



Submission:

Inquiry into the ACT Budget 2020-21

**ACT Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and
Economic Equality and ACT Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

March 2021

About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges Canberra has been built on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respects to their Elders and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. We celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contributions to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS Network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS's vision is for Canberra to be a just, safe and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community-based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

ACTCOSS advises that this document may be publicly distributed, including by placing a copy on our website.

Contact Details

Phone: 02 6202 7200
Address: Weston Community Hub, 1/6 Gritten St, Weston ACT 2611
Email: actcoss@actcoss.org.au
Web: actcoss.org.au
CEO: Dr Emma Campbell

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Introduction

This submission provides a summary of ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) responses to the 2020-21 ACT Budget announced on 9 February 2021.

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to your committee and thank you for considering our submission.

2020-21 ACT Budget process

Firstly, ACTCOSS would like to take this opportunity to provide some commentary on the 2020-21 ACT Budget Inquiry process and what we understand to be ongoing changes to the submission and hearings process.

We are aware that the Legislative Assembly of the ACT has determined that on presentation of the ACT Budget, appropriation units would stand referred across the Assembly's seven standing committees in accordance with the areas of responsibility assigned to each committee.

We understand that some committees including the ACT Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality and the ACT Standing Committee on Public Accounts intend to only consider written evidence rather than hold public hearings.

The lack of opportunity for peak and community-based organisations to provide testimony at public hearings will reduce public oversight of ACT Government spending decisions, policy and performance.

Further, while there may be some value in referring matters across specialist committees, this raises challenges for the oversight of government decisions by peak and community organisations which have limited resources and may not be able to make submissions to or follow the activities of multiple committees.

The ability for peak and community groups to provide public evidence to the process has been a valued and long-standing strength of the ACT Assembly's oversight of public accounts.

While the COVID-19 public health emergency has changed the way that we connect at public events for a period, peak bodies look to government for assurances that changes will not reduce the levels of public scrutiny, accountability and opportunities to interact with the Assembly oversight process.

We hope that future budgets will allow the full participation of peak bodies and community organisations as has been the historical practice in the ACT.

ACTCOSS 2020-21 ACT Budget submission

In summary, ACTCOSS believes that the delayed 2020-21 ACT Budget contained some welcome investments but fell short on the investments and vision required to ensure that Canberrans facing disadvantage are protected as the ACT emerges from the COVID-19 crisis.

The Budget includes pre-announced measures of \$15.8 million to extend funding introduced during COVID-19 for mental health services, \$2.6 million for housing and homelessness services, and new commitments for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

ACTCOSS welcomed budget measures including \$37.6 million to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing, low-income owner-occupiers and rental properties; \$900,000 for a Palliative Care ACT Respite Hub pilot; \$1.2 million to extend COVID-19 tenancy relief until 30 June 2021 for residential landlords who reduced rents by at least 25% for tenants who have been impacted by COVID-19; and \$4.9 million from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to continue to implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review.

While we welcome these investments, the 2020-21 ACT Budget is most notable for what is missing.

This Budget includes major commitments on infrastructure, including light rail and climate change initiatives, but does not include any additional money to implement the commitments in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement to increase social and affordable housing.

The ACT's housing crisis is worsening. Yet this ACT Budget will provide little comfort to Canberrans trying to keep a roof over their heads.

This is a missed opportunity. As the ACT recovers from the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, higher investment in housing delivers a high benefit. For every \$1 million invested in social housing, GDP is boosted by \$1.3 million.¹

We are deeply concerned that this ACT Budget funds some services for only one or two years. This means organisations, their staff and their clients have no future certainty. This contributes to high rates of anxiety and staff turnover and makes the work of the community sector very challenging.

The Health Justice Partnership, a successful service that supports new parents experiencing domestic and family violence, is only funded until the end of June 2021.

More broadly, we are disappointed to see that investment in community services does not appear to be part of the ACT Government's strategy to emerge from the COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

¹ KPMG, *Social Housing Initiative Review*, Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee, September 2012, p. 2, http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content101/c6/social_housing_initiative_review.pdf

For example, we would like to have seen more investment in community-based early intervention services that prevent people from entering the justice system.

There is a social inclusion statement, yet it is little more than a shell. There is little new spending in this Budget directly targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including people with disability, older people and carers, despite these people being among the most impacted by COVID-19.

The health care and social assistance sector is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the ACT as we try to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding and diverse population and an increasing population of older Canberrans.

We are struggling to meet demand, particularly following COVID-19. In the most recent National Survey of Community Sector Workers, 58% reported that poverty and disadvantage had increased among the people accessing their services; 84% reported demand in the community either 'increased' or 'increased significantly'; and less than 4% reported that they were completely able to meet demand.²

The community sector also makes an important economic contribution. For every \$1 a year invested in childcare, we can achieve an annual GDP increase of around \$5,³ and community service organisations in the ACT make a contribution of \$2.2 billion to the ACT economy.⁴

One area of hope is the Knowledge Capital – Future Jobs Fund announced in the ACT Budget. As a growing sector, and a major creator of jobs and economic growth, we urge the ACT Government to ensure that the needs of the health and community sector are included in the Future Jobs Fund program.

Information requested by the Committee

In this section ACTCOSS provides a response to information requested by the Committee:

1. A brief overview of your organisation and its purpose

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

2 Disaggregated ACT data provided to ACTCOSS by ACOSS from national survey. National data available in *The profile & pulse of the sector: Findings from the 2019 Australian Community Sector Survey*: <https://www.acoss.org.au/community-sector-policy-publications/>

3 J Dixon, *A comparison of the economic impacts of income tax cuts and childcare spending*, Centre of Policy Studies, Victoria University, October 2020, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/A-comparison-of-the-economic-impacts-of-income-tax-cuts-and-childcare-spending-WEB.pdf>

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2014-15*, ABS, 2015.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS Network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS's vision is for Canberra to be a just, safe and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community-based service providers in the health and social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

ACTCOSS engaged with our approximately 400 members and peaks on budget priorities and also held a forum with around 50 community organisations and services on their response to the 2020-21 ACT Budget which has informed this submission.

