ACT Budget Bulletin

2026-27

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About ACTCOSS

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (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.

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.

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Executive Summary

In the 2026-27 Budget, the ACT Government has recognised the importance of investing in people who most need our support, and in the community sector who provides the services and programs to help them.

The last five years have pushed more Canberrans into poverty and financial precarity as one international crisis after another has pushed up the costs of essential goods. As ACTCOSS noted in the 2026 Cost of Living Report, the community sector is reporting a significant rise in financial strain among their clients and an unprecedented jump in the use of foodbanks in the ACT as people struggle to make ends meet.

This Budget takes steps to reduce the harm these pressures are causing to Canberrans experiencing poverty and hardship.

Total funding for the Community Sector has increased from $252 million in 2025-26 to $327 million in 2026-27. This is an overall increase of 26% in real terms! As a proportion of the budget, investment in the community sector rose from 2.6% to 3.3% in a single year. It is significant because it signals a pivot towards trusted, approachable, high-value services that are focused on preventing people from experiencing crises. This is a good financial investment for the Territory because it helps prevent expensive acute interventions, like hospital and prison stays.

Important measures in this budget include the funding uplift of $23.7m over four years for community organisations, additional funding for ACCOs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, a focus on domestic, family and sexual violence support services, continued and new funding for homelessness services, and an investment to build more and better maintain public housing in the ACT.

Fiscal Sustainability and Revenue measures
It is clear the ACT Government has worked to balance immediate cost of living concerns with the Government’s own challenging fiscal position. Part of this approach has been to reduce infrastructure spending. However, the ACT Government has committed to health and housing as priority infrastructure projects, which are important for those on lower incomes.

This Budget has mostly sought to increase revenue through minor increases in a range of existing taxes but has delayed many of these to reduce the impact on households in the immediate term. For example, starting in 2027-28, there are projected increases in the Safer Families Levy, Motor Vehicle Registration Fees, the Short-Term Rental Accommodation Levy and the Utilities Network Facilities Tax.

New Expenditure
In the ACTCOSS submission to the ACT Government ahead of this budget, we called for a focus on four central priorities for greater equity:

1. Alleviating **cost-of-living** pressures for people on low-incomes
2. Valuing the **community sector**
3. Strengthening direct Government investment in **social housing and homelessness services**
4. Supporting **self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**.

That submission reflected the insights and expertise of our members, who see the struggles Canberrans experiencing disadvantage face every day.

Our preliminary finding is that the ACT Government has made a significant positive investment to support people experiencing disadvantage and in the community sector that supports them. This includes investing in multiple recommendations made in the ACTCOSS budget submission. ACTCOSS notes some gaps in the Budget measures including a lack of investment in measures that benefit people with disability, as well as carers, and the absence of a clear plan to reach the Government's targets for new public housing by 2030.

However, for the most part, this budget delivers for people experiencing disadvantage. Notable measures include:

- The introduction of the **Housing Crisis Support Fund** that provides one-off crisis support to people experiencing rental stress by covering rental costs and providing a $250 crisis support payment. This measure reflects a recommendation from the ACTCOSS budget submission.

- Substantial support for public housing and homelessness, including funding for **450 new public housing homes**, a **$650m Community Housing Loan Guarantee**, **$214m for public housing repairs** and **$16.9m for homelessness services**. This measure partially reflects a recommendation from the ACTCOSS budget submission.

- A permanent **uplift of $5m per year (indexed) for the community sector** commencing in 2027-28. This measure partially reflects a recommendation from the ACTCOSS budget submission.

- Investment of **$44.23m in funding for domestic, family and sexual violence frontline services**.

- New funding of **$1.93m to progress commitments to supporting and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.** This includes additional funding to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to meet their commitments. This measure reflects a recommendation from the ACTCOSS budget submission.
- An additional **$16.74m over four years for the community legal sector**.

These measures build on the dialogue started with the ACT Government and the community sector ahead of last year's Budget, and show that the Government is listening to the sector. For many of these measures, more work and investment will be required in future years. However, this budget demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the members of our community who are doing it toughest.

This budget was an excellent outcome for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage given the financial circumstances of the ACT and where we are in the election cycle. Nevertheless, there remains much work to do because some priority populations missed out, and even in areas of significant funding uplift there is critical investment yet to be made.

The success of this budget is the result of the collective action of our sector. We are bringing forward the timing of our budget pitches, addressing both line areas and Treasury. We are refining the content of our advocacy to better influence Government. Importantly, we are doing this collectively, and amplifying a shared message of the value our sector brings and the importance of the Canberrans we assist. Our challenge is to continue to refine and improve our approach. Those experiencing poverty and disadvantage rely on our continued efforts.

Devin Bowles

Dr Devin Bowles
ACTCOSS CEO

Key Announcements

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

The Budget provides a range of measures to fund ACCOs to deliver essential services to community across healthcare, education, housing, domestic, family and sexual violence, governance and justice initiatives. The Government also recognised the resourcing constraints of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and provided additional funding to enable members to meet their commitments as well as to support engagement with the response to the Jumbunna Review of the Overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the criminal justice system. These are both recommendations that ACTCOSS made in our budget submission following consultation. ACTCOSS will continue to advocate as an ally to strengthen support for self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Key Measures

- **Delivering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans:** $1.93m over two years ($1.1m in 2026-27 and $0.41m in 2027-28), partially offset by $0.99m in expenses and $0.78m from the Healing and Reconciliation Fund, for a net cost of $0.16m. The Government will extend funding to progress commitments which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and self-determination. This includes additional funding of:
    - $0.74m for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and independent secretariat.
    - $0.75m for work supporting the Truth Telling (Seed of Truth) Project including research into the history, presence and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT and surrounding region.

  (Budget Outlook, p.115; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.55)

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership on justice overrepresentation:** $1.06m to fund the Government's response to the Jumbunna Review of Overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the criminal justice system. This comprises $0.66m for two independent justice advisors and a small grants program open to ACCOs and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. There is additional support for the Elected Body and the Elected Body's independent secretariat to reflect the additional workload required to engage in this work. *(Budget Outlook, p.135; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.6)*

- **Board of Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaths in Custody:** $5.37m over two years ($4.15m in 2026-27 and $1.22m in 2027-28), with $4.3m offset from provisional expenses. The Government will establish a six-month Board of Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The Government will also provide funding of:
  - $0.33m to provide legal financial assistance to individuals and organisations.
  - $0.48m for community organisations to deliver counselling and other community-based support services.

  (Budget Outlook, p.137; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.6)

- **Supporting a community-led justice response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans:** $1.04m over four years. The Government will fund the ongoing operation of Circle Sentencing in the Supreme Court – a culturally grounded, community-led sentencing process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will deliver up to ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Supreme Court Circle Sentencing court matters a year. (*Budget Outlook, p.144; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.6)*

- **Supporting culturally responsive reintegration pathways:** An investment of $3.27m over four years will support the continuation and strengthening of Integrated Case Management, with:
  - $2.52m directed to the community sector
  - $0.75m allocated for a full-time equivalent (FTE) position within the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACSD).

