

1. 2022-23 BUDGET INITIATIVES

Recurrent

1.1.	Equity of Access in Public Education – Delivering Four-Year Old Preschool	Deb Efthymiades
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Capital

1.2.	Development of the Whitlam Primary School and Early Childhood Education and Care	David Matthews
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2. SYSTEM POLICY AND REFORM

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2.2.	Children’s Education and Care Assurance Investigations	Deb Efthymiades
2.3.	Education and Care – Affordability and Availability	Deb Efthymiades
2.4.	Set up for Success – An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT	Deb Efthymiades

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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3.2.	Privilege Statement
3.3.	FOL22/593 QON Summary Annual Report Hearings – February/March 2022
3.4.	FILE2022/25 Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, Report 4: Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-21
3.5.	FILE2022/619 2020-21 Annual Report Hearings Proof Transcript - 25 Feb 2022

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs

INVESTING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION – DELIVERING FOUR YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL

Investing in public education – Delivering four-year old preschool	Education and life-long learning				
	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2024-25 \$'000	2025-26 \$'000	Total \$'000
Expenses	1,569	1,811	2,112	1,133	6,625
Net cost of services	1,569	1,811	2,112	1,133	6,625
FTE	-	-	-	-	-

Key Information

- The ACT Government provides 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year of free education for all four-year-old children living in Canberra.
- The ACT Government will continue to offer 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year of free public preschool in the current service delivery model.
- This initiative builds on the Phase One initiatives of *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT*.

Background/additional Initiative Information

- Around 78% of eligible four year-olds access public preschools in the ACT and it is recognised as one of the best models in delivering educational outcomes for children in Australia.
- Public preschools are delivered at a total cost of around \$37 million per year, with the ACT Government contributing approximately \$27.3 million of this amount towards delivering this free universal service.
- In late 2021, the Minister for Early Childhood Development signed the new Preschool Reform Agreement 2022 – 2025 (PRA) on behalf of the ACT.
- The PRA replaces the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (NP UAECE) which was subject to many short-term extensions by the Australian Government and provided no long-term funding certainty for jurisdictions.
- The PRA provides longer term funding certainty through a four-year agreement, with the ACT to receive \$38.6 million over this period. The Commonwealth is contributing \$9.7 million per year based on 2021 funding levels; however, this amount is not indexed for future cost increases, resulting in a funding shortfall of \$1.5 million for the Territory over the life of the PRA compared to the NP UAECE.
- This shortfall is exacerbated by the requirement for the ACT to direct around \$1.475 million per year (\$5.9 million over the life of the agreement) away from government-run preschools to the non-government sector. This is a new approach as previously 100% of the funding under the NP UAECE was directed to government-run preschools.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- In practice, the funding shortfall for ACT Government preschools is approximately \$2 million per year and \$7.363 million over the life of the agreement. It is noted that the PRA assigns funding in calendar years rather than financial years. Over the next four years, the funding shortfall will therefore be \$6.625 million.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs

NEW AND EXPANDED SCHOOLS – DEVELOPMENT OF THE WHITLAM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRE

New and expanded schools - Development of the Whitlam Primary School and Early Childhood Education Centre	Education and life-long learning				
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Capital – EDU	2,102	13,925	28,477	24,427	68,931
Capital – MPC	90	594	1,215	1,042	2,941
Net capital	2,192	14,519	29,692	25,469	71,872
Depreciation	0	0	768	1,535	2,303
Expenses	0	593	2,763	4,269	7,625
1. Net cost of services	0	593	3,531	5,804	9,928
2. FTE	2	3	8	13	-

Key Information

- The Government will construct a new public primary school (P-6) with a capacity for up to 800 students and an early childhood education centre and care setting with a 130 place capacity in the new suburb of Whitlam.
- The school is scheduled to be open by 2025 and will have a total capital cost of \$76.750 million, including \$4.878 million of capital funding in 2026-27.
- This new school will service the growing suburb of Whitlam, providing residents with a high-quality public school close to where they live.

