



ACT
Government

Australian Capital Territory

Budget 2023–24

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Budget Statement

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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

The 2023-24 ACT Budget reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve their aspirations and improve access to services.

The significant new investments in this Budget include the delivery of new Aboriginal health facilities and the provision of more support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, ensuring more and better health services can be delivered for and by the community.

The Government is also continuing reform to address the recommendations of the Aboriginal-led *Our Booris, Our Way* review into the child protection system and investing in more culturally appropriate legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific healthcare

The Government is committed to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce is critical to achieving this.

The Government will provide \$1.3 million over four years for the continued delivery of the Indigenous Allied Health Australia ACT Health Academy, which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enter the health sector workforce by offering education in a culturally supported environment.

The Government is also investing \$2.1 million over four years to deliver initial actions under the *ACT Health Workforce Strategy 2023-2032*, including a mentoring program for the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

The Government has a strong partnership with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services (Winnunga), the ACT's only Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service. In this Budget, the Government will continue this partnership as part of the major redevelopment of the Watson Health Precinct.

This \$49 million redevelopment of the precinct will include a capital grant to Winnunga to construct a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation facility, as well as replacement of the existing Ted Noffs and Catholic Care facilities with purpose-built facilities.

The Government is also continuing its investment in the Ngunawal Bush Healing Farm, with \$620,000 allocated for the construction of a machinery shed. This complements recent work to build and support a residential service delivery trial.

Continuing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led reform agenda

Guided by the *Our Booris, Our Way* review, the Budget includes \$1.9 million over the next four years to improve culturally safe practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who engage with child protection services. As part of this package, the Government will direct \$373,000 in 2023-24 to boost the newly established First Nations Family Support team within Child and Youth Protection Services.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions to implement the recommendations of the *Our Booris, Our Way* review including:

- > improved frontline services such as Family Group Conferencing;
- > specific expertise and resources committed to Family Finding;
- > ongoing work to embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in legislation, policy and practice;

- > foundational work to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector focussing on children, young people, and families; and
- > improving cultural expertise within Child and Youth Protection Services.

Additionally, as part of a package of \$2.3 million over four years to better support the legal needs of vulnerable Canberrans, the ACT Government is providing funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client liaison officers to work in the community legal sector and for Legal Aid.

This builds on recent Government actions to maintain service delivery levels of community-based organisations operating in the legal assistance sector including the establishment of the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care and protection legal advocacy service.

We have partnered with Aboriginal-owned consultancy Curijo to develop and deliver culturally safe, trauma-informed engagement with the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the implementation of recommendations in the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program report, other domestic, family and sexual violence reforms and recommendations of the We Don't Shoot Our Wounded report.

These initiatives support a range of other measures to address critical needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, including progressing community led approaches to healing, truth telling and reconciliation through the Healing and Reconciliation Fund and an independent review to examine the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT's criminal justice system.

Measuring our progress

In 2019 the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and ACT Government partnered on the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028* (the ACT Agreement), committing to work together to support the aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT.

In this same spirit of partnership, in July 2020, the ACT joined with other Australian governments and the Coalition of Peaks to sign the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* ('the National Agreement').

In 2022, the ACT Government delivered on a commitment under the National Agreement by conducting a whole of government review of expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs and activities (the Expenditure Review), to provide better information that may inform future resource allocation decisions.

The Expenditure Review found that, in 2020-21, the Government spent \$25.6 million on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, and that grants funding to support outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had increased from \$3.1 million in 2019-20 to \$8.7 million in 2020-21. The Review also found that the Government's work under the ACT Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy (ATSIPP), including efforts to increase the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers for large building projects, is having a real impact. Procurement expenditure directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers more than doubled between 2019-20 (\$7.8 million) and 2020-21 (\$18.4 million).

The Expenditure Review has established a baseline to assist the ACT Government to track and monitor expenditure. Understanding where and how expenditure intended to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been directed is a crucial step towards ensuring our priorities are correct.

This Budget builds partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the driver of new investment and demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting the aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.