  (Budget Outlook, p.144; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.10-11)

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perinatal mental health space:** $1.20m over four years. This initiative is partially offset by $0.15m in 2026-27, with a one-year extension to the Mental Health Bilaterial Agreement Commonwealth Government, with a net cost of $1.05m. The Government will provide grants to community sector organisations to deliver a perinatal mental health space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and birthing people to deliver wrap-around, community based, culturally grounded perinatal support. *(Budget Outlook, p.109)*

- **Continued support for the Indigenous Allied Health Australia ACT Health Academy:** $1.87m over four years starting in 2026-27. The Government will continue to fund the Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) Health Academy program, which supports 30 places per year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students to complete a Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance. *(Budget Outlook, p.120; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.8)*

- **Yerrabi Yurwang's Housing Australia Future Fund application**: The Government is providing $0.50m support Yerrabi Yurwang's Housing

Australia Future Fund application for building costs of a 29-dwelling townhouse development in Moncrieff. The Government is also supporting Yerrabi Yurwang to acquire the Moncrieff site with over $3.00m through the Affordable Housing Project Fund. *(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.7)*

- **ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy**: $2.00m starting in 2026-27 to establish a grant pool for ACCOs delivering sexual violence responses. The 2026-27 budget also includes $0.12m in funding to elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in DFSV governance arrangements to promote shared decision making and support the participation of ACCOs in broader workforce development and coordination activities. *(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.7)*

- **Supporting CIT Yurauna**: $0.51m over 2026-27 to support CIT Yurauna, centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational excellence, as part of the *Supporting the new CIT Woden campus and CIT initiative Yurauna* of $5.89m (fully offset) over 2026-27. CIT Yurauna is designed to provide a culturally safe and supportive learning environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. (*Budget Outlook, p.67; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.10*)

- **Responding to the ACT Public School Resourcing Review**: $2.00m over four years. This initiative is funded to establish new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led governance within the education system, including funding for secretariat and remuneration for members. (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.9*)

- **Parent Advocacy Service Grant**: $0.55m (fully offset by expenses) over three years to establish a two-year trial of a parent advocacy service to provide information, tools and support for families to navigate school engagement. The program will provide grant funding to ACT Parents to deliver the service from the start of the 2027 school year, including advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and supporting them in a culturally safe and appropriate manner by members of their community. *(Budget Outlook, p.107; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p. 9)*

- **Head Start Program:** $0.77m over two years to continue the Head Start Program in the 2027 school year to provide support for students completing an Australian School based Apprenticeship. The program continued an annual allocation of five places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. (Budget Outlook p.106; *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.9*)

Children, young people and families

This budget did not include significant funding for children, young people and families.

While there are a number of measures in this budget that will have positive impacts (i.e. shifts in education financing, investment in health services and public housing), there were limited new measures that specifically aimed to support children, young people and families as distinct cohorts. The most significant of these is an increase in funding for the Future of Education Equity Fund, to provide additional support for school-age children to access education.

Key Measures

- **Continued delivery of minimum age of criminal responsibility reforms:** $2.51m over four years, offset by existing provisional expenses of $3.61m for a net saving of -$1.10m; this measure is therefore an expenditure reduction. Measure relates to a reduction in existing funding for implementing the minimum age of criminal responsibility reforms. Funding will support ongoing individualised therapeutic services through the Therapeutic Support Panel and extend the Safer Youth Response Service in 2027–28 while its effectiveness is evaluated *(Budget Outlook, p.112)*

- **Cost of living – Future of Education Equity Fund:** $0.98m funding in 2026-27. The Government will provide this additional funding for the Future of Education Student Equity Fund to support access to education for all students. This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2024-25 Budget initiative Future of Education Equity Fund – Cost of Living Relief and the 2025-26 Budget initiative Cost of living – Expanding the Future of Education Equity Fund. *(Budget Outlook, p.105)*

- **Feasibility for Expansion of Flexible Education and Specialist Schools:** $0.60m over two years ($0.10m in 2026-27 and $0.50m in 2027-28). This funding is provided to complete feasibility studies to plan for the long-term demand and infrastructure needs for flexible education services and specialists schooling. *(Budget Outlook, p.105)*

- **Supporting the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre:** $5.69m over four years (partially offset by 1.18m), including 0.56m in capital investment. The Government will provide ongoing funding support to ensure the sustained operation of the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (Bimberi), and further support for upgrades and replacement of ageing infrastructure. It will also implement a Throughcare pilot program, providing transitional support for young people leaving Bimberi. (*Budget Outlook, p.120*)

- **Supporting our health workforce – Continued support for the Indigenous Allied Health Australia ACT Health Academy:** $1.87m over four years starting in 2026-27. The Government will continue to fund the Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) Health Academy program, which supports 30 places per year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students to complete a Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance. *(Budget Outlook, p.120; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.8)*

- **Intensive therapeutic placements and extraordinary residential care:** $22.46m in 2026-27. The Government will continue delivering residential care, crisis accommodation and emergency supports for children and young people unable to remain safely with their families, including those with complex disability and mental health needs. This initiative builds on sustained investment to improve outcomes for children and families at risk of, or engaged with, the statutory child protection system. A sustainability review of out of home care expenditure will be undertaken to identify cost-effectiveness opportunities and inform future funding decisions. *(Budget Outlook, p.116)*

Climate, energy and environment

The Budget includes funding committed for the release of ACT's new Climate Change Strategy and the first action plan but ambitions on meeting the ACT's emissions reduction targets are muted.

The Budget includes funding to ACTCOSS to improve resilience of the community sector, who are often the first responders in climate disasters and a key pillar in enabling faster recovery from disasters. However, detail on other new measures that will be funded under the budget measure worth $9.31m is limited.

Many of the emissions reduction measures touted in the budget as new measures are effectively continuations of existing programs. This includes the Home Energy Support Program (which funds rebates of up to 5,000 for eligible homeowners with concession cards), and the Renters Home Energy Programme (delivers education on how to reduce energy use).

Where significant changes to emissions reduction programs have occurred, the changes made do not support greater equity in the transition to clean energy. For instance, the Sustainable Household Scheme will include a $ 5,000 increase per loan from 1 July 2026 and an expanded category of goods for which the loan can be taken. This concessional loan scheme remains inaccessible to most people on lower incomes and does not improve perceptions of transition injustice which are associated with negative repercussions for implementation of climate change interventions.