Additional Initiative Information

- This new school will service the growing suburb of Whitlam, providing these residents with a high-quality public school close to where they live. Molonglo's third school is scheduled to be open in time for the 2025 school year. Design and planning work on the new school is continuing.
- The P-6 component is expected to have capacity for around 800 primary school student places in permanent construction installations; and
- Delivery of an ECEC facility – This will provide the school with a 'wraparound' service model capability for children and families and will further expand the ECEC and P-6 integrated model that is being implemented through the Franklin School Expansion. The day care facility will be sized to accommodate 130 places and will be integrated with the preschool facility in the P-6 component of the school.

Election Commitment/Parliamentary Agreement

The ACT Parliamentary and Governing Agreement commits the Government to *“Continue to implement our Future of Education Strategy, which prioritises equity and inclusion”*. The initiative will deliver on the *Future of Education Strategy* and the election commitment outlining a public priority to progress planning for new school capacity in Molonglo.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Early Childhood Development

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND CARE ASSURANCE (CECA) INVESTIGATIONS

Talking points

- During the COVID-19 pandemic the safety and wellbeing of children has remained a priority and CECA have continued to assess incidents or complaints.
- CECA has a dedicated investigation team and a team of experienced officers who assess any incidents or complaints.
- CECA has a range of compliance tools available including: administrative letters; compliance notices; compliance directions; suspension powers; enforceable undertakings; conditions upon approvals and, where people pose a risk of harm to children, prohibition from participating in the sector.
- CECA is part of the professional community of practice around reportable conduct and works with ACT Policing, Child and Youth Protection Service, the Working With Vulnerable People Team, and the Senior Practitioner in relation to restrictive practices.
- The ACT has comparatively high rates of notification. This is due to CECA's high level of engagement with the Sector, and providers reporting all legally notifiable matters, including those involving no risk to children.
- In 2021–2022, CECA assessed 2,959 notifications of incidents or complaints at services. Out of the 2,959 incidents or complaints 1,747 (59%) were COVID related.
- Incidents or complaints at services increased by almost 200% from the same reporting period last year. The increase is a direct result of COVID-19 related notifications within the education and care sector.
- In 2021–2022, 282 compliance actions were taken in total. 172 of the 282 compliance actions related to the management of COVID-19 risk across education and care services.
- COVID related Emergency Action Notices and Administrative Letters were issued to services directing them to close or partially close, as was required by Commonwealth childcare funding arrangements at the time.

Key Information

- CECA assessed **2959 notification** between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 (inclusive). The total included **2697 incidents** and **262 complaints**.
- Out of the **2,959 notifications** of incidents or complaints at services approx. **1,747 (59%) were COVID related**.
- **590 incidents** were **serious incidents**, **2064** were **'other incidents'** and **43** assessed as **non-regulatory**.
- **85 complaints** were **made direct** to the Regulatory Authority, and **177 complaints** were notified to the Regulatory Authority by **approved providers**.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 16/08/2022
Cleared for public release by: Deputy Director-General
Contact Officer name: Sean Moysey
Lead Directorate: Education
TRIM Ref: FOL22/1767

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- **36 investigations commenced** during this **financial year**. Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, **31 cases** that **required investigation were closed** of which **15** had been carried over from 2020/2021.
- At 30 June 2022, **20 investigations** remained **open**.
- Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, **282 compliance actions were taken**.
- **172 out of the 282 compliance actions related to the management of COVID-19 risk** across education and care services

Background (Annual Report 2020- 21)

- ACT Education and Care Services notified 826 serious incidents in 2020-21. This represents 218.6 notifications per 100 services compared to a national average of 125.2 per 100 services.
- The rate has been consistently higher than the national average for some time and is attributable to proactive notification by the sector and the small size of the jurisdiction where all services are well known to the Regulator and vice-versa.
- In 2020–2021 CECA assessed 1,516 notifications of incidents or complaints at services. Of those notifications 49 matters were investigated. Other matters were managed appropriately by the providers who were not relevant to the National Law.
- Major areas of investigation are allegations of harm to children, non compliance staffing arrangements, inadequate supervision and missing or unaccounted for children.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio: Early Childhood Development

