

## **ACT Budget Bulletin 2021-22**

### **Introduction**

This bulletin provides a summary of ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) responses to the 2021-22 ACT Budget announced on 6 October 2021.

It summarises key announcements relevant to community service organisations and the Canberrans they support. 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.

Overall, ACTCOSS welcomes significant investments in housing and the community sector announced in the ACT Budget.

The Budget includes many previously announced measures. This includes an additional \$80m for improved maintenance of ACT public housing stock, \$19m for the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program and \$8.6m for specialist homelessness services.

In addition to the housing measures, other key budget measures welcomed by ACTCOSS include:

- Investments in mental health, alcohol and drug services and primary health care
- Ongoing funding to expand the Safe and Connected Youth Program
- Additional funding for frontline services supporting those impacted by domestic and family violence through an increase in the Family Safety Levy
- Funding for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples including the establishment of a Healing and Reconciliation Fund, support for ACT Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, an Aboriginal Business Support Package and a culturally appropriate suicide prevention program

- Support for targeted concessions and assistance measures including the expansion of the utilities concession, an increase in the Pensioner General Rates Rebate Cap and the continuation of the Utilities Hardship Fund
- Support for the JobTrainer program which will fund free training places for vocational students studying community sector qualifications
- Funding for a Patient Navigation Service to better coordinate care across the health system for people with chronic and complex conditions.

However, some gaps remain. The ACT continues to face a major housing crisis. As of 4 October 2021, there are currently 2,965 households on the ACT's social housing waiting list. The average wait time for standard housing (951 applications) is now over 4 years (1,472 days), while the wait for priority housing (207 applications) is approaching 1 year (339 days) and for high needs housing (1,807 applications) the wait time is now over 2.5 years (927 days).<sup>1</sup>

While additional investments in housing are welcome, this Budget does not explain how the ACT Government will deliver its full promised commitment of 400 additional public dwellings and 600 additional affordable rental properties by the end of the Parliamentary Agreement. Building of public dwellings needs to be accelerated and more support must be provided to community housing providers if the government is serious about meeting these targets.

Further, while we welcome additional funding for 2021-22 for services including the community legal sector and the ACT's Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Service, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, we need an ongoing commitment from government. Organisations need to be able to provide certainty to staff and the people they support.

A number of issues have not been addressed by this Budget. These include gaps in supports for older Canberrans, perinatal health services and community facilities. ACTCOSS is also disappointed that the Budget did not include funding for the ACT Carers Strategy or a Disability Health Strategy.

The Budget also fails to address ongoing calls from the community sector for an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system.

However, overall, the 2021-22 ACT Budget provides a basis for the shared work of government and the community sector as the Territory recovers from the COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Services Directorate, [Social Housing Waiting List](#), Community Services Directorate website, ACT Government, 4 October 2021, accessed 7 October 2021.

Investment in community organisations also supports our local economy by delivering significant returns on investment through jobs and spending in the local economy.

ACTCOSS looks forward to using this Budget as the starting point towards a more equitable and just ACT community.

## Key announcements

*Note: all page numbers refer to the provided PDF or Word version of [ACT Budget 2021-22 documents](#) at time of embargoed release.*

### Fix Canberra's housing and homelessness crisis

- \$2.466m in 2021-22 for **COVID-19 Response – Residential tenancy assistance** to provide land tax credits to residential landlords who reduce rent for tenants whose income has been affected by the current COVID-19 outbreak (Budget Outlook, p. 133). [ACTCOSS would like to see additional assistance through a rent relief scheme that can be accessed by tenants/occupants facing rent arrears and/or rental stress].
- \$8.6m across four years to **expand the capacity of existing homelessness services** (Budget Outlook, p. 191).
- \$80m for **public housing maintenance** over the next three years (Budget Outlook, p. 191).
- \$19m over four years for the **Growing and Renewing Public Housing program** that aims to add 400 additional public housing dwellings and renew another 1000 properties (Budget Outlook, p. 19).
- \$1.36m in preparation for the delivery of build to rent schemes in Turner, Lawson and Common Ground in Gungahlin (Budget Outlook, pp. 141, 173).
- \$3.6m to restructure financial support for **Community Housing Canberra** to manage affordable rentals on behalf of the ACT Government and extinguish loans (Budget Outlook, p. 140).
- \$8.2m over four years for **planning and site investigation for the land release program** (Budget Outlook, p. 173).