2. Has your organisation/group developed a written analysis of the ACT Budget that it would like to submit to the Committee?

Yes. ACTCOSS developed a 2020-21 ACT Budget Bulletin which we include with this submission at [Attachment A](#) which was distributed to all ACTCOSS members. Also attached as [Attachment B](#) is a summary of the ACTCOSS Budget Forum where ACTCOSS members had the opportunity to put their views on the Budget and ask questions of relevant ministers.

3. Your organisation's three key priorities for the ACT Budget

ACTCOSS has interests in all issues impacting our member organisations and the people they support. These issues include: housing, education, planning, the community services sector, justice, children, women, youth and families, disability and carers and many other groups who experience low incomes and disadvantage. We work across social justice priorities. However, broadly speaking, we wanted this Budget to deliver:

1. Spending commitments to deliver, as a priority, the policies in the Parliamentary Agreement that focus on achieving social justice, reducing poverty and supporting vulnerable people
2. New money to meet the shortfall of 3000 social housing dwellings, especially through effective land transfers to community housing providers
3. Investments in preparation for the move to a commissioning approach including the identification of community need and the design and procurement of services to meet that need.

See also our summary checklist of policy briefs that ACTCOSS issued in the lead up to the 2020 ACT Election (at [Attachment C](#)).

4. Your organisation's views on the ACT Budget in relation to your three key priorities

ACTCOSS believes that the delayed 2020-21 ACT Budget contained some welcome investments but fell short on the investments and vision required to ensure Canberrans facing disadvantage were protected as the ACT emerges from the COVID-19 crisis.

We welcome ongoing investments in public housing, homelessness, mental health, domestic violence services and other areas.

We were disappointed that there was no additional money in this budget for affordable housing.

There were some missed opportunities including funding for investments in a Disability and Health Strategy and community needs analysis work on transport and city infrastructure. We are optimistic that these will be included in the 2021-22 Budget.

We are concerned about the number of one-year only extensions to funding for many community services. Short-term funding means that community organisations face challenges to plan, maintain programs and create sustainable services.

5. Whether your organisation provided a submission to the ACT Government 2020-21 Budget Consultation and, if yes, do you think the ACT Budget addressed the issues raised in your submission?

ACTCOSS provided a [submission to the 2020-21 ACT Budget](#) in September 2019. Given the impact of the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, our priorities for the Budget are best outlined in the set of platforms we issued for the 2020 election. We welcome the inclusion of ACTCOSS priorities in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement. However, the Budget has not prioritised some of the most urgent investments required to meet the needs of Canberrans who face disadvantage.

Gaps include, specifically:

- A commitment to effective land transfers to Community Housing Providers for the provision of affordable housing and new funding injections for public housing to support full implementation of the ACT Housing Strategy and commitments under the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement
- A commitment to long-term financial sustainability for the community services sector including funding to support Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-26 implementation and funding to achieve meaningful outcomes from the new commissioning and procurement reform process
- Major investment in tertiary health services to meet demand. While there are a number of investments towards Walk-In Centre services, we would be keen to see more investment in improving access to tertiary health care

- Funding for a Disability and Health Strategy to address barriers to access, diagnostic overshadowing and critical health service gaps for people with disability
- Funding for early intervention approaches to prevent people coming into contact with the justice system
- Ongoing funding for the Justice Health Strategy
- Continued funding of the Utilities Hardship Fund and the lack of a commitment to continue to provide the Utilities Concession to eligible asylum seekers after 2020-21
- Funding for the ACT Planning Strategy; for a transport needs analysis; and a community infrastructure needs analysis; and improvements to decaying community infrastructure. While there is some funding for roads and physical infrastructure, there is a lack of investment in community development resources.
- Measures which support social inclusion for people with disability. While there are some ongoing measures such as the \$3.2m for the Disability Justice Strategy, continuation of the office of Senior Practitioner, the NDIS integrated response and \$2.25m in 2020-21 for disability access compliance in schools, there is no funding for a Disability Health Strategy, Universal Housing Design and the National Disability Strategy
- Funding targeting older Canberrans. Measures absent include specific funding for transport for older Canberrans, increased investment in Age-Friendly Suburbs (paths and pathway infrastructure) and funding for IT training and equipment for seniors, especially given the need to engage online with health providers, service providers and government services during the pandemic
- Funding for the ACT Carers Strategy
- Funding for the implementation of the *Crimes (Offences Against Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Act 2020*
- Funding for investment in mental health supports for children – particularly in their middle years
- Funding for evidence-based work with separated families including early intervention counselling, as the numbers of separating families increases. There is only a mention of services specifically related to domestic violence
- Funding to support families of people with disabilities.

6. Any views your organisation may have on the gender impacts of the ACT Budget?

The ACT community sector is a highly feminised workforce and around 80% of the community sector workforce are women.⁵

Contract arrangements and funding levels for the community sector which cause workers in the sector to be low paid or to experience job insecurity have gendered impacts.

The lack of affordable housing in Canberra has disproportionate impacts on women such as older women who have interrupted careers and low levels of retirement savings, and single parents – the majority of whom are women.

7. Any views your organisation may have on the COVID-19 recovery initiatives in the ACT Budget?

We are disappointed to see that investment in community services does not appear to be part of the ACT Government's strategy to emerge from the COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

For example, we would like to have seen more investment in community-based early intervention services that prevent people from entering the justice system.

There is a social inclusion statement, yet it is little more than a shell. There is little new spending in this Budget directly targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including people with disability, older people and carers, despite these people being among the most impacted by COVID-19.