EDUCATION AND CARE PLACES: AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY

Talking points

- The ACT Government is addressing equity and access to quality early childhood education through *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT*. (Refer to [1.03. Set up for Success](#))
- Under this strategy the ACT Government is committed to providing universal access to free, quality early childhood education commencing with a day per week in this term of Government.
- The Government commenced implementing the first phase of the *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* in early 2020. This has included providing free education to **500 priority three year olds** for two days per week, 48 weeks per year and **100 places** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Koori Preschools.
- To continue this very important work the 2021-22 ACT Budget committed **\$12.5 million over four years** to continue the ACT's nation-leading, ten year plan for early childhood education.
- This flagship initiative will improve access to quality early learning and care and reduce costs, starting with the families most in need.
- The *2021 Report on Government Services* shows centre based care and family day care services in the ACT continue to be the most expensive in Australia.

Key Information

- The factors informing the cost of long day care in the ACT are set out in a report published in 2017, following a review of affordability of the ACT Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector.
- Early childhood education and care services are part of a market based system. The cost of services is driven by factors such as:
 - the ACT's high employment rates and per capita incomes;
 - Relatively high property costs;
 - the relatively small cohort of available early childhood workers;
 - uneven interaction between Government and non-Government early childhood services; and
 - our small geographical footprint with higher price tolerances across the whole of the ACT.
- ECEC providers determine the fees they charge. States and Territories have responsibility for regulating the safety and quality of providers and services, but do not engage in price regulation. The Australian Government provides a national Child Care Subsidy system under the *Family Assistance Law*.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Since 2001, the **number of centre-based places** across the ACT has **more than doubled**. Centre based services include long day care, school age care, government and independent preschools.
- The current **372 services operating** includes centre based services as well as family day care. In January 2012 there were approximately 280 services in the ACT. Now there are 372, an **increase of 92 services** over eight years.
- **In 2021, 19,734 children** from birth to 5 years-old were accessing an approved centre based service compared to 13,045 children birth-5 years olds in 2012. This is a **51 per cent increase** in that time.
- As at 30 June 2021, there are approximately
 - **14,500 full time long day care places** available for children preschool age and under in centre-based education and care services.
 - **3,700 full time places** across **76 government preschools**.
 - **1,300 full time places** for preschool aged children in **non-Government preschools**.
 - **10,500 places** in outside school hours care.
- According to the Report on Government Services, released 2 February 2021, approximately **18,215 children aged 0-12** attended a **long day care** setting, and **5,736** were enrolled in a **preschool program** in the year before full time schooling.
- Report on Government Services data shows that between **2013 and 2016** the workforce who have primary contact with children grew by almost a 1000 staff, which is approximately a **30 per cent increase**.
- The 2021 National Workforce Census Report indicates the workforce has continued to grow both nationally and in the ACT. The Census recorded a total of **6144** ECEC sector staff in the ACT.
- In 2022 the effects of COVID continue to impact numbers of staff in the workforce. These impacts are exacerbated by absences due to other transmissible illnesses. While providers are successfully maintaining COVID safe practices staff absences have resulted in a reduction of services. Reduction in services includes capping opening hours, closing rooms and not offering additional places.

Background Information

- The ACT has one of the highest uptakes of early childhood education and care services in the country.
- In 2021, **63 per cent** of one year olds, **73 per cent** of two year olds and **79 per cent** of three year-olds **attended centre based services**.
- In February 2016, the then ACT Minister for Education (Minister Rattenbury) commissioned a review to advise Government on cost, access and quality issues related to long day care services in the ACT.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- The review found that the sector has moved from an under supply of places to an oversupply over the last few years. This **oversupply** of places may be as much as **20 per cent**, although the impact is not being evenly experienced across providers in the ACT.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Early Childhood Development

SET UP FOR SUCCESS: AN EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGY FOR THE ACT