Key Measures

- **Climate action – Delivering the ACT's Next Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan:** $9.31m over four years will fund a range of measures that will continue Government work towards reaching NetZero targets and adapting to climate change. This includes working with community partners to deliver projects that support climate change mitigation and adaptation, continuing to support community services organisations to manage climate risks and undertake adaptation planning, and delivering the next Climate Change Strategy and first Action Plan*. (Budget outlook, p.89)*

  Climate action – Continuing support for priority households: $5.22m over 3 years (partially offset by $2.85m), for a net cost of $2.36m. This funds continuation of the Renters Home Energy Program and the Home Energy Support Program. The Renters' Home Energy Program is a free program available to any person renting a home within the ACT, providing online tools or an in-person home energy assessment to educate on ways to save on energy bills and make homes more comfortable. The Home Energy Support Program provides rebates up to the value of $5,000 to eligible low-income homeowners to help with the costs of installing energy-efficient products. *(Budget Outlook, p.89)*

- **Climate action – Supporting community-led outcomes for ACT's environment:** $0.94m over 3 years. This funding initiative will fund an increase in funding for community environment initiatives through the ACT Environmental Grants Program. This initiative also includes resourcing to support the delivery of environmental, conservation and volunteer services to the Territory. (*Budget Outlook, p.90*)

- **Climate action – Sustainable Household Scheme enhancements:** $6.57m in additional concessional lending over four years, at a net cost of $1.31m ($1.38m in expenses, partially offset by $78,000 in revenue). Because the scheme concessionally lends rather than grants, the loan principal is repayable; the gross costs reflect administration and the concessional component of the loans. From 1 July 2026 the loan cap rises to $20,000 for all products for new participants, and electric cargo bikes become eligible following administrative changes. (*Budget Outlook, p.72*)

- **Delivering climate responsive city services:** $30.68m over 4 years. This initiative will support moving and horticultural works, targeted tree planting program to maintain and expand existing tree canopy, and employment of 2 additional volunteer coordinators to support the increased number of environmental volunteer groups to support health and safety of volunteers. (*Budget Outlook, p.91*)

- **Supporting responsible land management:** $13.63m over two years (partially offset by $0.31m), for a net cost of $13.32m. The Government will implement a range of land management activities and the continuation of Caring for Country partnerships. The Government will also continue to progress a Review of the Territory's environmental offsets policy. (*Budget Outlook, p.99*)

Community facilities and infrastructure

Nil to report.

Community sector

This Budget is the most significant increase in community sector funding in many years. Funding for the community sector has increased from $252m in 2025-26 to $327m in 2026-27. This is an overall increase of 26% in real terms.

The Government’s pre-Budget announcement of a permanent $23.7m uplift over four years makes last year’s one-off $5m increase ongoing and indexed. Indexation using the current formula continues for existing funded organisations and programs. The Budget includes new, modest investments in specific programs or organisations, including in LGBTQIA+ health and advocacy.

These investments, alongside expanded homelessness funding, additional support for community legal services and support for DFV and sexual violence support services, indicate Government’s broader recognition of the role of the community sector (see specific policy headings for details on these measures).

However, much of the longer-term funding remains subject to future decisions, creating some uncertainty about delivery and impact. While the combined measures represent a more comprehensive response than in previous years, they do not fully address the scale of historic underfunding, increasing service demand and growing complexity. This is especially the case with respect to disability and carer funding, where there is a notable absence.

Key Measures

- **Supporting a strong and responsive community sector:** $6.75m over 2 years (with $6.00m in 2026-27 and $0.75m in 2027-28) and $15.93m in provisional expenses over three years from 2027-28. The Government will provide a permanent funding uplift to community sector organisations to support a responsive and evolving service system that focuses on the areas of greatest need. This investment supports the ongoing work to reform community sector funding being delivered by the Government, with a focus on identifying and supporting priority needs. Funding is provisioned from 2027-28 subject to future Government consideration of the priority reforms. The Government will also provision funding to supports its commitments to move towards parity between the public and community sectors under the Community Sector Multi-Employer Agreement. (*Budget Outlook, p.118*)

- **Community Sector Indexation:** $8.22m over four years. The Government will apply Community Sector Indexation (CSI) to relevant Community Sector funding for not-for-profit community sector organisations that deliver services through multi-year funding agreements. (*Budget Outlook, p.112*)

- **Building safer communities – Supporting DFSV frontline services:** $44.23m over four years (partially offset by $17.93m), for a net cost of $26.31m. The Government will increase investment in frontline domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) services in the ACT to provide funding certainty. These initiatives will primarily be supported though increases in the ACT Safer Families Levy, with the remainder funded by ACT Government consolidated revenue and Commonwealth funding. *(Budget Outlook, p.111; Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.3*)

- **Strengthening community services and inclusion:** $0.89m over four years, (partially offset by $88,000). The Government will support the delivery of the Gender Pathways Peer Navigation Service by A Gender Agenda, an expansion of the Supporting and Strengthening LGBTIQA+ Communities program to deliver dedicated services for LGBTIQA+ parents and their children, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Advisory Group. The Government will also establish a two-year Taskforce in the Health and Community Services Directorate to deliver a review of the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme, including progressing agreed national reforms. *(Budget Outlook, p.117)*

Cost of living and poverty alleviation

This Budget meaningfully contributes to cost of living and poverty alleviation through some important, targeted measures. Most notably, ACTCOSS welcomes the introduction of the Housing Crisis Support Fund and meaningful investment in public housing and homelessness services.

Other measures, including investment in organisations providing crisis supports and continuation of concessions will also help low-income households deal with current cost-of-living pressures. Housing affordability measures and other measures may address some cost-of-living and inflation pressures on other ACT residents (see specific policy headings for details on these measures).

However, ACT households will see cost of living increases in multiple domains. We anticipate households will continue to see the prices of essential goods and services rise due to upward price pressures from current global economic uncertainty and energy price shocks. From January to March 2026, Canberra's CPI increased by 4.2%. The average household will see annual bill increases for water ($91), electricity ($70) and gas (at least $43). [1] Despite these substantial increases in utility costs, and discontinuation of the Federal Energy Bill Relief Fund, the ACT Government utilities concession remains fixed at $800 per year. In 2026-27, 33,200 households are expected to use this concession.

