



## Inner South Canberra Community Council

Email: [budgetconsultation@act.gov.au](mailto:budgetconsultation@act.gov.au)

### **ISCCC 2026 BUDGET SUBMISSION: THE FORGOTTEN SUBURB**

The Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC), in concert with the Oaks Estate Residents Association (OERA), makes this submission to the ACT Government for consideration in preparation of its 2026 budget.

2. ISCCC's considerable reservations about the future trajectory of the ACT budget will be fully set out in our submission to the ACT Assembly Select Committee on the fiscal sustainability of the ACT, and we do not repeat them here.

3. However, it is within the context of those concerns that we limit our budget proposals to a small number, which are however important, and should be achievable by reprioritisation of existing resources within the relevant budget headings. The proposals are key to the implementation of the Government's strategic plan to address the problems facing the "forgotten suburb", Oaks Estate.

4. The Oaks Estate Five Year Strategic Plan was prepared in 2025 by a task force reporting to the Deputy Chief Minister, Ms Yvette Berry MLA, responding to a resolution passed by the ACT Assembly. It requires an annual report on implementation to the Assembly, and is a coordinated, whole of Government response to address the complex issues facing the Oaks Estate community and its residents. The Strategic Plan was developed through a process of community consultation that was well supported by the Oaks Estate community.

5. However, a number of important actions under the Strategic Plan were deferred by the Government for consideration in the budget context, or in the case of community safety, unfunded. The purpose of this submission is therefore to remind the Government of these issues and ask that the Government fully fund the necessary measures in its forthcoming budget.

6. The Strategic Plan is divided into six distinct domains with separate goals for each domain and specific actions for each goal. The domains are Safety, Housing, Places and Spaces, Transport, Health and Education.

7. During the consultation, community feedback stressed the urgent need to address community safety in Oaks Estate and that this was the number one priority action. Under the Safety domain the goal is that “People living in Oaks Estate feel safe and are safe in their homes and community.” There is no budget allocation to achieve this goal and the actions mostly comprise the provision of information to residents. This is unsatisfactory as it does not address the ongoing and serious nature of the community safety concerns in Oaks Estate. They already know how to ring triple 0. Since the Strategy was compiled, there have been more serious incidents, of which a major one is detailed in the Attachment. What is needed is a permanent police presence at Oaks Estate to reduce the likelihood of more serious and life threatening incidents.

8. This issue needs to be addressed in the 2026 Budget, and would at minimum require an ongoing commitment of perhaps \$250,000 annually to provide a police presence at least during daylight hours.

9. In the Housing domain there is an action to “Explore opportunities to continue funding the Community Inclusion Program beyond the 30 June 2026.” Public housing at Oaks Estate, which is of poor quality, is used to provide emergency housing for severely disadvantaged tenants. The funding of this Community Inclusion program is essential to provide support to vulnerable and at risk public housing tenants. St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies) currently operates this program and has done so for the last two years. When this program was funded by the ACT Government in 2024, it was subject to budget consideration and Vinnies were only notified about the funding at the end of June 2024. If this happens again in 2026, there will be no capacity for Vinnies or any other organisation to plan service delivery or guarantee continuity of service, staff and support to tenants. There needs to be a commitment to fund the program on an ongoing basis before the budget process is completed.

10. We are not aware of the details of the Vinnies contract, but suggest \$500k annually as a guesstimate. Government officers should be able to insert the correct figure.

11. In the Places and Spaces domain an action to “Explore options for upgrades to footpaths and handrails to the river walk” are deemed to be “subject to a future budget process.” The lack of footpath access in the residential streets in Oaks Estate is a significant safety concern for residents. Parents pushing prams, children walking to playgrounds and other community facilities, residents walking to shops, all have to walk on the road. The River Walk is one of Oaks Estate’s main recreational assets. Cut off from the rest of the ACT, and with no direct bus link to the City’s public transport system, Oaks Estate residents have limited access to recreational assets enjoyed by most Canberrans. The River Walk is advertised by the ACT Government as a Heritage Walk, but the stairs are very dangerous, with insufficient hand rails or ones which are badly eroded. These issues need to be urgently addressed in the 2026 budget. We suggest an allocation of at least \$500k in the first instance to make a start in addressing these problems.

12. A second issue under this domain is the need for increased access to the Oaks Estate Community Hall.

13. The OERA has repeatedly asked the ACT Government to facilitate improved access to the Oaks Estate Community Hall. Although the cost of rental for the Hall appears relatively small, it is prohibitive for the Association to hire the Hall on a regular basis. This includes for the regular meetings of the OERA and other community events. This is now an even more pressing issue with the development of the Five Year Strategic Plan, as the OERA will need to provide regular feedback to residents and to gather information about the effectiveness of implemented actions.

14. \$1000 annually will cover the OERA costs for access to the community hall.

#### Summary of ISCCC/ OERA budget proposals

##### Safety Domain

1) Continuous police presence. \$250k ongoing

##### Housing Domain

2) Community Inclusion program. \$500k annually ongoing

##### Places and Spaces Domain

3) Footpaths and safety improvements for Riverside Walk. \$500k to make a start

4) Community Hall - funding for Residents Association access. \$1000 annually.

Colin Walters

Chair, Inner south Canberra Community Council

With Fiona MacGregor

President, Oaks Estate Residents Association

13 January 2026

## Attachment

### A serious incident which took place after the Strategic Plan was completed

Thursday 18 December: over 10 police vehicles attended an incident in George St that involved shots being fired. The Tactical Response Team was also involved and the street was blocked off for some hours.

When these incidents occur, members of the community feel very unsafe and there is never any debriefing or counselling provided to community members who may need it. Residents requested a community policing response that was not included in the Strategic Plan.