-sector collaboration between housing and homelessness services and allied systems such as mental health, alcohol and other drugs, disability, justice, domestic and family violence, and youth services. This includes revisiting and assessing progress against earlier work on high and complex needs in the ACT, identifying what has worked, where gaps remain, and how responses can be strengthened.
- **Improving services to prevent and respond to youth homelessness**, working in collaboration with Youth Coalition and other community sector stakeholders to supporting better planning and targeting of resources via a system-wide mapping and needs analysis.
- **Advance early-intervention and prevention approaches** by exploring innovative budgeting and investment models that better align government spending with long-term outcomes. This includes examining how budgeting frameworks such as the [Early Intervention Investment Framework](#) could be applied in the ACT to reduce demand on crisis services, improve life outcomes for people at risk of homelessness, and deliver better value for government over time.

- **Contribute to targeted system and law reform**, including youth homelessness planning in partnership with the Youth Coalition; strengthening cross-border coordination with NSW through ongoing engagement with regional homelessness leadership groups; and providing expert input into residential tenancy law reform to improve safety, security and dignity for renters and other occupants (with an emphasis on meeting commitments under the national 'Better Deal for Renter's framework and addressing the gap in protections for occupants).
- **Ensure equity and affordability are embedded in planning and housing reforms**, particularly as the ACT pursues higher density, missing-middle housing and transit-oriented development and increased housing supply under the National Housing Accord. ACT Shelter would provide independent, housing-equity-focused analysis and input to help ensure supply reforms support more equitable housing outcomes and more inclusive communities, and do not exacerbate existing housing inequalities.
- **Support implementation of the human right to housing** by working with the ACT Human Rights Commission to build community and government understanding of the practical implications of enshrining the right in law and translating it into effective policy and decision-making.

Across all of this work, ACT Shelter would continue to provide high-quality, independent policy input into government consultations and legislative assembly inquiries, government working groups, and commissioning processes, drawing on its unique system-wide perspective. Modest, stable funding would enable ACT Shelter to move from operating in crisis mode to delivering sustained, strategic contributions that add measurable value to government decision-making and improve housing outcomes across the ACT.

## **A constructive partner at a critical moment**

ACT Shelter approaches this submission in the spirit of partnership. We are committed to working constructively with the ACT Government and the broader community to improve housing outcomes for Canberrans. But partnership requires capacity. A housing system as complex and pressured as the ACT's cannot afford the loss, or hollowing out, of its independent housing peak.

The 2026-27 Budget presents a critical opportunity to secure ACT Shelter's future and, in doing so, strengthen the policy ecosystem that underpins housing reform in the ACT. An additional \$198,000 in ongoing funding would ensure ACT Shelter's viability, safeguard its independence, and enable it to continue contributing meaningfully to a fairer, more effective housing system. This is a small investment with outsized returns: for government, for the sector, and for the people of Canberra who depend on a housing system that works.

## **Recommendation**

***That the ACT Government provide an additional \$198,000 in ongoing peak body funding in the 2026-27 Budget to restore ACT Shelter to a viable and sustainable footing, enabling it to continue its essential role as the ACT's independent peak body for housing justice and to support effective, evidence-informed housing policy and reform.***

## APPENDIX: Shelter funding and staffing across the country

The information below outlines state and territory government funding arrangements for peak housing policy, research and advocacy. Across Australia, the primary 'housing consumer' advocacy peaks are Shelters and Tenants' Unions. While Tenants' Unions are largely funded as community legal centres, they also undertake systemic advocacy and maintain dedicated policy positions. Governments also fund peak bodies representing community housing providers; where these are not funded specifically as housing peaks, Shelters are often resourced to undertake this broader policy and advocacy role. In some jurisdictions, governments additionally fund a dedicated homelessness peak body.

### ACT Shelter

2025-2026	Amount	% of Total	Notes
<b>Peak funding ACT Govt</b>	199,000	96	Ongoing contract to 2027
<b>Miscellaneous funds</b>	38,000		
<b>Membership fees</b>	1,700		
	<b>\$238,700</b>		
<b>Staff</b>		<b>Hours F/N</b>	
<b>Permanent</b>			
<b>Full time employees</b>	1		
Chief Executive Officer		75	
<b>Part Time employees</b>	2		
Policy Officer		30	
Office Manager		20	
		<b>125</b>	
Full time equivalent staff	1.68		

No funded Tenants' Union, community housing or homelessness peak bodies. Legal Aid ACT receives funding for a tenancy advice service sourced from bond interest.

### Shelter Tasmania

2025-2026	Amount	% of Total	Notes
State Govt Funding	724,635	96	Ongoing 5-year contract
Miscellaneous funds	4,600	1	
Membership fees	28,659	4	
	<b>\$757,894</b>		
<b>Staff</b>		<b>Hours F/N</b>	
<b>Permanent</b>			
<b>Full time employees</b>	1		
Chief Executive Officer		76	
<b>Part Time employees</b>	5		
Policy Officer		60	
Communications Officer		42	
Finance Manager		30	
Senior Project Officer		60	
Workforce Development & Administration Officer		52	
<b>Casual employees</b>	1		
Quality Assurance Officer		14	
		<b>334</b>	
<b>Full time equivalent staff</b>	4.39		

Other housing-related organisations with Tasmania Government funding: Tenants' Union Tasmania. Shelter is funded to undertake community housing and homelessness work.