Talking Points

- *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* is the ACT Government's plan for early childhood education and care in the ACT for the next decade.
- The goal of this strategy, in line with the *Future of Education Strategy*, is to achieve an education system that sets all children up for success and gives every child a fair start to life.
- *Set up for Success* Strategy was launched in August 2020 with implementation of Phase One progressing throughout 2020, 2021 and 2022.
- The *Set up for Success* Phase One Implementation Plan was launched in March 2022.
- Initiatives progressed to date include:
 - Continuing to provide places for up to 500 priority three year olds for two days per week, 48 weeks per year of quality early childhood education and 100 places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander three year-old children in Koori Preschools.
 - Establishing 16 Communities of Practice between selected early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and ACT public schools.
 - Delivering a suite of trauma informed training for early childhood educators.
 - Reforming the Early Childhood Degree Scholarship program.
 - Trialling out of school hours care for preschool children in the preschool environment.
 - Piloting an approach to effective transitions from ECEC service to preschool.
 - Co-designing a process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for Koori preschool.
 - Launching the Preschool Pathways program acknowledging parents and carers as children's first teachers.

Providing free quality early childhood education and care

- The ACT Government has committed to providing 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year of free quality early childhood education for all three year-olds in the ACT.
- The first phase of this commitment is delivering up to 500 free places for priority three year-old children – those experiencing vulnerabilities or disadvantage – to access two days per week, 48 weeks per year of quality early childhood education.
- Children are primarily identified through Community Services Directorate programs, as well as other directorates and community services.
- The initiative operates on a rolling intake process so that children can commence early learning as soon as they turn three. Children are also supported to enrol in and transition to four year-old preschool through the annual school enrolment cycle.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Two Early Childhood Community Coordinators have been engaged to further strengthen partnerships with providers, services, and warm referrers across the ACT, and to support enrolments into four year-old preschool.
- As at **30 June 2022, 504 children** have been referred into the 3 year-old initiative since it commenced in January 2020. Since the initiative commenced:
 - **435 children** have accepted a place in a partnering early childhood education and care service.
 - **36 children** did not accept a place in the initiative. Instead, they engaged in an Early Entry to Preschool placement, a Koori Preschool placement, continued in their Children Service's Program Placement, chose to continue with their Additional Childcare Subsidy placement or moved away from the ACT prior to commencing their placement.
 - The Education Directorate has partnered with 17 providers representing 59 ECEC services to deliver 450 funded places for priority children (additional places can be purchased based on need).
- As at 30 June 2022, **223 children** had an active placement at a partnered ECEC service.
- **233 children** have transitioned out of the initiative since it commenced in 2020, substantially due to moving on to 4 year old preschool in 2021 and 2022.
- The initiative has been impacted by COVID-19. Some children have been unable to access placements because of ECEC service closures and quarantine requirements.

Piloting an approach to effective transitions

- Children transitioning from the three year-old initiative to four year-old preschool are being supported through a *Transition and Continuity Framework and Statement*.
- The aim is to support educators from ECEC services and schools to share children and families' stories and other key information, facilitating positive transitions.
- Transitions to preschool are also supported by Preschool Pathways which is a program aiming to build the capacity of parents to be active partners in their children's education. It includes resources for parents and carers to support their child to experience a smooth transition to preschool. Preschool Pathways includes a fact sheet on supporting the unique context of transitioning during COVID-19.
- Established Communities of Practice, which are purposeful relationships between ECEC services and schools, also help children transition smoothly between these settings, improve sharing of expertise between educators, and increase opportunities for coaching and mentoring.

Preschool Pathways program

- Launched in 2021, the Preschool Pathways program builds the capacity of parents to be active partners in their children's education. The program includes resources for parents to support a smooth transition to preschool.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Four Preschool Pathways Partners have also been established to work with educators in ACT public preschools and ECEC services partnered to deliver the 3 year-old initiative, to provide tailored coaching that builds their knowledge, confidence and capacity to implement inclusive practices and enhance transitions.