### Valuing community services

- \$4m over four years to **increase indexation** applied to annual community sector grants funding to help meet higher wage costs following the recent

Fair Work Commission decision to increase the national minimum wage and all award wages by 2.5% (Budget Outlook, p. 149).

- A review of the wage price calculation formula to determine the community sector funding rate in future years will be completed in 2021-22 (Budget Outlook, p. 236).
- \$3.934m (including \$2.326m offset) in **rental relief on ACT Government properties** in 2021-22 (Budget Outlook, p. 128).
- \$16.750m (including \$8.375m offset from Commonwealth funding) from ACT Government from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for **JobTrainer extension** – free training places in areas of skills need or employment growth, cost shared equally by ACT and Commonwealth governments (Budget Outlook, p. 121).

## Better health

- \$50,000 in 2021-22 for a **COVID-19 Response Fund** to respond quickly and flexibly to the public health emergency, noting the uncertainty around future measures that may be required (Budget Outlook, p. 131).
- \$870,000 over 2 years, starting 2021 for **repairs at the Child Development Service at Holder** and conduct a feasibility study to identify options for future service delivery infrastructure requirements (Budget Outlook, p. 149).
- \$475,000 over 4 years for COVID-19 response continuation – transition of the **Canberra Relief Network (CRN) to a community-led model** to provide planning, data collection and a streamlined response to food security beyond the public health emergency of COVID-19 (Budget Outlook, p. 150).
- \$207,000 over 2021-22 for more support for the **Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service the Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service (CAYPELS)**. This is listed as a depreciation item (Budget Outlook, p. 154).
- \$16.057m over four years to increase in **home-based palliative care services** and five new inpatient beds at Clare Holland House. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 180).
- \$480,000 in 2021-22 to expand the **COVID-19 vaccination program** to support vaccinations for any eligible member of the public. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 182).

- \$28.354m over four years for four additional beds in the **Intensive Care Unit at the Canberra hospital**. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook p. 182).
- \$15.282m over 4 years for two additional intensive care cots in the **Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children** (Budget Outlook p. 183).
- \$22.879m over 4 years to expand the capacity of the **Canberra Hospital Emergency Department** to better respond to service demand pressures and support contemporary models of care. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 183).
- \$6.425m over 4 years to establish a **Patient Navigation Service** to better coordinate care across the health system for people with chronic and complex conditions, or who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 189).

## Alcohol and other drugs

- \$260,000 in 2021-22 for **fixed-site pill testing pilot**. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 189).
- \$982,000 from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **harm reduction programs**, including a Needle Syringe Program and scoping for a Medically Supervised Injecting Facility. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 190).
- \$803,000 (\$503,000 offset – Health Funding Envelope) in 2021-22 to commence design work on the redevelopment of the **Watson Health Precinct** to provide preliminary design for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential rehabilitation facility and for the redevelopment of the current facilities on the site. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope and also includes capital funding (Budget Outlook, p. 190).

## Mental health

- \$923,000 over 3 years to 2023-4 to continue the **Mental Health Detention Exit Community Outreach** program. \$300,000 of this measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 178).
- \$2.025 m over two years to 2022-23 to support the Mental Health Foundation ACT to continue the **Mental Health Discharge Accommodation Program pilot** for a further two years. This measure is

listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 179).

- \$1.223m in 2021-22 to continue support for the **Home Assessment and Acute Response Team (HAART)** program, which provides urgent mental health assessment and intervention, helping to reduce hospital admissions. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 179).
- \$8.526m over 4 years to provide **funding to community organisations for mental health programs targeting early intervention**, including the Moderated Online Social Therapy program (MOST), Catholic Care's Youth & Wellbeing program and the Parentline counselling service. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 180).
- \$184,000 in 2021-22 for the government to **develop a model of care to assist in the future development of supported accommodation for people living with mental health challenges**. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 181).
- \$3.862m (\$3.601m offset – COVID-19 Response Fund) in 2021-22 for the delivery of **additional mental health services to Canberrans affected by the COVID-19 pandemic** (Budget Outlook, p. 182).
- \$41.477m over 4 years to establish 10 additional **acute mental health inpatient beds** at the Canberra Hospital. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 187).