The health care and social assistance sector is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the ACT as we try to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding and diverse population and an increasing population of older Canberrans.

We are struggling to meet demand, particularly following COVID-19. In the most recent National Survey of Community Sector Workers, 58% reported that poverty and disadvantage had increased among the people accessing their services; 84% reported demand in the community either 'increased' or 'increased significantly'; and less than 4% reported that they were completely able to meet demand.⁶

The women's sector has also noted increases in domestic and family violence in the ACT following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as particular impacts for women with regard to mental health and loss of employment. COVID-19 recovery initiatives need to acknowledge and respond to the

5 N Cortis & M Blaxland, *The State of the Community Service Sector in the Australian Capital Territory, 2016*, SPRC Report 19/16, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia, Sydney, p. 28, <https://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/advocacy-publications/state-community-service-sector-act-2016-report>

6 Disaggregated ACT data provided to ACTCOSS by ACOSS from national survey. National data available in *The profile & pulse of the sector: Findings from the 2019 Australian Community Sector Survey*: <https://www.acoss.org.au/community-sector-policy-publications/>

vulnerability of women following the pandemic. Where additional funding has been provided, much is short term and set to end on 30 June 2021.

The community sector also makes an important economic contribution. For every \$1 a year invested in childcare, we can achieve an annual GDP increase of around \$5,⁷ and community service organisations in the ACT make a contribution of \$2.2 billion to the ACT economy.⁸

8. Any other issues that you wish to bring to each committee's attention.

We would invite the relevant committees to refer to our answers to question 5.

We are keen for the ACT community sector's contribution to jobs and economic recovery to be recognised in the prioritisation of investments.

We would invite each of the committees to consider the 12 community policy platforms that the ACT Government must act upon to achieve a just and fair Canberra. This [checklist](#) provides a relevant summary.

We would welcome invitations to appear before the relevant committees to expand on this submission.

List of Attachments

Attachment A - ACTCOSS ACT Budget Bulletin 2020-21

Attachment B - ACTCOSS ACT Budget Forum 2020-21 Summary

Attachment C - Summary checklist of policy briefs that ACTCOSS issued in the lead up to the 2020 ACT election

7 J Dixon, *A comparison of the economic impacts of income tax cuts and childcare spending*, Centre of Policy Studies, Victoria University, October 2020, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/A-comparison-of-the-economic-impacts-of-income-tax-cuts-and-childcare-spending-WEB.pdf>

8 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2014-15*, ABS, 2015.

Attachment A: ACTCOSS ACT Budget Bulletin 2020-21



Policy Update

11 February 2021

ACT Budget Bulletin 2020-21

Introduction

This bulletin provides a summary of ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) responses to the 2020-21 ACT Budget announced on 9 February 2021.

The bulletin summarises key announcements for community service organisations and Canberrans on low incomes and facing disadvantage. It also includes a list of measures about which ACTCOSS will be requesting more information. Lastly, it highlights gaps that are not addressed in this Budget.

In summary, ACTCOSS believes that the delayed 2020-21 ACT Budget fell short on the investments and vision required to ensure Canberrans facing disadvantage were protected as the ACT emerges from the COVID-19 crisis.

The Budget includes pre-announced measures of \$15.8 million to extend funding introduced during COVID-19 for mental health services, \$2.6 million for housing and homelessness services, and new commitments for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

ACTCOSS welcomed budget measures including \$37.6 million to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing, low-income owner-occupiers and rental properties; \$900,000 for a Palliative Care ACT Respite Hub pilot; \$1.2 million to extend COVID-19 tenancy relief until 30 June 2021 for residential landlords who reduced rents by at least 25% for tenants who have been impacted by COVID-19; and \$4.9 million from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to continue to implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review.

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implement the commitments in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement to increase social and affordable housing.

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The community sector also makes an important economic contribution. For every \$1 a year invested in childcare, we can achieve an annual GDP increase

9 KPMG, *Social Housing Initiative Review*, Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee, September 2012, p. 2, http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content101/c6/social_housing_initiative_review.pdf

10 Disaggregated ACT data provided to ACTCOSS by ACOSS from national survey. National data available in *The profile & pulse of the sector: Findings from the 2019 Australian Community Sector Survey*: <https://www.acoss.org.au/community-sector-policy-publications/>

of around \$5,¹¹ and community service organisations in the ACT make a contribution of \$2.2 billion to the ACT economy.¹²

One ray of hope is the Knowledge Capital – Future Jobs Fund announced in the ACT Budget. As a growing sector, and a major creator of jobs and economic growth, we urge the ACT Government to ensure that the needs of the health and community sector are included in the Future Jobs Fund program.

Key announcements

Note: all page numbers refer to the Word version of [ACT Budget 2020-21 documents](#).

Supporting the community services sector

- \$1.40m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for a **Technology Upgrade Fund** for the Community Sector (Budget Outlook 2021, p.81).
- \$100,000 in 2020-21 to fund an **extension of the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian (RASH) program** to support ACT Services Access Card holders (asylum seekers) through the RASH Coordination Committee (Budget Outlook, p. 81). This is for one year only.

Cost of living, financial hardship and poverty

- \$1.2m from 2020-21 to 2021-22 to **extend COVID-19 residential tenancy relief** until 30 June 2021 for residential landlords who reduce rents by at least 25% for tenants who have been impacted by COVID-19 (Budget Outlook, p. 77).
- \$52,000 in 2020-21 for the **Canberra Relief Network to continue** to operate until the end of 2020-21 at Exhibition Park in Canberra (Budget Outlook, p. 80).