OSHC for preschool-aged children in the preschool environment

- In 2020 a model of Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) for preschoolers in the preschool environment was trialled at Duffy, Giralang, Monash, and Palmerston District Primary Schools.
- In this model preschool children remain in their preschool room and the qualified OSHC and preschool educators transition in and out. This allows educators and families to connect better, share important information about children, and reduces transitions resulting in a more seamless day of learning.
- The evaluation of the trial found transitions for children were reduced, educators experienced increased collaboration, and families felt more supported with more convenient hours offered.
- The Education Directorate is exploring expanding the model of OSHC for preschool-aged children, in more ACT public schools. Any such consideration will include active engagement with preschool educators.

Supporting children affected by trauma

- Over the last two years the Directorate has worked with the Australian Childhood Foundation to develop a suite of resources for the ECEC sector to support workforce capability in trauma responsive practice.
- The training is designed to build educators' understanding of trauma informed practice, strengthen existing practices, and create supportive networks across the sector. The suite of supports is available publicly on the Directorate's website and so far include:
 - Eleven (11) online training modules on trauma informed theory and practice
 - Twenty Five (25) free webinars on specific topics related to trauma
 - Thirteen (13) relational exchange blog articles on trauma responsive practice and strategies
 - One (1) champions network and up to six professional support networks for educators to collaborate on practice and develop collective expertise grounded in research.

Progressing 2021-22 Budget commitments

2021-2022 budget

- The 2021-22 ACT Budget committed funds to further deliver initiatives under *Set up for Success*:
 - Increasing the daily rate paid to ECEC providers delivering places for priority three year-olds to reflect the costs required to deliver quality early learning

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Engaging an expert consultant for development of a Territory-wide transitions methodology and framework
- Increasing the number of Early Childhood Teacher Degree scholarships
- Delivering a Professional Learning Fund for non-government educators in the sector
- Delivering grants for educators to support them in understanding their obligations and rights when working with children
- Undertaking legislative reform to recognising early childhood in the *Education Act 2004*
- Providing ongoing funding for two Early Years Engagement Officers connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to Child and Family Centres, Koori Preschools and schools
- Progressing legislative and system changes for all Early Childhood Teachers to be recognised and registered by the Teacher Quality Institute.

Early Childhood Degree Scholarship program

- The ACT Government is supporting the growth of qualified non-government staff with the Early Childhood Degree scholarship program.
- Scholarships of up to \$25,000 are offered over four years full time or eight years part time. Additional funding of up to \$4000 per scholarship is available to support employers to backfill staff when students undertake practical training in different settings.
- Students may attend a four-week placement with the ACT's Regulatory Authority, Children's Education and Care Assurance, as part of their final year of study.
- In June 2022 there were 23 scholarship holders studying towards a degree in early childhood education, with an additional 10 scholarship holders in the process of commencement.
- Since the introduction of early childhood scholarships in 2014, 32 scholarship holders have successfully completed their early childhood degrees

Early Years Engagement Officers

- The ACT Government has secured ongoing funding for two Early Years Engagement Officers to work collaboratively within the Community Services Directorate to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to the Child and Family Centres, Koori Preschools and schools, as well as other wrap-around supports.

Legislative amendments and workforce supports

- In April to June 2022, the Education Directorate consulted with key stakeholders and the community on recognising early childhood education in the *Education Act 2004*. Feedback was sought on how early childhood education should be recognised as part of the educational service offering for children.
- Legislative amendments also provide an opportunity to increase clarity around the offering of education for children of preschool age to support the rights of the child in the ACT.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Provisions could include recognition of the ECEC sector and the value of the workforce, enabling collaboration and information sharing between services and schools, and links to existing frameworks on developmental milestones for children.
- Through this consultation process the Directorate also consulted on the development of an ACT ECEC Workforce Strategy that will address issues specific to the ACT context, and will be aligned to the National ECEC Workforce Strategy.
- The ACT ECEC Workforce Strategy will include:
 - educator professional standards (initially for voluntary adoption)
 - increased coaching and mentoring opportunities, and
 - delivering the Professional Learning Fund for non-government educators in the sector.
- Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) is also progressing legislative and system changes for all Early Childhood Teachers working in any setting type, to be recognised and registered by TQI.