## Shelter NSW

2023/4	Amount	% of Total	Notes
State Govt Funding	879,763	96	<a href="#">NSW Community Peaks Program<sup>1</sup></a>
Miscellaneous funds	25,000	2.8	
Membership fees	8,829	0.9	
	<b>\$913,592</b>		
<b>Staff</b>		Hours F/N	
<b>Permanent</b>			
<b>Full time employees</b>	2		
Chief Executive Officer			
Principal Policy Officer			
Policy Officer			
Project coordinator			
<b>Part Time employees</b>	3		
<b>Casual employees</b>	1		
<b>Full time equivalent staff</b>	5		

NSW Govt funds: Homelessness NSW **\$3,785,928, FTE 13**; Community Housing Industry Association of NSW (CHIA NSW) **\$3,894,205 FTE 20.15**; and TUNSW, which receives funding from bond interest and CLC funding.

## Shelter WA

2023/4	Amount	% of Total	Notes
State Govt Funding	2,848,873	90.4	Includes project funding. Core funding is \$940K of this.
Fee for service	131,955	4.2	
Membership fees	43,382	1.4	
Interest	66,532	2.1	
Donation	47,433	1.5	
Other	11,577	0.4	
	<b>\$3,149,752</b>		
<b>Staff</b>		Hours F/N	
Chief Executive Officer	1		
Business Manager	1		
Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor	0.8		
Senior Policy & Advocacy Advisor	0.8		
Media and Campaigns Manager	0.8		
Senior Marketing Advisor	0.5		
Events & Marketing Coordinator	1		
Finance and Human Resource Advisor	0.5		
Executive Coordinator	1		
Project Lead	Varies - by project		Fixed term project staff - for the life of a range of projects
Project Support Officer	Varies - by project		Fixed term project staff - for the life of a range of projects
Full time equivalent staff (core staff - ongoing)	7.1		F/T – 3, P/T - 5

No CHIA so Shelter undertakes community housing sector advocacy, sector support etc. WA gov't funds tenancy advice and advocacy through Circle Green community legal centre.

<sup>1</sup> NSW gov't funds 14 peak organisations

## NT Shelter

2024/5	Amount	% of Total	Notes
Recurrent			
State Govt Peak Body Funding	718,000	50.2	
Homelessness Response Group	148,000	10.4	
Non recurrent			
Sector capacity building	27,500	1.9	
SHS accreditation support	74,635		
Sector conference sponsorship	27,500		
AHURI project	208,079		
CHIA auspice	250,000		
	<b>\$1,428,964</b>		
<b>Staff</b>		Hours F/N	
Chief Executive Officer			
Principal Policy Officer			
Policy Officer			
Project coordinator			
	3.9 FTE		

NT govt funds tenancy advice and advocacy through [Darwin community legal centre](#).

## Q Shelter

2023/4	Amount	% of Total	Notes
Grants			
Dept Housing	6,161,612		
Dept Employment, Business & Training	745,302		
Dept Justice	9,058		
Other			
Training/events	129,518		
Donations/sponsorships	56,733		
Membership	32,087		
Interest	63,948		
	<b>\$7,198,258</b>		
<b>Staff</b>			
Full time employees	20		
Part Time employees	7		
Full time equivalent staff	24.71		

The Queensland Government also funds: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland (established to represent First Nations housing providers and improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples); Community Housing Industry Association of Queensland (CHIA Qld); Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Inc. (QYHC); Council to Homeless Persons Queensland; and the Community Services Industry Alliance.

## SA Shelter

Shelter SA receives no government funding. It was funded by the SA State Government from 1977 to 2020 (funding level at \$380,000), in 2020, the Liberal Marshall Government ceased advocacy funding, consolidated funds and called for tenders for a housing and homelessness customer advisory service<sup>2</sup>. Primary income is now from membership fees. There have been some consulting and projects, but these are random and unreliable. They are not in a financially sustainable position.

2023/4	Amount	% of Total	Notes
Membership	118,915		
Service provided	18,182		
Donations	13,130		
Interest	1,725		
	<b>\$151,952</b>		
<b>Staff</b>			
Part-time employee	1		

The [Community Housing Council Industry Association SA](#) (CHIA SA) receives \$503,597 from the SA Government.

## Victoria

Shelter Vic and other peaks were defunded by the Kennet Government in 1994.

Different funded housing peak bodies and systemic policy advocacy organisations include:

- Tenants Victoria (FTE 28) including policy positions
- [Council to Homeless Persons](#) (\$3,421,178 including, \$1,651,162 Govt grants)
- [CHIA](#) (Govt grant of \$940,512)
- Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum
- [Brotherhood of St Lawrence](#) (\$180,000)
- [Victorian Public Tenants Assoc](#) - \$960,905. Staff 3 F/T, 6 P/T FTE: 6.6

The Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria is also a peak body funded by the Victoria government and which includes a focus on systemic housing policy reform.

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<sup>2</sup> [Shelter SA faces axe in State Govt housing reform - News | InDaily, Inside South Australia](#)