Key Measures

- **Cost of living – Housing Crisis Support Fund (Housing ACT)**: $5.16m over two years from 2026-27 (offset with $1.95m from existing provisions, for a net cost of $3.21m). Replaces the previous Rent Relief Fund, which ceased in July 2025. Provides targeted assistance to low-income households experiencing rental stress, including direct support for up to four weeks of rent capped at $2,500, and establishes a new $250 Crisis Support Payment for essential household expenses such as insurance, utilities and basic furnishings. The program will be evaluated ahead of the 2028-29 Budget. Builds on the 2025-26 Budget Review initiative *Cost of living – Financial Support for private renters*. *(Budget Outlook p. 123; Housing Budget Statement p. 7)*

- **Investing in housing and homelessness services (Housing ACT)**: $16.92m over four years from 2026-27, rising from $2.80m in 2026-27 to $5.64m in 2029-30; all new funding with no offsets. Increases funding for Samaritan House, Roadhouse, Bluedoor and Our Place Braddon; ensures continuity of housing support for people with disability; expands the Housing Asset Assistance Program by 65 properties for people with complex needs experiencing long-term homelessness, plus 10 further properties under the Housing First model for people experiencing chronic

[1] Gas bills consist of 4 main components. Data was available for only one component at the time of publication.

homelessness; continues the Community Inclusion Program at Oaks Estate; and secures long-term funding for ACT Shelter's research and policy advocacy. *(Budget Outlook p. 124)*

- **Cost of living – Future of Education Equity Fund:** $0.98m funding in 2026-27. The Government will provide this additional funding for the Future of Education Student Equity Fund to support access to education for all students. This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2024-25 Budget initiative Future of Education Equity Fund – Cost of Living Relief and the 2025-26 Budget initiative Cost of living – Expanding the Future of Education Equity Fund. *(Budget Outlook, p.105)*

- **Climate action – Continuing support for priority households:** $5.22m over 3 years (partially offset by $2.85m), for a net cost of $2.36m. This funds continuation of the Renters Home Energy Program and the Home Energy Support Program. The Renters' Home Energy Program is a free program available to any person renting a home within the ACT, providing online tools or an in-person home energy assessment to educate on ways to save on energy bills and make homes more comfortable. The Home Energy Support Program provides rebates up to the value of $5,000 to eligible low-income homeowners to help with the costs of installing energy-efficient products. *(Budget Outlook, p.89)*

- **Climate action – Sustainable Household Scheme enhancements:** $6.57m in additional concessional lending over four years, at a net cost of $1.31m ($1.38m in expenses, partially offset by $78,000 in revenue). Because the scheme concessionally lends rather than grants, the loan principal is repayable; the gross costs reflect administration and the concessional component of the loans. From 1 July 2026 the loan cap rises to $20,000 for all products for new participants, and electric cargo bikes become eligible following administrative changes. (*Budget Outlook, p.72*)

Disability

This year's Budget reflects the ongoing transition of the disability service system as reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continue to affect Governments and the community sector. Expectations are currently unclear for state and territory Governments, service providers (both community and for-profit), people with disability, and carers.

At present, it is unclear how many people in the ACT will need services provided outside the NDIS and how this will be resourced. The key disability Budget measure is the nationally driven Thriving Kids initiative, which is partially funded by the Commonwealth and has provisional funding allocated by the ACT Government. Additional measures include feasibility studies for flexible education and specialist schooling, and for transport for outpatients with chronic conditions.

Funding to sustain disability organisations during the NDIS transition, and to continue the Disability Reform Taskforce, has been provided but will not be sufficient to support current NDIS clients if their funding is reduced or removed in the next 12 months.

The provisional funding and limited measures contribute to uncertainty for providers and service users at a time of significant system change. The risk is very high that community organisations, carers and other informal supports will need to fill gaps in coming years

ACTCOSS believes in this time of uncertainty, stronger action and clarity from the ACT Government is required.

Key measures

- **Feasibility for expansion of flexible education and specialist schools:** $0.60m over two years ($0.10m in 2026-27 and $0.50m in 2027-28). The Government will provide funding to complete feasibility studies to plan for the long-term demand and infrastructure needs for flexible education services and specialists schooling. *(Budget Outlook, p.105)*

- **Supporting disability services – Design and implementation of Thriving Kids:** $17.05m over three years (with $14.80m in 2026-27) and $38.04m in provisional expenses over three years from 2027-28. This initiative is fully offset by $3.34m, an additional $30.86m in provisional expenses and $20.88m from the Commonwealth Government).
    - The Government will progress commitments under the National Agreement on Foundational Supports – Thriving Kids Bilateral Agreement, to provide supports for children aged 8 years and under with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs, and their families, carers, and kin who permanently reside in the ACT.
    - Funding will also be provided to sustain key disability organisations as National Disability Insurance Scheme reforms are finalised.

    - The Government will also fund the continuation of the Disability Reform Taskforce to support the ongoing disability reform agenda.

  (Budget Outlook, p.119)

- **Outpatient transport for patients with chronic conditions:** $1.30m (fully offset) over four years. The Government will provide funding to a community sector organisation to provide a transport service for individuals with chronic conditions. This service will improve access to critical care by transporting patients to and from regular medical appointments, such as chemotherapy and renal dialysis. *(Budget Outlook, p.116)*

- **Continuing autism assessment services:** $0.20m over 2026-27 (fully offset by $0.20m). The Government will expand the delivery of Autism assessment services provided by the Child Development Service, being the only publicly funded, no-cost, autism assessment service for children up to 12 years old in the ACT. *(Budget Outlook, p.113)*

Education

The Budget has a range of measures to support education, through funding for ACT public schools, extending fee-free TAFE and supporting apprentices, but limited supports for children and students facing difficulties accessing education because of costs or other reasons.

As recently highlighted in the ACTCOSS 2026 Cost of Living Report, Education is among the key goods and services to have experienced increased cost of 20% or more between 2020 and 2025. The Government's investment of an additional $0.98m to the Cost of living – future of education equity fund, will help to provide some short-term relief in the coming financial year. However, more funding will need to be committed in future years to ensure equitable access to education for students from low-income households.

The Pilot Parent Advocacy service may assist parents of children at risk of exclusion or higher educational needs, but the overall objective is unclear in the Budget papers.

Substantive investment in education in the Budget includes an additional $60.98m over two years from 2026-27 to 2027-28 for ACT public schools to meet the learning needs of students and $7.93m over four years to start the implementation of the Future of Education: One Public Education System plan. Capital funding of $1.40m to implement the plan is committed for 2026-27. This initiative includes $2.00m to establish new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led governance within the education system, including funding for secretariat and remuneration for members.