### **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander self-determination**

- \$920,000 for 2021-22 to 2024-25 for an **Aboriginal Business Support Package** to deliver enhanced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business support, including a Business Accelerator Program and a networked concierge service that will link Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to appropriate support mechanisms (Budget Outlook, p. 123).
- \$15.463m for 2021-22 to 2024-25 to fund and construct a purpose-built facility for **Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation** on their current premises in Wanniasa (Budget Outlook, p. 151).
- \$6.009m for 2021-22 to 2024-25 for the establishment of a **Healing and Reconciliation Fund** to support and deliver on local priorities set out in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028. An additional \$14 million is provisioned beyond the 2024-25 financial year to bring the total investment over ten years to \$20m (Budget Outlook, p. 152).

- \$790,000 (Safer Families Levy – \$144,000 offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to **strengthen domestic and family violence responses for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community** (Budget Outlook, p. 158).
- \$9.058m for 2021-22 to 2024-25 to continue the **Muliyan Off-Campus Flexible Learning Program** which provides culturally safe supports for 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are disengaged or disengaging with education (Budget Outlook, p. 165).
- \$2.212m (including \$1.962m offset from the Health Funding Envelope) for 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific mental health services** to provide an ongoing **culturally appropriate Suicide Prevention Program** (Budget Outlook, p. 178).
- \$803,000 (\$503,000 offset – Health Funding Envelope) in 2021-22 to commence design work on the redevelopment of the **Watson Health Precinct** to provide preliminary design for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential rehabilitation facility and for the redevelopment of the current facilities on the site. This measure is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope and also includes capital funding (Budget Outlook, p. 190)
- \$2.314m (with \$1.476m offset from Health Funding Envelope) for 2021-22 to **Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services** for services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) (Budget Outlook, p. 189).
- \$2.018m for 2021-22 to 2024-25 to fund the Community Legal Assistance sector, including for the **Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT**, to ensure community-based legal assistance organisations can maintain service delivery levels. The \$2.018m also includes funding for Canberra Community Law, Care Inc., and the Environmental Defenders Office (Budget Outlook, p 194).
- \$714,000 for 2021-22 (fully offset) for upgrades to the **Galambany Circle Sentencing** court room (Budget Outlook, p. 196).
- \$311,000 for 2021-22 (one year only) to fund **a temporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families Advocate**, (plus additional staff member), pending the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner (Budget Outlook, p. 199).

### **Poverty, inequality and cost of living**

- \$20.480m net costs (expenses and revenue foregone) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **2021-22 tax settings – Expanding concessions and assistance measures** (Budget Outlook, p. 147). This consists of:

- permanently increasing the Pensioner General Rates Rebate cap by \$50 to \$750 from 2021-22 (total of \$3.010m revenue foregone)
- permanently increasing the Utilities Concession by \$50 to \$750 from 2021-22 (total of \$6.290m expenses)
- providing an additional one-off \$50 rebate to Utilities Concession recipients in 2021-22 (in addition to the one-off \$200 increase announced in September 2021, increasing the total concession to \$1,000 in 2021-22) (total of \$1.550m expenses)
- expanding the Utilities Concession to ACT households where an account holder also holds an ACT Services Access Card (total of \$80,000 expenses)
- providing an additional \$0.25 million to the Utilities Hardship Fund in 2021-22 and forward years (total of \$1m expenses)
- allocating \$300,000 in 2021-22, \$250,000 in 2022-23 and \$200,000 over the remaining forward years to help improve energy literacy among vulnerable community members and improve awareness of available assistance measures (total of \$950,000 expenses)
- extending the current temporary conveyance duty concessions for off-the-plan units valued at \$500,000 or below purchased by owner-occupiers on a permanent basis (total of \$7.6m revenue foregone).
- \$6.2m in 2021-22 for **COVID-19 Response – Additional \$200 rebate for Canberra's most vulnerable** which provides an additional one-off \$200 increase in the Utilities Concession to support those households most in need during the current COVID-19 outbreak (Budget Outlook, p. 131).
- \$250,000 in 2021-22 for **COVID-19 response continuation – ACT Hardship Fund** to extend the ACT Hardship Fund for a further 12 months to 30 June 2022 (Budget Outlook, p. 133). The ACT Hardship Fund provides financial assistance to individuals who are unable to work as a result of being tested for, or contracting, COVID-19 and are ineligible for other forms of support. [ACTCOSS recommends extending eligibility for this support to income support recipients whose payments are below the poverty line].
- \$1.100m in 2021-22 for **COVID-19 Response – Community support package** economic and social support in response to the impact of the current COVID-19 public health emergency on the community, particularly for Canberrans with a disability, older Canberrans and people experiencing financial hardship.
- \$475,000 (fully offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **COVID-19 response continuation – More support to improve food security** to support the