Background Information

- Set up for Success has four foundations:
 - **A fair start for every child:** ensuring access and equity
 - **Valuing educators, values children:** ensuring a high-quality
 - **Every child has a story:** ensuring seamless transitions for children, particularly between ECEC and later schooling, and creating safe environments for children's diverse backgrounds and needs
 - **Working together for children:** recognising that connected systems and networks between education, health, community, and other services maximise the benefits of early childhood investment
- Under each foundation sits initiatives to be delivered across three phases:
 - First Phase – years one to two (2020-2022)
 - Second Phase – years three to five (2023-2025)
 - Third Phase – years five to ten (2026-2030)
- These align with the foundations and principles of the ACT Government's *Future of Education Strategy*.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022 - 2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair), Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

WITNESS LIST FOR COMMITTEE AND HANSARD

INQUIRY INTO ACT BUDGET 2022–23

To assist the Committee with its records and Hansard in recording the appearance of all officers who are likely to give evidence to the Committee, please provide the following information.

1. Email a completed witness list at least **one week before the hearing** to the secretary by email: LaCommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au.
2. Please include the names of all officers who are likely to give evidence to the Committee.
3. Provide **one witness list per portfolio area or agency for each hearing** (usually delineated by the timeslots on the hearing schedule).
4. Estimates hearings will be conducted in the Prince Edward Island Committee room.
5. Detailed guidance is available in the [Webex Committee Hearing Guide for Participants](#), which will be emailed to DLOs to convey to officials, and published on the Assembly website.
6. If you have any questions, please contact the Administration Officer, Emma Weaver, 02 6202 0136 or LaCommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022 - 2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair), Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

WITNESS LIST FOR COMMITTEE AND HANSARD

INQUIRY INTO ACT BUDGET 2022–23

WITNESS DETAILS					
Minister/ statutory office holder:		Yvette Berry MLA Minister for Early Childhood Development			
Directorate/ statutory authority:		Education Directorate			
Hearing date/ time:		Friday 19 August 2022 at 2:00 – 3:00pm			
Hearing arrangements:		✓ Officials will be together in the Legislative Assembly Chamber Room			
Title	Full name	Position	Branch or Division	Directorate or Agency	Meeting room or waiting room
Ms	Katy Haire	Director-General		Education Directorate	Meeting room
Ms	Deb Efthymiades	Deputy Director-General	System Policy and Reform	Education Directorate	Meeting room
Mr	Sean Moysey	Executive Branch Manager	System Policy and Reform	Education Directorate	Meeting room
Dr	Nicole Moore	Executive Branch Manager	System Policy and Reform	Education Directorate	Meeting room
Ms	Sam Seton	Executive Group Manager	Service Design and Delivery	Education Directorate	Meeting room
Mr	Ian Turnbull	Chief Finance Officer	Business Services	Education Directorate	Meeting room



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICE

PRIVILEGE STATEMENT

The Assembly has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

Witnesses must tell the truth: giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter, and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

While the Committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 20 May 2013

QON Summary – Annual Report Hearings – February 2022

QON #	Asked by	Subject	Business unit	TRIM REF
595 & 598	JONES	Grants	MCR / SF&P	CMTEDD2022/627 (WOG) and SUB22/3196
1	Lee	Tenders	MCR	SUB22/4279
3	Hanson	Equity, Census of ACT Public Schools	A&E / Finance	FOL22/593
4	Hanson	Identification with School	A&E	FOL22/593
5	Hanson	Public High School Education & Public Secondary College Education	A&E	FOL22/593
6	Hanson	Disability Education in ACT Public Schools	SDD	FOL22/593
7	Hanson	Student Wellbeing: Safe and Supportive Schools	SDD	FOL22/593
8	Hanson	Scrutiny - Auditor-General Reports	Audit & Assurance	FOL22/593
9	Hanson	A-G Report on Teaching Quality No. 6/2021	P&P	FOL22/593
10	Hanson	Workplace Health and Safety	P&P	FOL22/593
11	Hanson	Workforce Profile	P&P	FOL22/593
12	Hanson	Capital Works	ICW	FOL22/593
13	Hanson	Government Contracting	SF&P	SUB22/4147
14	Hanson	Investigation of Complaints	Complaints & Feedback	SUB22/4148
15	Hanson	Contracts, Performance Measurement	A&E	SUB22/4149
16	Lawder	Outdoor Education	SDD	SUB22/4194
ECCB 8	Clay	ED Emissions reduction commitments	ICW	SUB22/4357