Key Measures

- **Cost of living – Future of Education Equity Fund:** $0.98m funding in 2026-27. The Government will provide this additional funding for the Future of Education Student Equity Fund to support access to education for all students. *(Budget Outlook, p.105)*

- **Feasibility for expansion of flexible education and specialist schools:** $0.60m over two years ($0.10m in 2026-27 and $0.50m in 2027-28). This funding is provided to complete feasibility studies to plan for the long-term demand and infrastructure needs for flexible education services and specialists schooling. *(Budget Outlook, p.105)*

- **Head Start Program:** $0.77m over two years to continue the Head Start Program in the 2027 school year to provides support for students completing an Australian School based Apprenticeship. The program continues with an annual allocation of five places for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. (Budget Outlook p.106; *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.9*)

- **Parent Advocacy Service Grant:** $0.55m over three years (fully offset by $0.55m). The ACT Government will provide funding to establish a two-year trial of a parent advocacy service to provide information, tools and support for families to navigate school engagement. The program will provide grant funding to ACT Parents to deliver the service from the start of the 2027 school year, including advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and supporting them in a culturally safe and appropriate manner by members of their community. *(Budget Outlook, p.107; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p. 9)*

- **Extending Fee Free TAFE**: $24.81m over four years, (partially offset with revenue from Commonwealth contribution of $10.86m), for a net cost of $13.95m. The ACT Government is working with the Commonwealth Government to extend fee free TAFE training for an additional 9,093 training places in healthcare, advanced technology, construction, hospitality and foundation skills. *(Budget Outlook, p.75)*

- **Supporting CIT Yurauna**: $0.51m over 2026-27 to support CIT Yurauna, CIT's centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational excellence, as part of the *Supporting the new CIT Woden campus and CIT initiative Yurauna* of $5.89m (fully offset) over 2026-27. CIT Yurauna is designed to provide a culturally safe and supportive learning environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. (*Budget Outlook, p.67; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.10*)

Family, domestic and sexual violence

The 2026-27 ACT Budget includes positive investments in domestic, family, and sexual violence services. Additional funding of $47.8m has been allocated over the next four years to support the implementation of the *ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy 2026-2036*, and the associated *First Action Plan 2026-2028*. Of this, $44.23m has been allocated to support DFSV frontline services and $3.6m to implement Family and Domestic Violence reforms. This will primarily be funded by the ACT Safer Families Levy, with remaining funds to come from ACT Government consolidated revenues. Of the $44.23m allocated to frontline workers, $12.8m per annum is ongoing and recurrent across the next 4 years, helping to provide some certainty for the ACT community and organisations that provide these services. Further detail about the allocation of funding is provided in the *2026-27 Budget factsheet: Addressing domestic, family and sexual violence*.

Key Measures

- **Building safer communities – Supporting DFSV frontline services:** $44.23m over four years (partially offset by $17.93m), for a net cost of $26.31m. The Government will increase investment in frontline domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) services in the ACT to provide funding certainty. These initiatives will primarily be supported though increases in the ACT Safer Families Levy, with the remainder funded by ACT Government consolidated revenue and Commonwealth funding. *(Budget Outlook, p.111; Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.3*)

This funding includes:

  - **Critical services for victim survivors:** $21.40m provided over 4 years. Funding will be allocated to maintain stable baseline funding and respond to growing demand. This includes $9.90m to Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS), $8.70m to Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC), and $2.8m to YWCA Canberra*. (Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.3)*
  - **Sustainable investment in DFSV programs for children and young people:** $4.10m over 3 years. Funding will support the continuation of DFSV programs that support children and young people, including intensive, trauma-informed therapeutic support provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation, Beryl Refuge and Doris Women’s Refuge. *(Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.3)*
  - **Embedding specialist DFV workers in the HCSD Children, Youth and Families:** $1.50m over 4 years. This funding will be provided to the HCSD CYF program that is co-located alongside specialist DFV services, and $0.23m over 3 years to support delivery of the ‘Talk To Them’ program by the Youth Coalition. *(Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.4)*

- **Addressing DFSV service gaps for marginalised groups:** $7.50m over 4 years. This funding will be provided to deliver DFSV programs that are tailored to priority communities. This includes
  - $2.10m in direct funding for ACCOs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of sexual violence.
  - $0.70m over 3 years to support for people experiencing financial abuse.
  - $1.60m over 3 years to provide financial assistance grants for people affected by domestic and family violence.
  - $2.10m over 4 years to fund DFV services for multicultural women, children and young people.
  - $1.00m over 4 years to establish new specialist DFV supports for LGBTIAQ+ people.

(Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.4-5)

- **Continuation of sexual violence programs**: $3.00m over 4 years to continue the delivery of 2 key sexual violence programs. $1.30m has been allocated to Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Victim Support ACT will receive $1.30m.
- **Building a sustainable ACT men's behaviour change sector:** $6.70m over 4 years. EveryMan will receive $3.50m to continue and enhance behaviour change programs, and DVCS receiving $3.20m over 2 years to support the continued delivery of the Room4Change program.

- **Building safer communities – Strengthening DFSV system foundations:** $3.56m over four years (partially offset by $2.37m), for a net cost of $1.18m. The Government will establish the Information Sharing Coordinator role for Government and non-Government workforces. Funding will also establish a domestic, family and sexual violence sector network to provide advocacy, coordination and workforce development for domestic, family and sexual violence services, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. *(Budget Outlook, p.111)*

- **Strengthening access to justice:** A total of $37.80m over the 4 years. This funding is provided to strengthen access to justice. While not directly attributed to addressing DFSV, these initiatives support broader system responses and improved safety for victim survivors. This includes:
  - $18.94m over 4 years to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) for additional prosecutors and witness assistance officers, to bring DFSV matters before the courts. *(Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.6)*
  - $16.74m over 4 years to support Community Legal Centres, to provide family law advice and representation, embed disability liaison functions

and ensure interpreting services are available for people experiencing DFSV or engage as a ODPP witness. (*Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.6)*

  - **Legal assistance for vulnerable Canberrans:** $2.15m over four years to continue to provide legal assistance for people, including those related to DFSV. *(Budget Outlook, p.139; Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.6-7)*

- **Sexual health and relationships education and services:** $0.10m for 2026-27 for Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT), to support the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services. (*Domestic and Family and Sexual Violence factsheet, p.7*)

Fiscal sustainability and revenue

It is clear the ACT Government has worked to balance immediate cost of living concerns with the Government's own challenging fiscal position. Part of this approach has been to reduce infrastructure spending. However, the ACT Government has committed to health and housing as priority infrastructure projects, which are important for those on lower incomes.

Despite significant public debt, this budget does not include many substantial new revenue measures, rather committing to a series of smaller measures that deliver moderate savings over the forward estimates. Most of these measures have been held over for this financial year in a move that ensures there is not additional financial pressure for people doing it tough right now. For example, starting in 2027-28, there are projected increases in the Safer Families Levy, Motor Vehicle Registration Fees, the Short-Term Rental Accommodation Levy and the Utilities Network Facilities Tax.

The revenue measure gaining the most traction in the initial reporting on the budget is the change to calculation of rates. ACTCOSS broadly supports this measure as it makes the rates more progressive and aligned to land values.

Consistent with recommendations from the *Inquiry into Fiscal Sustainability in the ACT*, the Government has set fiscal targets around levels of debt, deficits and infrastructure investments with a view to bringing the budget back to a sustainable footing. While ACTCOSS welcomes the transparency of clear targets, the levels of debt and interest repayments in the forward estimates are concerning. By the 2029-30 financial year, interest repayments on debt are projected to be $1.22b – more than 10% of annual expenditure.

