

Poverty & Disadvantage in the ACT

Anti-Poverty Weeks 2023

Get Informed

The ACT has high average wages, however those Canberrans on low incomes are struggling to cope in Australia’s least affordable jurisdiction.¹ Canberra is experiencing a cost of living crisis, exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of events such as the Black Summer bushfires, COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 eastern Australia floods and the war in Ukraine. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the ACT has increased at a higher rate than nationally,⁴ with the ACT having the second most expensive median rent prices after Sydney.²

Cost of living and housing pressures place already disadvantaged groups at a greater risk of poverty particularly: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, older people, and women.



CPI increases mean that living costs in the ACT have reached the highest levels in two decades.³



1,777 people in the ACT were homeless according to the 2021 Census.⁴



ACT community sector services have reported increasing poverty rates, with only 4% of services able to meet increasing demand.⁵



3,171 applicants are currently waitlisted for social housing in the ACT, with a wait time of over 5 years for standard housing.⁶

¹ SGS Economics & Planning (SGSEP), [Rental Affordability Index](#), SGSEP, 2022.

² CoreLogic, [Quarterly Rental Review Australia October 2023](#), CoreLogic, 2023

³ ABS, [Selected Living Cost Indexes, Australia, December 2022](#), ABS website, 2023.

⁴ ABS, [Estimating Homelessness: Census, State and territory of usual residence](#), ABS website, 2023.

⁵ ACOSS, [Australian Community Sector Survey - ACOSS](#), ACOSS, 2022

⁶ ACT Government Community Services Directorate, [Social Housing Waiting List](#), CSD, as of 11 September 2023

Quote us:

“Despite high average weekly earnings in the ACT, there are many Canberrans living in poverty and struggling to make ends meet. For people in poverty, the rapidly accelerating cost of living and housing crises are creating insurmountable pressures.

“We have heard countless stories of households in our community having to choose which essentials they can manage to cover each week. This is an indictment of our current social security system, which is operating in a way that traps people below the poverty line.

“Both the ACT and federal governments have major roles to play in poverty alleviation. Investment is urgently needed to redress prohibitive cost of living pressures, housing unaffordability, underfunding of community sector services, and shamefully low rates of income support.”

Dr Devin Bowles, CEO, ACTCOSS



Take Action

This Anti-Poverty Week we are calling on our governments to unlock poverty for millions of Australians by raising income support above the poverty line and investing in social housing.

Everyone can play a role in poverty alleviation in our community including by:

- Attending and participating in [APW events](#)
- Petitioning politicians to take action and [emailing your MP about poverty](#)
- Joining the ACOSS campaign to permanently and adequately [Raise the Rate](#) of unemployment and related payments so that they keep people out of poverty
- Joining the [Everybody's Home](#) campaign calling for a better, fairer housing system for everyone
- Getting informed and learning more by reading our [ACT Cost of Living Report](#) and [Poverty and Cost of Living Position Statement](#)
- Donating to a [local community organisation](#)
- Finding [volunteering opportunities](#) in the ACT



Scan to
learn more
and take
action!