Affordable housing and homelessness

- \$2.6m for the **ACT's housing and homelessness services** to: expand the Early Morning Centre to a seven day per week service (\$300,000 from 2020-21 to 2021-22); increase emergency support and accommodation to OneLink to provide tenancy and client support services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness (\$450,000 from 2020-21 to 2021-22); provide additional funding to ACT Shelter to provide

11 J Dixon, *A comparison of the economic impacts of income tax cuts and childcare spending*, Centre of Policy Studies, Victoria University, October 2020, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/A-comparison-of-the-economic-impacts-of-income-tax-cuts-and-childcare-spending-WEB.pdf>

12 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2014-15*, ABS, 2015.

systemic advocacy in the housing sector following cuts by the Australian Government (\$700,000 from 2020-21 to 2023-24); and provide funding to Mackillop House and Winter Lodge services and expand the Axial Housing service (\$1.2m from 2020-21 to 2021-22) (Budget Outlook, pp. 93-94).

- \$1.56m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for **identified staff positions for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people** in the ACT to work towards the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled housing organisation (Budget Outlook, p. 93).

A just Canberra

- \$529,000 from 2020-21 to 2021-22 to provide **additional staff to administer the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme**. These additional resources will help ensure the scheme continues to provide critical support to the victims of crime in a timely manner while a review of the administration of the scheme is finalised (Budget Outlook, p. 96).

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander self-determination

- \$4.857m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to **continue to implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review**. This initiative will support the operation of an independent Implementation Oversight Committee, which will monitor progress against the recommendations. The ACT Government will continue foundational work to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector focusing on children, young people and families. The initiative also provides ongoing funding for improved frontline services, including Family Group Conferencing, Family Finding, embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and cultural expertise within Child and Youth Protection Services (Budget Outlook, p.80). While this funding is welcome, it is long overdue. Some recommendations from the Our Booris, Our Way review are almost three years old. We also await to see a breakdown of how this funding will be spent.
- \$425,000 from 2020-21 to 2021-22 to support **detailed design work for the new accommodation for Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation**, as part of its commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families have access to quality services and support to meet their cultural needs (Budget Outlook, p. 80).
- \$317,000 from 2020-21 to 2021-22 to provide funding to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to develop a governance structure for a **Healing and Reconciliation Fund**. This initiative will also support facilitation of community conversations about the opportunity for and implications of a Treaty process for the ACT, an early project to be supported by the Healing and Reconciliation Fund (Budget Outlook, p. 80).
- \$2.448m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to provide **ongoing employment for six Ngunnawal Ranger positions** to focus on natural resource management,

land, fire, water, wildlife and ecological management. The Rangers will undertake field programs, research, policy development and visitor interpretation in a range of disciplines, providing the opportunity for Ngunnawal engagement and self-determination (Budget Outlook, p. 86).

- \$1.56m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander housing**. The ACT Government will establish two identified positions for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff within Housing ACT. These staff will be dedicated to the establishment, in close partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled housing organisation to support housing access for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (Budget Outlook, p. 93).

Climate and energy

- \$104m has been allocated from 2020-21 to 2023-24 as part of a \$150m fund for the **Sustainable Household Scheme** to offer zero interest loans of up to \$15,000 for households and not-for-profit community organisations to assist with the upfront costs of investing in: rooftop solar panels; household battery storage; zero emission vehicles; and efficient electric appliances (Budget Outlook, p. 78). ACTCOSS will be advocating for these loans to be targeted at Canberrans who face disadvantage and who are on low incomes. We also await further details of the loan support scheme for not-for-profit community organisations.
- \$37.605m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for **Vulnerable Household Energy Support** to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing, low-income owner-occupiers and rental properties. A provision has also been established for the balance of the \$50m fund (including \$12.462m in 2024-25) (Budget Outlook, p. 87).
- \$3.75m from 2021-22 to 2023-24 towards the [previously announced](#) \$5m **Building Energy Efficiency Upgrade Fund** to deliver grants and no-interest loans for energy and water efficiency upgrades, rooftop solar and batteries for community clubs (Budget Outlook, p. 85).
- \$855,000 from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to support the development of a **long-term plan for the phase out of gas use in the ACT**. This includes funding to develop legislative amendments to prevent future gas connections in residential greenfield and urban infill developments. It also covers projects that will advance all-electric infill developments (Budget Outlook, p. 86).
- \$250,000 in 2020-21 to **implement the recommendations of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission** to make it easier for ACT consumers to get better electricity deals by improving the transparency and comparability of retail electricity offers (Budget Outlook, p. 95).
- \$5.154m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 towards **waiving registration fees on newly purchased new or second-hand zero emission vehicles**

registered during May 2021 to June 2024 for the first two years of their registration. This measure includes \$4.454m in revenue forgone. The ACT Government will also establish a fleet advisory service to support Canberra businesses and community organisations transitioning their fleets to zero emission vehicles (Budget Outlook, p. 88).

Community infrastructure

- \$8.856m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for **road and community infrastructure** which provide improvements to road and cycling infrastructure, and playground and recreational infrastructure, as well as waste, public toilet and library facilities (Budget Outlook, p. 102). This initiative is funded by a Commonwealth *Local Roads and Community Infrastructure* grant. It is unclear what proportion of this funding will go to recreational infrastructure, toilets, and libraries.
- \$2.52m in 2020-21 for **feasibility and design studies for infrastructure and upgrades** in the next four months to develop a pipeline of shovel-ready proposals for future consideration (Budget Outlook, p. 100). It is not clear if this will be informed by, or includes funding for, a community facilities needs analysis.

A human rights jurisdiction

- \$2.4m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to **support the ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme to better meet existing demand**. The scheme is a child protection measure designed to ensure allegations of abuse and misconduct by employees of institutions are identified, reported and acted on appropriately by their organisation. Ongoing support of the scheme will be substantially offset against funding already provisioned. Due to an offset of \$2.34m, the net cost of services is \$45,000 (Budget Outlook, p. 77).

