

# Media Release: ACT Community Organisations Call for Continuation of the Rent Relief Fund

16 June 2025

ACT community service organisations are urging the ACT Government to continue funding the [Rent Relief Fund](#) in a joint submission ahead of the 2025-26 ACT Budget. This vital program, set to end on 30 June 2025, provides financial relief to vulnerable private renters experiencing rental stress or severe financial hardship.

Since its re-establishment in April 2023, the Rent Relief Fund has delivered over 1,400 grants, equating to two grants per day, to households in need. The program offers up to four weeks' rent (maximum \$2,500) paid directly to landlords, helping renters stabilise their housing and connect with broader support services.

The ACT faces a severe housing affordability crisis, with the highest rate of rental stress among Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients in Australia according to the Productivity Commission's [2025 Report on Government Services](#). Half (50.3%) of these households in the ACT were paying more than 30% of their income on rent, and over a quarter (26.9%) were paying more than 50% of their income on rent.

Released in April, Anglicare Australia's [2025 Rental Affordability Snapshot](#) found that the ACT was one of the most, if not the most, unaffordable jurisdictions for low-income households.

The [UNSW City Futures Research Centre](#) has estimated that 5,400 households in the ACT have an unmet need for social and affordable housing. Currently, [public housing wait times](#) in the ACT average up to five years.

At an annual cost of \$1.7 million, community organisations emphasise that the Rent Relief Fund is a modest yet impactful investment that addresses immediate housing needs while complementing long-term efforts to increase social and affordable housing.

The introduction of a short-term accommodation levy in the ACT from 1 July 2025 is forecast to generate \$3.8 million in revenue in 2025-26, more than enough to sustain the program.

One example of the program's importance and its positive impact is presented through a case study in our joint submission to the ACT Budget Consultation process: Bree\*, a single parent recovering from financial abuse, was able to maintain her tenancy and custody of her child through a Rent Relief Fund grant and wraparound support services.

\*Name changed for privacy.

**Quotes for attribution:****Corinne Dobson, Chief Executive Officer at ACT Shelter said:**

“The Rent Relief Fund has been a vital lifeline for renters in crisis, helping to keep a roof over people’s heads at a time of exorbitant rents and rising cost-of-living pressures. Now is not the time to be winding back targeted support for households doing it toughest. ACT Shelter urges the Government to continue funding this critical program beyond June to prevent more Canberrans from slipping into housing insecurity and homelessness.”

**Dr Devin Bowles, Chief Executive Officer at ACT Council of Social Service said:**

“The Rent Relief Scheme reduces pressure on Canberra’s limited social housing, so it is an amazing financial investment for the ACT Government. From a human perspective, the security of being able to stay where you live is fundamental.”

**Dr John Boersig PSM, Chief Executive Officer at Legal Aid ACT said:**

“Legal Aid ACT supports the continuation of funding for the Rental Relief Fund. As with many of our other community sector colleagues, our clients have significantly benefited from the assistance the Fund offers. Considering the ACT is Australia’s second-most expensive capital city to rent in, and in the context of the current cost of living crisis, continuing this funding is essential to prevent evictions and relieve financial pressure on the most vulnerable members of our community.”

**Dan English, Chief Executive Officer at Woden Community Service said:**

“At Woden Community Service, the Tenancy Assistance Program has seen firsthand the vital role the Rent Relief Fund has played in supporting renters across the ACT. The availability of this short-term financial relief has significantly reduced stress for our clients, giving them the capacity to focus on the underlying causes of their housing instability. Financial hardship and rental distress can be all-consuming, and without immediate relief, many people are unable to engage meaningfully in support services or plan beyond their immediate crisis.

At least 60% of the Tenancy Assistance Program’s clients renting privately have accessed the Rent Relief Fund. This support has consistently led to quicker and more sustainable outcomes, allowing clients to participate more fully in our program and build the skills needed to move forward independently.

While the Tenancy Assistance Program continues to deliver effective wraparound support, the absence of the Rent Relief Fund will reduce the speed and flexibility with which we can stabilise housing for clients. Without access to immediate financial relief, many clients face prolonged distress, which can impact their engagement in support and limit the range of viable housing options. Maintaining this fund would strengthen

tenancy support services across the sector and enhance outcomes for those most at risk.”

**Carmel Franklin, Chief Executive Officer at Care said:**

“At Care, the Rent Relief Fund has proven to be a critical part of providing wraparound support to vulnerable private renters. It has provided clients with financial support to sustain their housing as well as providing a means to connect with other supports offered through Care’s financial counselling and other programs, including energy supports. The Rent Relief Fund has also provided a means to connect clients with other services and supports provided by government and non-government agencies who we work closely with as referral partners.”

**Lucy Hohnen, Chief Executive Officer at St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn said:**

"Every day, our Vinnies teams support individuals and families facing mounting rental stress. The Rent Relief Fund is often the circuit breaker that keeps people safely housed while we work with them on longer-term solutions. Without it, many of our support programs such as Vinnies Emergency Relief and Family Services Programs would have less opportunity to help people stabilise their situation and avoid homelessness. For a modest investment, this fund delivers hope to those in crisis."

**Andrew Scotford, Chief Executive Officer at Canberra Institute of Technology Student Association (CITSA) said:**

“Through CITSA’s management of CIT Student Accommodation we are aware that CIT students have benefitted materially from the Rent Relief Fund. It has contributed to their capacity to maintain their study and active participation in training as well as their accommodation at the same time.”

**Jessi Claudianos, Director of ACT & Migrant Support Programs National Operations at Australian Red Cross said:**

“It can be difficult to comprehend the lived reality of people forced to leave their homes, communities, and loved ones behind—often in fear and under unimaginable conditions. This invaluable support has resulted in many of our clients settling into secure living arrangements in the ACT. “

**Supporters:**

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