Key Measures

- **2026-27 Capital Works Program savings measures:** Reduces the capital works program by $718.54m in net capital over four years, comprising $239.73m in Tier 3 project savings, $201.81m in Asset Renewal Program savings, and a $277.00m capital rollover provision in 2026-27. The specific projects to be deferred or removed will be identified through the 2026-27 Budget Review. ACTCOSS will monitor whether community facilities, social infrastructure or housing-enabling works are affected, and notes the Budget Review process is the window in which those decisions will be made. *(Budget Outlook p. 73)*

- **Whole of Government Expenditure Reform**: Net saving of $6.44m over four years, including time-limited Restructure Fund funding for voluntary redundancies across the ACT Public Service over two years, aimed at achieving efficiencies. Redundancy costs fall up-front while most savings ($27.59m) land in 2029-30, so the ongoing saving beyond the forward estimates is larger than the four-year net figure suggests. A related measure cuts contractor and consultant spending by $20.77m. The functions and roles to be reduced are not identified; ACTCOSS will monitor impacts on frontline services. *(Budget Outlook pp. 78, 84)*

- **Sustainable revenue – General rates**: $119.90m in additional revenue over four years from 2026-27. General rates increases above the Wage Price Index offset reductions in conveyance duty under the tax reform program. The average residential general rates bill (including levies) will not increase by more than 5 per cent in 2026-27; however unit-title increases significantly more than that by 16.7%. Part of the rate increase goes to offsetting conveyance duty concessions. (*Budget Outlook, p. 81*)

- **Discontinuing the Health Levy**: $65.40m in revenue forgone over three years to 2028-29. The Health Levy is discontinued from 1 July 2026. The levy was introduced in the 2025-26 Budget as a temporary four-year charge of $250 per rateable property and reduced to $100 for residential and rural properties by amendment during 2025-26 (reducing revenue by $29m in 2025-26 and $119.3m over four years). The nil figure in 2029-30 reflects the levy's original legislated end date. *(Budget Outlook, p. 74)*

- **Safer Families Levy**: $6.10m in additional revenue over three years from 2027-28. The Safer Families Levy increases by $5 each year for three years from 2027-28 to continue investments addressing domestic, family and sexual violence. Combined with the pre-legislated increase to $70 in 2026-27, the levy reaches $85 by 2029-30. The levy applies as a fixed charge to residential and rural properties and is hypothecated DFSV expenditure. (*Budget Outlook, p. 79*)

- **Police, Fire and Emergency Services Levy**: $13.65m in additional revenue over two years from 2028-29. The PFESL increases by 5 percentage points above the Wage Price Index in 2028-29 to contribute to the cost of expanding police, fire and emergency services. The residential fixed charge is $458 in 2026-27 with a pensioner rebate of $133. *(Budget Outlook, p. 77)*

Health

Government spending on public health care is a significant and increasing cost, with ongoing funding for ACT hospitals and planning the new North Canberra Hospital and delivery of public health programs. The Budget discontinues the regressive Health Levy from 1 July 2026 and the ACT Government has secured additional Commonwealth funding under the National Health Reform Agreement.

Measures specific to the ACT community sector are minimal, including support for Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT to provide health services and education to young people and priority populations, and outpatient transport for people with chronic conditions (see also Disability).

Key Measures

- **Support for Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT:** $0.10m in 2026-27. The Government will provide additional funding to extend the current contract with Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT for the Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for one year to 30 June 2027. This investment will support the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services, including education, with a focus on young people and priority populations. *(Budget Outlook, p.117)*

- **Outpatient transport for patients with chronic conditions:** $1.30m (fully offset) over four years. The Government will provide funding to a community sector organisation to provide a transport service for individuals with chronic conditions. This service will improve access to critical care by transporting patients to and from regular medical appointments, such as chemotherapy and renal dialysis. *(Budget Outlook, p.116)*

- **Intensive therapeutic placements and extraordinary residential care:** $22.46m in 2026-27. The Government will continue delivering residential care, crisis accommodation and emergency supports for children and young people unable to remain safely with their families, including those with complex disability and mental health needs. This initiative builds on sustained investment to improve outcomes for children and families at risk of, or engaged with, the statutory child protection system. A sustainability review of out of home care expenditure will be undertaken to identify cost-effectiveness opportunities and inform future funding decisions. *(Budget Outlook, p.116)*

Housing and homelessness

Housing costs are the single largest driver of poverty in the ACT. For Canberrans on low incomes, rent is the most significant predictor for whether they fall below the poverty line. A range of Budget measures respond to housing concerns and address recommendations made by ACTCOSS and other community organisations.

This Budget responds substantially to calls for more public housing with 450 new public housing dwellings funded through a new Public Housing Pipeline and by lifting repairs and maintenance spending by $214.53m for the more than 20,000 people living in public housing. However, 450 falls short of the 1000 houses required to meet the Government's election commitment to increase total public housing stock to 13,200 by 2030.

The Budget also adds a significant $16.92m for frontline homelessness services. We also welcomed the Housing Crisis Support Fund which replaces the former Rent Relief Fund.

This is also a significant Budget for community housing providers (CHPs). The Community Housing Loan Guarantee will support community housing projects under the Housing Australia Future Fund by underwriting up to $650m in private lending to CHPs, supporting financing gaps in getting projects underway.

Changes to housing taxation are broadly progressive and supply-oriented. Stamp duty abolition for first home buyers, pensioners and DVA Gold Card holders is funded through a progressive increase to the valuation-based component of general rates, while regressive flat charges fall: fixed charges are cut in nominal terms and the Health Levy is abolished. However, an uncapped stamp duty exemption does little to benefit renters or people experiencing homelessness and may result in significant concessions going towards high-end property bought by high-income individuals.

Key Measures

Social, public and community housing investment

- **30,000 homes by 2030 – Public housing pipeline:** $301.98m in net capital over four years from 2026-27 (quoted as $360m gross in the Housing Budget Statement). Delivers an additional 450 public housing dwellings toward the 1000 required to meet the commitment to grow the portfolio to 13,200 homes by the end of 2030. More than half (252) are being put forward for Commonwealth funding through the Housing Australia Future Fund Facility Round 3; if approved, these Government-owned dwellings would be managed by community housing providers over 25 years with Commonwealth availability payments. The measure funds delivery under the plan developed through the 2025-26 Budget initiative *30,000 homes by 2030 – Planning for more public housing*. *(Budget Outlook p. 126; Housing Budget Statement p. 6)*

- **30,000 homes by 2030 – Continuing the Growing and Renewing Public Housing and Social Housing Accelerator Programs (Housing ACT)**: $93.34m in capital in 2026-27 (fully offset from existing provisions). Funds the final year of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program to meet the committed target of 1,000 property renewals and 400 net portfolio growth by June 2027, and continues delivery of at least 55 social housing dwellings under the Commonwealth-funded Social Housing Accelerator Program; 41 remain for delivery in 2026, with 14 already delivered. *(Budget Outlook p. 122; Housing Budget Statement p. 6)*