transition of the Canberra Relief Network (CRN) to a community-led model to provide planning, data collection and a streamlined response to food security beyond the public health emergency of COVID-19 (Budget Outlook, pp. 150-151).

- \$120,000 in 2021-22 for **COVID-19 response continuation – Refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian support** to support the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian program to provide financial assistance for clients who hold an ACT Services Access Card and to support the resettlement of refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian visa entrants living in the ACT (Budget Outlook, p. 151).

## Disability

- \$450,000 from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for a **Disability Education Review** (Budget Outlook, p. 162). [ACTCOSS cautiously welcomes but seeks further information on review purpose and implementation].
- \$913,000 funding for Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT to provide **sexual health education, information and support services** for people with disability. This item is listed as an offset against the Health Funding Envelope (Budget Outlook, p. 178).
- \$1.648m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to **strengthen disability advocacy**. Funding targeted towards ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion (Budget Outlook, p. 159).
- \$4.409m to continue the **Integrated Service Response Program** to provide case coordination and emergency funding for people with disability with high and complex needs (Budget Outlook, p. 153)

## Climate and energy

- As already captured under the 'Poverty, inequality and cost of living' section above in relation to **2021-22 tax settings - Expanding concessions and assistance measures** and **COVID-19 Response – Additional \$200 rebate for Canberra's most vulnerable**, the 2021-22 ACT Budget includes both a permanent and one-off increases to the Utilities Concession; continuation of the Utilities Hardship Fund; and funding to improve energy literacy among vulnerable community members and improve awareness of available assistance measures (Budget Outlook, pp. 131, 147).
- \$856,000 from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Climate action – Supporting action on climate change** to support the community to reduce their household emissions and save on their energy bills through community awareness and behavioural change activities (Budget Outlook, p. 124).

- \$3.084m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to continue the **Climate action – Solar for Low Income scheme – continuation** to provide subsidies for the cost of solar installations (capped at \$2,500) for concession card holders – as part of the Sustainable Household Scheme (Budget Outlook, pp. 124, 172).
- \$2.647m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Climate action – Adaptation and resilience** to deliver the ACT Government's climate change adaptation commitments, including improved living infrastructure, climate data and risk-based assessments, and supporting community action and awareness (Budget Outlook, p. 170).
- \$5.001m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Climate action – Community Clubs Building Energy Efficiency Fund – continuation** to continue its four-year Community Club Building Energy Efficiency Fund to provide rebates to clubs for equipment upgrades, building efficiency improvements, and the installation of rooftop solar and batteries to reduce electricity and gas bills (Budget Outlook, p. 171).
- \$600,000 from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Climate action – Community Zero Emissions Grants** to provide grants to eligible community groups and not-for-profit organisations to undertake projects that support the ACT's transition to net zero emissions by 2045 (Budget Outlook, p. 171).
- \$8.874m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Climate action – Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme – continuation** to continue delivery of the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme (EEIS), to support emissions reductions and lower household and business energy use and cost. Expenses are fully offset from funds paid into the Scheme by Tier 2 energy retailers (Budget Outlook, p. 171).
- \$8.560m (revenue forgone) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Climate action – Free registration for zero emissions vehicles** to provide free vehicle registration for two years for second-hand zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs) newly registered in the ACT from 24 May 2021 to 30 June 2024.