Children, young people and families

- \$105,000 in 2020-21 to **extend the funding to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Domestic Violence Crisis Service** to provide critical supports in responding to cases of domestic and family violence (Budget Outlook, p.81). This is for one year only.
- \$159,000 in 2020-21 to **continue the Health Justice Partnerships program**, which places legal help in maternity and early childhood services across the ACT to offer early intervention and support in domestic and family violence cases, primarily to pregnant women and new families (Budget Outlook, p.81). This is for one year only.
- \$2.928m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to **increase the number of weeks offered to priority families accessing early childhood learning** for three-year-olds, from 40 to 48 weeks per year. This increase will align with the annual operating period of most ACT early childhood education and care

providers. Due to an offset of \$2.928m, this measure has zero net cost (Budget Outlook, p. 83).

- \$3.156m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to provide **funding to continue to deliver the successful Adolescent Mobile Outreach Service (AMOS)**. AMOS is a community-based mental health outreach service that provides assessment treatment seven days a week for adolescents aged 12 to 18 years. Due to an offset of \$3.156m, this measure has zero net cost (Budget Outlook, p.89).

Better health

- \$20.46m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to ensure a **safe and efficient rollout of the ACT of the COVID-19 vaccine** (Budget Outlook, p. 90).
- \$6.53m in 2020-21 to fund **acute medical, birthing, and non-elective surgery services at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce** (Budget Outlook, p. 89).
- \$908,000 from 2020-21 to 2021-22 to **fund four beds in Palliative Care ACT's 'Leo's Place' respite hub** to support Canberrans with a life-limiting illness and their carers. The facility will also provide a place for families and carers to access resources and support, including coordinating access to relevant services. Due to an offset from the Health Funding Envelope, the net cost of services will be \$300,000 (Budget Outlook, p. 92).
- \$16.63m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 provisioned in the August 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update will be released to **undertake critical electrical building services infrastructure upgrades to Building 10 at Canberra Hospital** that will support critical pathology and clinical research services. Due to an offset, the net capital cost will be zero, leaving \$441,000 in depreciation costs (Budget Outlook, p. 92).
- \$10.9m from 2021-22 to 2023-24 to include **outpatient imaging services at the Weston Creek Walk-In Centre** including ultrasound, X-ray, and computed tomography (CT). (Budget Outlook, p. 91).
- \$2m from 2020-21 to 2021-22 to undertake feasibility and site selection work for **four new Walk-In Centres** in South Tuggeranong, West Belconnen, Inner South, and North Gungahlin offering a combination of walk-in and appointment-based services. Feasibility will include site assessment, consideration of new models of care, and community consultation (Budget Outlook, p. 92).
- \$832,000 from 2021-22 to 2023-24 to establish a **new Walk-In Centre in Coombs**, co-located with the National Health Co-op GP clinic focusing on maternal, child and family health. It is on track to be opened on 1 July 2021 (Budget Outlook, p.92).
- \$2.390 (\$441,000 offset – Health Funding Envelope) from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to **extend mental health programs and services funded by the**

COVID-19 Mental Health Support Package in May 2020 (Budget Outlook, p. 91).

- \$14.129m (\$12.195m offset – Health Funding Envelope) from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to continue the seven-day-a-week operation of **the Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response (PACER)** program until 2024 (Budget Outlook, p. 91).
- \$3.156m from 2021-22 to 2023-24 for **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)** to continue to operate the Adolescent Mobile Outreach Service to improve care for vulnerable young people and increase the availability of existing services supporting young people under the age of 18 who have moderate to severe mental illness. Due to an offset of \$3.156m through the Health Funding Envelope, the net cost of services is zero (Budget Outlook, p. 89).
- \$655,000 [previously announced](#) to **increase mental health support for young Canberrans with highly complex needs** who are at risk of mental illness. This investment supports the work underway to deliver an Adolescent Mental Health Unit by September 2022. Commitment of money not explicit in the Budget papers and this will be followed up with the ACT Government. However, this is a welcome first step towards addressing a significant service gap. This funding includes: scoping for a multidisciplinary service to support young people with complex needs who experience mental health challenges alongside trauma, disability, and/or drug and alcohol abuse; and scoping for an intensive trauma service for adolescents built on the Melaleuca Place model to support recovery and positive behaviour for 13 to 17-year-olds who have experienced childhood trauma, including abuse or neglect (Budget Statement C, p. 4).

Measures requiring further consideration

ACTCOSS will be requesting more information on the following initiatives to determine their impact upon and value to the community sector and Canberrans on low incomes and facing disadvantage.

These include:

- \$2.103m in 2021-22 on early works design to raise London Circuit; an enabling project for light rail Stage 2A (Budget Outlook, p. 98). Construction of Light Rail to Woden is part of a \$14b ACT Infrastructure Plan.
- \$2.3m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to establish a Better Regulation Taskforce to review the current business environment in the ACT and begin pursuing reforms to support Canberra's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and long-term economic growth. The taskforce will also lead the ACT's contribution to nation-wide regulatory reforms. Due to an offset of \$1.984m, the net cost of services is \$329,000 (Budget Outlook, p. 68). A priority area in the Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-26 is reduction of red tape. ACTCOSS will inquire into the inclusion of the community sector in the Better Regulation agenda.