- **30,000 homes by 2030 – Supporting community housing (City and Environment Directorate)**: $38.19m net cost over four years from 2026-27. Establishes a Community Housing Loan Guarantee offering financial guarantees of up to $650m for approved projects under Housing Australia Future Fund Round 3, supporting more than 1,000 social and affordable homes owned and operated by community housing providers. The guarantee reallocates credit risk to the Territory to address financing barriers that would otherwise prevent these developments proceeding. *(Budget Outlook p. 87; Housing Budget Statement p. 6)*

- **Cost of living – Housing Crisis Support Fund (Housing ACT)**: $5.16m over two years from 2026-27 (offset with $1.95m from existing provisions, for a net cost of $3.21m). Replaces the previous Rent Relief Fund, which ceased in July 2025. Provides targeted assistance to low-income households experiencing rental stress, including direct support for up to four weeks of rent capped at $2,500, and establishes a new $250 Crisis Support Payment for essential household expenses such as insurance, utilities and basic furnishings. The program will be evaluated ahead of the 2028-29 Budget. *(Budget Outlook p.123; Housing Budget Statement p.7)*

- **Investing in housing and homelessness services (Housing ACT)**: $16.92m over four years from 2026-27, rising from $2.80m in 2026-27 to $5.64m in 2029-30; all new funding with no offsets. Increases funding for Samaritan House, Roadhouse, Bluedoor and Our Place Braddon; ensures continuity of housing support for people with disability; expands the Housing Asset Assistance Program by 65 properties for people with complex needs experiencing long-term homelessness, plus 10 further properties under the Housing First model for people experiencing chronic homelessness; continues the Community Inclusion Program at Oaks Estate; and secures long-term funding for ACT Shelter's research and policy advocacy. *(Budget Outlook p.124)*

- **Public housing repairs and maintenance (Housing ACT)**: $214.53m over four years from 2026-27 (partially offset by $5.78m in savings from insourcing repairs and maintenance services). Funds an increased and enhanced repairs and maintenance program across planned, responsive and vacant property works for more than 20,000 Canberrans living in Housing ACT homes, responding to cost pressures from inflation, ageing stock, compliance requirements and more complex works. *(Budget Outlook p.125)*

- **Improving the public housing tenant experience (Housing ACT)**: $21.44m over four years from 2026-27 (fully offset; not new funding). Secures ongoing funding for 31 existing FTE delivering public housing tenancy management, with supplementary funding for rates and levies expenses. *(Budget Outlook p.124)*

- **30,000 homes by 2030 – Operational support for Commonwealth housing projects (Housing ACT)**: Funding not for publication over four years from 2026-27, as disclosure may prejudice the Territory's approach to market. Supports the delivery of crisis and transitional housing for vulnerable cohorts at risk of homelessness under the Commonwealth's National Housing Infrastructure Facility Crisis and Transitional Housing Program. *(Budget Outlook p. 122; Housing Budget Statement p.8)*

- **Justice Housing Program (Justice and Community Safety Directorate)**: $9.37m over four years from 2026-27 (offset by $1.14m in 2026-27), provided as ongoing funding. Continues the Justice Housing Program and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Transitional Accommodation Program, delivered by the community sector, providing short-term transitional accommodation and wraparound support for people on parole, bail or community correction orders from the Alexander Maconochie Centre. *(Budget Outlook p.138)*

Housing development

- **30,000 Homes by 2030 – Missing Middle LVC remission and LVC review (City and Environment Directorate)**: $6.43m in revenue forgone over three years from 2026-27 plus $1.39m in expenses, partially offset by $5.83m in additional revenue from induced development, for a net cost of $2.00m. Provides a temporary 50 per cent remission of the codified Lease Variation Charge for missing middle developments in RZ1 and RZ2 zones (development approval before 30 June 2029; construction complete by 31 December 2030; LVC not paid or deferred before 10 June 2026). A separate framework provides LVC reductions for social and affordable housing: from 2026, community housing providers and developers with at least 15 per cent social or affordable rental housing in projects of more than 10 dwellings completed by 31 December 2030 may be eligible; the size of that reduction is not stated. The Government will also review the LVC framework to simplify it, reduce disputes and improve certainty. *(Budget Outlook p. 86; Housing Budget Statement p.4)*

- **30,000 Homes by 2030 – Delivering the next stages of planning reform (City and Environment Directorate)**: $4.63m over two years from 2026-27 (fully offset from an existing provision). Funds planning and technical studies to support the supply of new housing, social infrastructure and community facilities, including planning reforms to support more housing in well-located areas close to shopping centres and high-frequency public transport corridors. *(Budget Outlook p.86)*

- **Housing Supply and Land Release Program**: The 2026-27 Budget features a plan to release land enabling close to 26,000 dwellings over five years. In 2026-27, 15 per cent of suitable residential land released is allocated to public, community and affordable housing, expected to deliver around 300 such dwellings across Canberra. *(Housing Budget Statement p.3)*

Housing related taxes and concessions

- **Reducing stamp duty for owner-occupiers**: $69.70m in revenue forgone over four years from 2026-27, offset by $65.51m from the tax reform component of general rates, for a net cost of $4.20m. From 1 July 2026, the Government will expand stamp duty concessions for all first home buyers, owner-occupiers who buy off the plan and eligible pensioners.

- **Sustainable revenue – General rates:** Rates and land tax structure, 2025-26 to 2026-27. The average total residential rates bill (general rates plus levies) is capped at a 5 per cent increase in 2026-27. The composition of that increase is the notable feature: the valuation-based general rates component rises by an average of 8 per cent, while the flat components of the bill (fixed charges and levies like the Safer Families Levy) fall by around $100 in net terms. The increase is carried entirely by the part of the bill that scales with land value.

Justice and human rights

Support for community legal assistance and legal assistance for vulnerable Canberrans are key justice measures to improve sustainability for community legal centres and support people facing barriers to accessing justice. Increased ongoing funding for community legal centres, and specific funding to support disability liaison officers will help the most vulnerable Canberrans receive help at critical times.

We are concerned by the number of measures from the 2025-26 budget where funding has been reprofiled to 2026-27. While many of these measures do not relate specifically to the community sector, we are concerned about what this may indicate about the ACT Government's capacity to implement certain measures Some reprofiled measures are for investments to improve and support emergency services, for the Justice Housing Program continuation and expansion, and the Government Response to the Sexual Assault (Police) Review Report.

In *Table 25: Changes to Appropriation – Expenses on Behalf of the Territory*, $4.95m has been revised from estimated expenditure during 2025-26 to expenditure over 2026-27 and 2027-28. While Table 26: *Changes to appropriation – Capital Injections, Controlled* shows similar re-profiling in relation to capital expenditure including upgrades including for ACT Corrective Services Facilities and investing in rehabilitation opportunities for detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Reprofiled capital measures total over $13m. (*Budget Statement D p 30-33*).