## Justice

- \$795,000 from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for **reforming the minimum age of criminal responsibility** (Budget Outlook, p. 196).
- \$3.475m (\$3.510m offset from Provision) from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for **better support for vulnerable witnesses** for the ACT Intermediary Program (Budget Outlook, p. 193).
- \$2.513m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for community sector partnerships for **better justice support for vulnerable Canberrans**, to support the Legal Aid Commission to meet increased demand (Budget Outlook, p. 194).

- \$2.018m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for the **community legal assistance sector** (Budget Outlook, p. 194).
- \$17.755m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 (including \$7.609m Health Funding Envelope offset) for **Drug and Alcohol Court**. Noting that 2023-24 to 2024-25 funding is only \$2.2m each year (Provision) (Budget Outlook, p. 195).
- \$21.782m (including \$5.294m from Capital and \$16.488m from Expenses) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **improving infrastructure and wellbeing at the Alexander Maconochie Centre**, including for facility repair, trial integration program and long-term enhancement of women's accommodation (Budget Outlook, p. 197).
- \$7.165m to provide **more support for victims of crime** including funding to the Victim Services Scheme and the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme (Budget Outlook, p. 199).

## Children, young people and families

- \$7.053m (including \$4,000 offset from revenue) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for the **safe and connected youth** program, providing response and respite accommodation for young people aged eight to 15 years (Budget Outlook, p. 155).
- \$1.373m (Safer Families Levy – fully offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for the **Safer Families Collaboration Program**, to improve responses to children and young people experiencing DFV in the context of child protection services (Budget Outlook, p. 157).
- \$21.040m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **digital access and equity** (Chromebooks and internet access) for public education (Budget Outlook, p. 161).
- \$21.641m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **equitable enrolment adjustment**, to support an increase in students with additional needs in ACT public schools (Budget Outlook, p. 162).
- \$12.922m (including \$3.543m offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Future of Education Equity Fund** to support disadvantaged families to meet education expenses (Budget Outlook, p. 163).
- \$2.057m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Gender equality in our Schools**, including resources to prevent domestic and family violence (Budget Outlook, p. 163).
- \$7.363m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for more **social and youth workers in schools** (Budget Outlook, p. 164).

- \$445,000 over four years to continue the **Schools Legal Liaison** program (Budget Outlook, p. 166).
- \$4.934m towards investing in public education – ‘**set up for success**’ – **early childhood program** with free education to 500 priority three-year-olds for two days per week for 48 weeks per year (Budget Outlook p. 166)
- \$99m from (including \$68.024m in Capital offset) 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **school maintenance and infrastructure upgrades** to improve amenity, functionality and inclusivity of ACT public schools (Budget Outlook, p. 169).
- \$1.285m (including \$1.285m offset provision) from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for the **Therapeutic Care Court** (Budget Outlook, p. 201).

## Women, gender and sexuality

- \$624,000 from 2021-22 to 2024-25 to provide **support for trans, gender diverse and intersex Canberrans**, to fund A Gender Agenda (AGA) (Budget Outlook, p. 143)
- \$4.064m (Safer Families Levy, including \$3.902m offset) from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for the **Health Justice Partnership** (Budget Outlook, p. 155).
- \$249,000 (Safer Families Levy – fully offset) for 2021-22 for the **Family Violence Safety Action Pilot** (Budget Outlook, p. 156).
- \$2.158m (Safer Families Levy - fully offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Frontline domestic violence and rape crisis services** – additional support in 2021-22 reflecting increased demand as a result of COVID-19 (Budget Outlook, p. 156).
- \$817,000 (Safer Families Levy – including \$499,000 offset) from 2021-22 to 2022-23 for **private rental assistance for people experiencing domestic violence** (Budget Outlook, p. 157).
- \$1.500m (Safer Families Levy, including \$140,000 offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **strengthening sexual assault prevention and response**, to establish and fund the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee and related working groups (Budget Outlook, p. 158).
- \$400,000 (Safer Families Levy, fully offset) from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **women’s safety grants** (Budget Outlook, p. 158).
- \$360,000 (fully offset – Health Funding Envelope) in 2021-22 for a detailed implementation plan and to begin to deliver on the recommendations from the final report of the ACT Health Directorate’s **LGBTIQ+ Health Scoping Study** (Budget Outlook, p. 180).