- \$145,000 in 2020-21 to establish a taskforce in the health portfolio to conduct a feasibility study into insourcing work currently sub-contracted to external parties (Budget Outlook, p. 91). ACTCOSS seeks more information and assurance that this is not to an agenda to insource services delivered by community service organisations.
- Funding has been allocated to develop policy and legislation to support the introduction of \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits on electronic gaming machines (Budget Outlook, p. 96). ACTCOSS welcomes limiting load-up to \$100 but supports the [Canberra Gambling Reform Alliance](#)'s call to introduce \$1 bet limits.
- Eligibility for Building Energy Efficiency Upgrade Fund grants (Budget Outlook, p. 81) for energy and water efficiency upgrades, rooftop solar and batteries for community clubs should be tied to the surrender of gaming machine authorisations and other gambling harm minimisation activities (as under previous ACT Government measures).
- \$9.027m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 for equal remuneration order (ERO) funding increase for Community Organisations and Development of Evidence Base for Future Funding Decisions (Budget Statement G, p. 25). ACTCOSS will clarify activities under the 'Development of an Evidence Base for Future Funding Decisions' and ongoing sector sustainability.
- \$2.434m in 2020-21 to support more Canberrans to Park and Ride (Budget Outlook, p. 251). ACTCOSS seeks clarity regarding alignment to broader planning and transport agendas, including the need for a needs analysis in community infrastructure and transport.
- \$15.80m from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to extend mental health programs and services funded by the COVID-19 Mental Health Support Package in May 2020 (Budget Outlook, p. 91). ACTCOSS seeks clarity as to what in this package is re-announced funding from the May 2020 [announcement](#).
- Canberra Health Services has recognised that an ACT-wide palliative care service, commencing with the design of a new palliative care ward at Canberra Hospital, is a 2020-21 priority. It has committed to partnering with service providers to commence design (Budget Statement C, p. 33). ACTCOSS supports calls for an enhanced palliative care service that provides dedicated medical, nursing, and allied health staff with consumers and carers included in the design process.
- ACT Health Directorate has reduced its targets for Strategic Indicator 1.1 – Improving the Mental Wellbeing of Canberrans (from >90% in 2019-20 to >60% in 2020-21) and Strategic Indicator 1.2 – Improving the Health Status of Canberrans (from >90% in 2019-20 to >55% in 2020-21) noting '[t]his target has proven to be unrealistic given the prevalence of mental health and other conditions (for example cancer and diabetes) in the community' (Budget Statement C, pp. 5-6). ACTCOSS seeks clarity as to why these targets have been changed rather than addressing the causes of poor outcomes for Canberrans.

- Community Services Directorate has identified a 2020-21 strategic and operational priority is to increase the permanency and stability for children and young people on long-term orders in out of home care through increased Enduring Parental Responsibility and Adoption orders (Budget Statement G, p. 5). ACTCOSS seeks more information on this policy and how it will impact families engaged with the child protection system, and the goal of keeping families connected.

What's missing

- Commitment to **land transfers to Community Housing Providers for the provision of affordable housing** and new funding injections for **public housing** to support full implementation of the ACT Housing Strategy and commitments under the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement.
- A commitment to long-term financial sustainability for the community services sector including funding to support **Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-26** implementation.
- Major investment in **tertiary health services to meet demand**. While there are a number of investments towards Walk-In Centre services, we would be keen to see more investment in improving access to tertiary health care.
- Funding for a **disability and health strategy** to address barriers to access, diagnostic overshadowing and critical health service gaps for people with disability.
- Funding for **early intervention approaches** to prevent people coming into contact with the justice system.
- Ongoing funding for the **Justice Health Strategy**.
- Continued funding of the **Utilities Hardship Fund** and no commitment to continue to provide the Utilities Concession to eligible Asylum Seekers after 2020-21.
- Funding for the **ACT Planning Strategy**; for a transport needs analysis; and a community infrastructure needs analysis; and improvements to decaying community infrastructure. While there is some funding for roads and physical infrastructure, there is a lack of investment in community development resources.
- Measures which support **social inclusion for people with disability**. While there are some ongoing measures such as the \$3.2m for the Disability Justice Strategy, continuation of the office of Senior Practitioner, the NDIS integrated response and \$2.25m in 2020-21 for disability access compliance in schools, there is no funding for a Disability Health Strategy, Universal Housing Design and the National Disability Strategy.
- Funding targeting **older Canberrans**. Measures absent include specific funding for transport for older Canberrans, increased investment in Age-

Friendly Suburbs (paths and pathway infrastructure) and funding for IT training and equipment for seniors, especially given the need to engage online with health providers, service providers and government services during the pandemic.

- Funding for the **ACT Carers Strategy**.
- Funding for the implementation of the *Crimes (Offences Against Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Act 2020*.
- Funding for investment in mental health supports for children – particularly in their middle years.
- Funding for evidence-based work with separated families including early intervention counselling, as the numbers of separating families increases. There is only a mention of services specifically related to domestic violence.
- Funding to support families of people with disabilities.

Attachment B: ACTCOSS ACT Budget Forum 2020-21 Summary

Attachment B: ACTCOSS ACT Budget Forum 2020-21 Summary is an ACTCOSS members-only document and not for publication.

If you are a member of ACTCOSS and would like access to this document, please contact ACTCOSS on 02 6202 7200 or email actcoss@actcoss.org.au.

Attachment C: 2020 ACT Election checklist for voters and newly elected MLAs




How the next ACT Government can create a fair and just Canberra for all Canberrans

A checklist for voters and newly elected members of the ACT
Legislative Assembly

These priorities have been developed by the ACT Council of Social Service following engagement with members, peaks and community organisations.

Objective	Actions required by government
<p data-bbox="268 1048 549 1191">Support the community services sector</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="625 1039 1337 1223">• Conduct a full needs analysis to understand Canberra’s demographic changes, increasing complexity of needs (including an aging population; growing number of births; greater diversity) and the changed Canberra geography. <li data-bbox="625 1245 1347 1388">• Conduct a full cost analysis to accurately assess the cost of delivering community services to include increased levels of regulation, and increasing costs of operations and salaries. <li data-bbox="625 1411 1337 1554">• Commit to revitalising the commissioning, procurement and contract management process across the ACT Government <u>in partnership</u> with the community sector. <li data-bbox="625 1576 1295 1688">• Support capital investments including zero emissions vehicles and ICT infrastructure for the community sector. <li data-bbox="625 1711 1295 1787">• Fund Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander led policy and services. <li data-bbox="625 1809 1337 1841">• Renew its commitment to the ACT Social Compact. <li data-bbox="625 1863 1347 1975">• Ensure proper resourcing of strategies such as the Carers Strategy and fund the implementation of new legislation such as Crimes (Offences Against

