
2026-27 ACT Budget: investment in community services

The ACT Council of Social Service warmly welcomes the ACT Government's pre-budget announcement today of meaningful investment in the ACT community sector.

ACTCOSS CEO, Dr Devin Bowles said, "Our member organisations are being asked to help more and more people that have never needed community supports before.

The permanent uplift of \$23.7 million across the next four years will give certainty to organisations that they can continue to provide this desperately needed assistance."

Sustainability and long-term investment

The government's focus on sustainability and long-term investment in the community sector is particularly welcome during this time of rising costs and financial stress on families.

"This financial year's \$5 million uplift to the sector was a great first step. Today's announcement that it will be permanent and indexed is another step forward."

Being able to plan allows organisations to recruit and retain specialist staff, commit to long term service-delivery and to communicate available services to clients and potential clients.

"ACTCOSS remains committed to working alongside the Legislative Assembly, ACT Government officials and the community sector to ensure funding truly reflects the actual cost of the essential services we deliver.

We look forward to seeing the details of the Budget Papers, about where funding will be allocated to specific services and areas of need," said Dr Bowles.

Funding upstream services that keep people out of crisis is a good investment for the ACT Government.

"The community sector provides agile services that it can tailor to individuals' needs. Investments like this reduce pressure on other areas of government spending, like hospitals.

The human pay-off is that it keeps people out of crisis," said Dr Bowles.

Homelessness services

The \$15.4 million in expanded and new funding to support more homelessness services is very welcome.

CEO of ACT Shelter, Corinne Dobson said, "Demand for emergency accommodation and homelessness services in the ACT is far outpacing supply and this increase will help to keep services operating.

More details will be needed to understand how much the funding will support us to meet the increasing need for emergency accommodation and services.”

In the 2026 Budget Submission, ACTCOSS recommended that the ACT Government also needs to increase funding for public housing to help provide pathways for people from short-term and crisis accommodation into permanent housing.

Legal assistance services

ACTCOSS welcomes increased support for community legal assistance services and Legal Aid.

Coupled with last week’s announcement about increased funding to the DPP and for sexual violence and domestic and family violence services, these measures will directly support a substantial number of people in the ACT.

Dr Bowles said, “These community legal services are vital for Canberrans who have experienced violence and exclusion.

I welcome the government’s commitment to reviewing Legal Aid funding, and the government’s commitment to ongoing and sustainable funding for the community legal services who support some of the most vulnerable people in the ACT.”

Other sectors

The government has also announced specific funding for support and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ Canberrans and for essential sexual and reproductive health services.

ACTCOSS is pleased that funding recognises the needs of all Canberrans and families.

Connected system

Community sector organisations are part of a connected system.

Being able to efficiently support individuals and families requires organisations and different sectors, including government and community organisations, to work together and communicate well.

“This Budget announcement offers a way forward for government and the sector to view people’s needs holistically. It opens the door to working together to design and deliver comprehensive interventions,” Dr Bowles said.

ENDS

ACTCOSS advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations. Follow us @ACTCOSS on X, Facebook and Instagram.

**For more information or comment, please contact
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