- \$560,000 (including \$140,000 from provision) from 2021-22 to 2023-24 for **Women’s Workforce Participation** to fund the Return to Work program supporting women re-entering training or employment (Budget Outlook, p. 159).

## Human rights Jurisdiction

- \$1.031m from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for **Human Rights Commission** to increase capacity to respond to complaints (Budget Outlook, p. 196).
- \$576,000 from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for more support for the **Official Visitor Scheme** (Budget Outlook, p. 199).

## Older Canberrans

- The Budget includes ongoing funding for Active Travel initiatives which include **Aged Friendly Suburbs** although it is unclear whether there is a dedicated component for Aged Friendly Suburbs (Budget Outlook, p. 209).
- ACTOSS was unable to identify other significant new dedicated initiatives for older Canberrans (see ‘What’s missing’ section).

## Planning and transport

- \$340,000 over 4 years for new community facility to support community groups and provide access to a **multipurpose facility in the Molonglo region** (Budget Outlook, p. 125).
- \$5.417m (including \$4.327m offset through revenue) to **strengthen building quality regulation** (Budget Outlook, p.144).
- \$300,000 over two years through a community co-design process to inform potential development and construction **of the Gungahlin Community Centre** (Budget Outlook, p. 135).
- \$600,000 over four years for **zero emission grants for eligible community groups** and not-for-profit organisations (Budget Outlook, p. 171).
- \$1.471m (including \$791,000 offset through provision) for the continuation of **flexible bus service** for a further 12 months (Budget Outlook, p.213).

## Measures requiring further consideration

- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees at the AMC - \$2.314m for 2021-22 but nothing budgeted for forward years. Is this COVID related funding?
- Community legal sector – \$1.199m for 2021-22, but drops to \$160,000 by 2024-25 (Budget Outlook, p. 194).
- Review of Safer Families Levy funding and proportion going to front-line community services.
- Frontline domestic violence and rape crisis services are allocated \$759,000 for 2021-22, but this drops dramatically to \$458,000 the following year. The impacts of the pandemic on domestic and family violence are likely to last beyond this financial year and supports should remain.
- Intensive Corrections Orders – \$8.213m for the continuation for the Intensive Corrections Order Scheme (Budget Outlook, p. 197).
- Where is the \$11.1m of additional funding for ACT Policing (Budget Outlook, p. 201) going?
- ACTCOSS is disappointed about the slow roll-out of the Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme (Budget Outlook, p. 176). The 2020-21 ACT Budget had allocated almost \$12.5m to this scheme in the forward estimates for 2021-22. In this Budget, only a quarter of this (\$3.087m) has been allocated for 2021-22. Delivering on the ACT Government's commitment to a just transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions will require greater investment and more urgent action to ensure that no-one is left behind. This stands in stark contrast to the \$150m Sustainable Household Scheme which was also announced in last year's ACT Budget but has since been trialled and is now being fully rolled out.
- ACTCOSS notes the significant investment in ACT Government building infrastructure of over \$10.2m and other building upgrades of a further \$986,000 to improve energy efficiency (see Budget Outlook, pp.119, 137, 142). This contrasts with uneven investment in community infrastructure, particularly under investment in the maintenance and upgrade of ACT Government owned buildings and community hubs. (Budget Outlook, p. 338 details significant infrastructure investment already in progress of \$4.540m in 2021-22 rising fourfold in 2022-23 to \$17.814m).
- It would be useful for the Budget papers to provide further information on the provisioning arrangements for health investments given a number of health investments are listed as offsets.