	<p>Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to properly fund peaks and organisations representing community voices including changes to legislation to cover peaks under the ACT's Portable Long Service Leave Scheme.
<p>Support women, children, young people and families</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a child protection system capable of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children while working to keep families together and/or connected through measures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An independent external review mechanism for child protection decisions in the ACT. • Building a restorative child protection system. • Better access to advocacy and legal support for women, children and families in the child protection system. • Implement all recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review into the care and protection of Aboriginal children in the ACT. • Increase investment in the out of home care (OOHC) system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of supported placements for all young people in out of home care, without individual assessments and incremental approval, from 18 to 21 years. • Access to an aftercare service for young people up to the age of 25 years. • Provide additional funding for community-based specialist women's services including domestic violence services, legal services and housing and homelessness services. • Further improve inclusive education in the ACT to enable children with disability to participate in mainstream schooling safely and successfully. • Implement Respectful Relationships Education at a minimum standard for all staff and students from Preschool to Year 12.

Act for affordable housing and to reduce homelessness



- Commit to full delivery and proper oversight of the ACT Housing Strategy.
- Achieve target of 15% of the Land Release Program for the supply of public, community and affordable homes.
- Increase *effective* land transfers to ACT community housing providers and empower them to build more community and affordable housing.
- Provide further investment in additional public housing and renewal of current stock.
- Locate public and community housing in a range of locations including suburbs close to established amenities and services.
- Commit to all new residential properties in the ACT built to meet Universal Design standards to make them able to be adapted and accessible to all people regardless of age, disability or other factors, and support reforms of the National Construction Code.
- Re-establish and fund an advocacy voice for tenants in the ACT.
- Develop an Indigenous Housing Strategy for the ACT including a pathway to a community controlled Aboriginal housing organisation.
- Establish a specialist youth homelessness service.
- Implement long-term housing solutions for detainees leaving the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC).
- Fund human rights compliant mental health specific supported housing.

Achieve a just Canberra



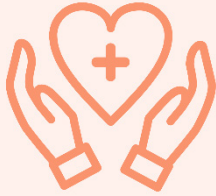
- Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to at least 14 years of age.
- Improve access to justice by increasing funding to community legal centres, mediation and individual advocacy supports.
- Resource the Disability Justice Strategy.
- Resource the Justice Reinvestment Strategy: meet recidivism targets, significantly reduce Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander incarceration, and introduce gender-specific rehabilitation and diversion programs.
- Fix the prison: Focus the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) on rehabilitation.
- Implement and fund all ACT Inspector of Correctional Services Healthy Prison Review recommendations.
- Address remand policies at the AMC: separate people on remand, including women's section.
- Implement a needle and syringe program for the AMC.
- Ensure equal access to gender-specific accommodation, services and support for women in the AMC.
- Expand specialist drug and alcohol programs and fix legislative barriers to enable the diversion of Canberrans away from the justice system and towards support.
- Amend the *Crimes Act 1900* (ACT) to include the concept of positive consent as recommended by the Inquiry into Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill.

Deliver the promise of the ACT as a human rights jurisdiction



- Incorporate all Economic, Social and Cultural rights in the *ACT Human Rights Act (2004)* including: the right to housing; the right to an adequate standard of living; the right to physical and mental health; and the right to a healthy environment.
- Through improved access to legal support and better funding for the ACT's community legal services, ensure equality before the law for all ACT residents, including women and children, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and other Canberrans facing legal disadvantage.
- Improve access to the ACT Human Rights Act (2004) by adding a direct complaints mechanism through the ACT Human Rights Commission followed by referral to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) if the complaint cannot be resolved.
- Embed human rights principles and obligations in all procurement processes and service contracts.
- Include a human rights reporting component in Director-General annual reports.
- Establish an annual evaluation and report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on human rights in the ACT.
- Implement and resource clear strategies to address racism, discrimination against LGBTIQ+ Canberrans, gendered discrimination and violence, and ableism.
- Foster an independent advocacy voice for culturally and linguistically diverse Canberrans in the ACT.
- Publicly commit to a federal Human Rights Act.
- Commit to review police complaints handling mechanisms to ensure greater practical independence, accountability and transparency of investigations.
- Commit to not introducing anti-consorting laws.
- Commit to not introducing any laws that are inconsistent with human rights obligations.

Work for better health



- Commit to real increases in spending on frontline health services to raise ACT service standards up to those of other jurisdictions.
- Through a commitment to the Wellbeing Framework and the Preventative Health Strategy, increase investment as part of the ACT's health policy in the non-clinical needs of low-income and disadvantaged Canberrans as an acknowledgement of the social determinants of health.
- Produce a blueprint for the development of the Canberra Hospital.
- Design and implement a Disability Health Strategy.
- Adequately fund sexual and reproductive health services.
- Support for pain management services.
- Expand palliative care services.
- Invest in trauma-informed practice and service design training for government and non-government workers.
- Build a robust mental health sector that reflects Canberra's diversity, prioritising family programs, an adolescent mental health program and sub-acute mental health services.
- Invest in alcohol and drug treatment facilities, including in the design and construction of an Aboriginal residential alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation facility.

Take action for people with disability and carers



- Resource all six areas of the National Disability Strategy.
- Commit to ending restrictive practices and meet Operational Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) obligations in all congregate living situations in the ACT and aged care facilities.
- Ensure concessions are targeted to need.
- Improve access to justice for people with disability and other vulnerable cohorts by expanding individual advocacy supports.
- Design and implement a Disability Health Strategy.
- Establish and support a consultative forum on transport for people with disabilities.
- Properly fund the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme by removing the trip limit and increasing the monetary cap to keep pace with increases in taxi fares.
- Establish an access reference group to improve physical and sensory access.
- Commit to all new residential properties in the ACT being built to meet Universal Design standards.
- Commit to a target to reduce the number of people in congregate living situations and special education.
- Reduce violence and institutionalisation, and fully fund implementation of the Crimes (Offences Against Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.
- Ensure gaps in National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services are met.
- Fully funded and appropriate respite care facilities for carers and for palliative care patients and carers.