Key Measures

- **More support for the community legal assistance sector:** $16.74m over four years from 2026-27 (partially offset by $0.58m), for a net cost of $16.19m. The Government will provide ongoing funding to support the Canberra Community Law Centre, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, Women's Legal Centre ACT and Care Financial. Ongoing funding will support the Aboriginal Legal Service, Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Victim Support ACT to embed disability liaison functions. The Government will also provide ongoing funding for interpreting services for community members accused of offences to engage with the ACT Supreme Court; and those experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence to seek legal assistance and engage with the Director of Public Prosecutions as a witness in a proceeding. (*Budget Outlook, p.140*)

- **Legal assistance for vulnerable Canberrans:** $2.15m over four years (with $1.65m in 2026-27 and evenly over the remaining three years). The Government will provide additional funding for Legal Aid to provide grants of assistance to vulnerable and low-income applicants. The Government will also invest in a review of Legal Aid's expenditure and longer-term funding needs. (*Budget Outlook, p.139*)

- **Continued delivery of minimum age of criminal responsibility reforms:** $2.51m over four years, offset by existing provisional expenses of $3.61m for a net saving of -$1.10m; this measure is therefore an expenditure reduction. Funding will support ongoing individualised therapeutic services through the Therapeutic Support Panel and extend the Safer Youth Response Service in 2027–28 while its effectiveness is evaluated. *(Budget Outlook, p.112)*

- **Supporting the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre:** $5.69m over four years (partially offset by $1.18m), including $0.56m in capital investment. The Government will provide ongoing funding support to ensure the sustained operation of Bimberi and further support for upgrades and replacement of ageing infrastructure. It will also implement a Throughcare pilot program, providing transitional support for young people leaving Bimberi. (*Budget Outlook, p.120*)

- **Justice Housing Program:** $9.37m over four years ($1.14m offset from expenses in 2026-27), for a net cost of $8.23m. The Government will provide ongoing funding to continue the Justice Housing Program and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Transitional Accommodation Program. These programs, delivered by the community sector, provide short-term transitional accommodation and wrap-around support to individuals on parole, bail or community correction orders from the Alexander Maconochie Centre. (*Budget Outlook p.138*)

- **Board of Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaths in Custody:** $5.37m over two years ($4.15m in 2026-27 and $1.22m in 2027-28), with $4.3m offset from provisional expenses. The Government will establish a six-month Board of Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The Government will also provide funding $0.48m for community organisations to deliver counselling and support services for people participating in the Board of Inquiry and $0.33m to establish a legal financial assistance scheme for witnesses. *(Budget Outlook p.137; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement p.6)*

- **Supporting culturally responsive reintegration pathways:** An investment of $3.27m over four years will support the continuation and strengthening of Integrated Case Management, with:
  - $2.52m directed to the community sector
  - $0.75m allocated for a full-time equivalent (FTE) position within the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACSD).

  (Budget Outlook, p.144; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.10-11)

- **Supporting a community-led justice response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans:** $1.04m over four years. The Government will fund the ongoing operation of Circle Sentencing in the Supreme Court – a culturally grounded, community-led sentencing process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will deliver up to ten Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Supreme Court Circle Sentencing court matters a year. (*Budget Outlook, p.144; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement, p.6)*

- **Upgrades to the electronic security system at the AMC:** $2.08m over two years (partially offset by $1.28m), for a net cost of $4.78m. An additional $7.95m in capital over two years (with $5.73m in 2026-27 and $2.21m in 2027-28, partially offset by $0.95m in 2026-27), for a net capital investment of $7.00m. The Government will upgrade and maintain the Electronic Security System at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). This funding also includes the installation of additional internal security cameras to address black spots throughout AMC. *(Budget Outlook, p.146)*

- **Additional operational funding for the AMC:** $3.17m in 2026-27. The Government will provide additional funding for the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). The Government will also review the longer-term funding needs of AMC to inform future budget processes. *(Budget Outlook, p.136)*

- **Sustaining Territory legal and human rights services:** $8.55m over four years. The Government will provide additional investment to support the ACT Government Solicitor's Office and the Human Rights Commission to manage an increase in demand for services and Territory legal expenses. *(Budget Outlook, p.145)*

Planning and transport

Modest measures to improve transport affordability and improve public transport user experience do not reflect the level of ambition and funding commitment needed to address growing transport disadvantage in the ACT. People on lower incomes are more reliant on public transport to meet their transport needs, and reliance on the bus network and school buses is likely to increase in the context of the current fuel supply and associated cost issues.

The Government is conducting light rail and bus ridership surveys to gather data on the enrolment status of tertiary students. An evaluation of the reduced monthly fare cap will be considered alongside this data to inform a fare strategy being undertaken by Transport Canberra.

Key Measures

- **Delivering safe and reliable public transport services:** $67.07m over 4 years offset by expenses provision of $0.88m, and revenue foregone, at a net cost of $70.71m. This will cover a range of operational costs and includes continuation of flexible public transport services for eligible Canberrans with accessible transport needs while Government completes an evaluation of the program. *(Budget Outlook, p.92)*

- **Public Transport Fares – Lower monthly costs for tertiary students:** $614,000 in 2026-2027 will reduce the monthly fare cap for tertiary students from 40 to 30 paid trips as part of a twelve-month trial. This initiative will align the number of paid trips per month for tertiary students with school students. *(Budget Outlook, p.96)*

Social inclusion

Investment in new social inclusion measures is limited in this Budget.

Modest funding to A Gender Agenda supports continuation of their Gender Pathways Peer Navigation Service. Other measures marked as contributing to social inclusion include ministerial advisory councils on related matters, the annual Multicultural Festival, support for the multicultural community through grants, programs and awards, and the anti-racism and anti-discrimination frameworks.

Social inclusion is supported by measures which fund social housing and specialist homelessness services identified in the Budget papers, as well as emergency payments and food relief support.

Key Measures

- **Strengthening community services and inclusion:** $0.89m over four years, partially offset by $88,000 for a net cost of $0.81m. The Government will support the delivery of the Gender Pathways Peer Navigation Service by A Gender Agenda, an expansion of the Supporting and Strengthening LGBTIQA+ Communities program to deliver dedicated services for LGBTIQA+ parents and their children, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Advisory Group. The Government will also establish a two-year Taskforce in the Health and Community Services Directorate to deliver a review of the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme, including progressing agreed national reforms. *(Budget Outlook, p.117)*

- **Continuing humanitarian support:** $0.29m in 2026-27 (partially offset by $0.18m), for a net cost of $0.10m. The Government will continue funding the Family Settlement Assistance Grants program and the Humanitarian Fund to support individuals and families arriving in Canberra from global crises, including financial assistance for essential expenses such as housing and living costs. *(Budget Outlook, p.114)*

Thank you

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