- The 2021-22 ACT Budget notes that this year's 11.95% increase in electricity prices is 'largely due to increased network costs which are regulated at a national level and passed on from distributors to retailers' (Budget Outlook, p. 223). The key driver behind this increase was the cost of the ACT Government's Large-scale Feed-in Tariff (LFIT) Scheme. ACTCOSS has called for a review of the LFIT scheme to assess and address its impact on energy costs for residential, small business, and not-for-profit energy consumers.
- A clear articulation of the role/use of wellbeing indicators and framework in the ACT Budget.
- While there is funding for needs analysis work for flexible buses, it is unclear whether this work will provide a clear picture of need for all on-demand transport including community transport.
- What proportion of new housing supply, including for public housing, will meet new Universal Design requirements?
- Homelessness funding welcome, but we remain concerned about how the allocated budget will help us meet the supply targets for public housing in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement.
- Unclear if funding for palliative care is wholly new money. We believe this money was announced in 2016-17 Budget and is Commonwealth funding. There have also been calls for a palliative care ward in The Canberra Hospital.
- It would be useful to understand how the funding allocation for the Watson Health Precinct redevelopment has been modelled, and whether \$803,000 over one year will be enough to design and redevelop three facilities (Ted Noffs, CatholicCare and the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential rehabilitation centre). It is also worrisome that there is no future money allocated to development or funding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential rehabilitation facility.
- Within the \$21.782m earmarked for the AMC we are keen to understand details of the work to improve women's accommodation, for example will it fund the creation of separate facilities for women on remand.
- How much of the \$120,000 COVID relief funding for refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian support is going to frontline support services? Why does that differ from the \$570,000 that was announced on 16 September 'to support vulnerable members of Canberra's migrant and refugee community'.
- Is the \$1.1m for the COVID Response community support package further funding beyond the Disability and Carer Relief Grants already being spent?

- We would like more information on the Gender Equality in Schools funding allocation; is this money going to frontline services to deliver Respectful Relationship programs in public schools?
- Will any of the funding for implementing the LGBTQIA+ Health Scoping Study be allocated to frontline staff or the community sector, or will this money remain with ACT Health?
- Is the \$560,000 announced to support women's workforce participation new funding? Has the existing program been assessed and has it been successful?
- Is the \$913,000 for Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT new money, or a continuation of regular funding?
- We appreciate the funding for organisations such as ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion to perform individual advocacy but note the need for funding for other peaks who also provide systemic advocacy.

## What's missing

- Further details on land release setting out how ACT Government will meet its affordable land release targets across the life of the Parliamentary Agreement to deliver goal of 600 additional affordable rentals by 2025-26 (Parliamentary Agreement Appendix 1a, part 2).
- Significant spending on community facilities, including a community facilities audit, and the need for investment in the maintenance and upgrade of ACT Government owned buildings and community hubs.
- Increase in core funding for community organisations to cover rising costs of service provision.
- Funding for the Carers Strategy and measures to support carers.
- Seniors' mental health and other measures to support older Canberrans in the COVID recovery.
- Funding for review or evaluation or input from carers for Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response (PACER) Program.
- Funding to support Peer Workers in mental health.
- Funding for a respite facility for mental health carers.
- Funding to respond to the review for older persons' mental health.



- Maternal Wellbeing – no significant additional funding for community-based or tertiary services for prevention, early intervention, or in-patient support in peri-natal mental health.
- Additional funding for the Wayback program does not address the increasing demand for working with people who have attempted suicide; or prevention.
- No funding for the creation and implementation of the Disability Health Strategy.
- Funding for improving/implementing inclusive education beyond a new review.
- Funding for alcohol and other drug treatment and harm reduction specialist services is insufficient and needs to be doubled to allow service providers to meet current demand.
- There is no dedicated additional funding for smoking cessation
- Disability Justice Strategy not resourced, nor the Justice Reinvestment Strategy.
- No reference to an independent commission of inquiry to investigate overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system
- This year's ACT Budget Papers do not include a Socio Economic Analysis on Taxation and Concessions Policy. In recent years, this analysis has been provided to track equity impacts of ACT Government's land tax reform and related concessions.
- ACTCOSS welcomes the increase in the Utilities Concession to a base rate of \$750 per annum along with one-off rebates that will see eligible households receive a \$1,000 rebate on their electricity bills in 2021-22. We have called for further work to be done to ensure that concessions and other supports are adequate and appropriately targeted to need. On Budget day, we welcomed tri-partisan support in the ACT Legislative Assembly for a motion to review and update the ACT's Targeted Assistance Strategy in the first half of 2022, with potential measures to be considered as part of the 2022-23 Budget.
- Community sector workforce strategy that provides adequate funding to attract, train, pay and retain staff and narrow gender pay gap.
- An investment in early childhood education and preschools with early intervention strategies for children with developmental delays.

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ACTCOSS is committed to reconciliation, acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to elders past and present.

ACTCOSS advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

Initiative of