Poverty, inequality and the cost of living



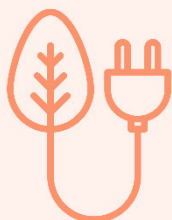
- Take action on the fundamentals of social and economic justice, including:
 - Publicly call for a permanent and adequate increase (above the poverty line) to JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and related Commonwealth payments.
 - Incorporate all economic, social, and cultural rights in the *Human Rights Act 2004* (ACT).
 - Conduct a detailed analysis to better understanding the need for community services in the ACT.
 - Adequately fund our community services – they play a vital role in preventing, reducing, and alleviating the impacts of poverty and disadvantage in the ACT.
 - Ensure that revenue is collected in a way that is progressive, equitable, efficient, and sufficient to fund quality services and infrastructure.
- Take action on targeted financial assistance, including:
 - Review the ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy to ensure concessions and rebates are targeted to need.
 - Recognise the contribution of older Canberrans to our community through a range of targeted supports and assistance points across the city.
 - Extend financial and other support for all young people transitioning from care.
 - Increase funding to financial counselling services.
- Take action on key cost of living pressures, including housing, health, transport and energy.
- Take action to ensure equal access to justice.
- Implement the Canberra Gambling Reform Alliance’s program for reducing gambling harm.

**Achieve
self-determination
for Aboriginal
and/or Torres
Strait Islander
people**



- Implement mandatory Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Ngunnawal cultural awareness training for all Members of the Legislative Assembly.
- Invest in celebrating and protecting Ngunnawal land and culture.
- Enact a United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC) partnership agreement, which outlines shared policy goals and commits to genuine, regular consultation between Ministers and the UNEC.
- Develop a comprehensive Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander policy statement.
- Support and invest in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver fully funded community services.
- Invest in supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, youth and families with measurable outcomes.
- Expand the ACT Human Rights Commission to include an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner.
- Support the design and commencement of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Child Care Agency.
- Implement all 28 recommendations from Our Booris, Our Way Steering Committee to improve the systemic failures for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children involved with child protection in the ACT.
- Develop an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy for the ACT including a pathway to a community-controlled Aboriginal housing organisation.
- Invest in the design and construction of a community-controlled Aboriginal residential alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation facility.
- Provide additional investment for autonomous, holistic health and wellbeing services at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.
- Investigate the expansion of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm to have cottages that can accommodate families.
- Fund the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) positions at a full-time rate.

Climate and energy: a just transition



- Implement an effective plan for a just transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT by 2045, if not sooner.
- Develop a roadmap for low-income and other vulnerable households in the transition from natural gas and to zero emission vehicles that identifies and addresses barriers, ensuring no one is left behind.
- Resource the collection of detailed data to assess whether a just transition is occurring in the ACT.
- Fund independent research on the relative cost-benefit of growing the electricity grid versus maintaining and growing gas infrastructure.
- Undertake and invest in workforce planning and skills training to ensure adequate capacity to deliver high quality services across the energy efficiency sector, and create jobs.
- Establish a mechanism for joint governance of a just transition by community, government, technical experts, and business.
- Ensure Utilities Concession eligibility is adequate and targeted toward need (including to ACT Services Access Card holders) and continue the Energy Support Voucher program across all ACT energy retailers through the Utilities Hardship Fund.
- Require ACT energy retailers to provide regular 'better offer notifications' to their customers, telling them if they have a plan that could reduce their bills.
- Introduce legislation for staged minimum energy performance requirements for rental properties by the end of 2021.
- Expand energy efficiency and productivity programs for low-income and rental households, aligned with the proposed National Low-income Energy Productivity Program.
- Fund community energy consumer advocacy to represent the long-term interests of low-income, small business, and community sector energy consumers in decision making on climate and energy policy and programs.

Take action for older Canberrans and aged care



- Invest in social housing and community transport to meet community need, including for older Canberrans.
- Commit to all new residential properties in the ACT being built to meet Universal Design standards making them accessible to all people regardless of age, disability or other factors.
- Provide a range of targeted supports and assistance points across the city for older Canberrans, including seniors hubs in the southern suburbs of the ACT (Tuggeranong) and in a northern suburb of Canberra.
- Ensure footpaths in Canberra are suitable for people who are aged and enable independent community participation and support independence.
- Commit to ending restrictive practices and ensure Australia's Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) obligations apply to all congregate living situations in the ACT, including aged care facilities.
- Reduce violence and institutionalisation and fully fund the implementation of the *Crimes (Offences Against Vulnerable People) Legislation Amendment Act 2020* (ACT).
- Ensure adequate levels of both wellbeing and mental health supports are available to Canberra's older people and their carers.
- Improve access to justice for older people engaged with the justice system by expanding individual advocacy supports.
- Support respite opportunities including for carers and palliative care patients and their carers.

Invest in community infrastructure



- Carry out an audit and stocktake of community needs in planning and transport including community facilities.
- Demonstrate a renewed focus on social planning and engagement with marginalised groups.
- Develop a policy framework and investment model for the long-term provision of community facilities across the city leading to proper funding for community facilities and community development.
- Require developers to build community infrastructure into new developments.
- Provide appropriate incentives and place greater responsibilities on developers to create community facilities and make developed spaces more liveable.
- Guarantee on-demand transport (like community transport) as well as mass transit (like trams and buses).
- Develop a cost benefit business case to make travel on public transport free.
- Fund the Community Development Network for the ACT and Region (CDNet).

For our full set of 12 election briefs, go to www.actcoss.org.au/policy/act-election