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Education and
Community Inclusion

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Approved for publication

Report 4
10th Assembly
May 2022

About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion Education and Community Inclusion on 2 December 2020. The Committee is responsible for examining the following areas:

- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- Youth Affairs
- Skills
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Multicultural Affairs
- Disability
- Women (including the Office for Women)
- Seniors
- Veterans
- LGBTIQ+
- Sport and Recreation

The full establishing resolution is available on the Assembly's website:

<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/resolution-for-committees/resolution-establishing-committees-of-the-tenth-assembly>

Committee members

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair)

Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Deputy Chair)

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Secretariat

Mr Andrew McIntyre, Committee Secretary

Ms Mihira Jeyanarayanan, Research Officer

Ms Lydia Chung, Administrative Assistant

Contact us

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About this inquiry

Clause 3A of the establishing resolution for standing committees of the Assembly provides that calendar and financial year annual reports for 2020–2021 stand referred to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report by 31 May 2022.

This supersedes clause 3 of the resolution, under which calendar and financial year annual and financial reports stood referred to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report by 9 April of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

Acronyms

Acronym	Long form
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank
ATSIPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
CSD	Community Services Directorate
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MPC	Major Projects Canberra
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support implementation of the *Capital of Equality Strategy*, with a particular focus on delivering inclusive education and equitable healthcare.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support the construction of a new arena for the Canberra Capitals.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate provide regular updates to the Canberra community—with particular focus on the Tuggeranong and Gungahlin communities—on development of the new ice rink in Tuggeranong and the new tennis complex in Amaroo.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to invest in high quality public schools in the Gungahlin area.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate finalise the priority of enrolment area for Kenny high school as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate ensure all delegates are well-trained in procurement and probity processes and that supplementary refresher training is provided regularly.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate consider expanding the performance measures used in annual reports when reporting on its strategic objectives.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate monitor the results of ACT students. Should trends emerge, the Directorate should take further steps to understand and address the factors that may be contributing to the relevant changes, with a particular focus on any academic gender gap.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Canberra Institute of Technology as a public provider of vocational education and training.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Canberra Institute of Technology ensure that its advertising of apprenticeships is clear on the steps a person must take to register as an apprentice.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate expand its reporting on Youth Affairs to include advice and policy recommendations provided by the ACT Youth Advisory Council and Youth Assembly, in addition to updates on government responses and implementation of recommendations.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that Child and Family Centres can meet current and future demand as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review how Child and Family Centres Satisfaction Surveys are undertaken and publish the results of the review.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government begin tracking the incidence of delayed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis, including by collecting and collating data from the Child Development Service and community stakeholders.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify and address any delays in the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the ACT.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support implementation measures under the *Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029* and associated Action Plans and continue to actively identify opportunities to better support people with disability in custodial and other criminal justice settings.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate expand its annual reporting to include information on performance in relation to cross-directorate initiatives such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support women entering traditionally male-dominated trades and occupations.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise organisations with a gendered focus in tender processes where procurement relates to initiatives supporting gender equity.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce targets for their procurement practices relating to gender equity and equal representation on private sector boards.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that responsibility for the annual women's budget statement be moved from the Community Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate, in line with the approach taken in other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review all the progress made on the recommendations from the First Action Plan of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016–2026* and report their findings to the Assembly before the end of 2022.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government start collecting gender disaggregated data for government services and initiatives (for example, public transport) to better understand the gendered use of such services and initiatives and make any consequent improvements.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that ACT Government continue to pursue higher levels of accreditation as a Welcoming City.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that ACT Government continue to provide support to multicultural groups who have missed out on opportunities due to the cancellation of the National Multicultural Festival.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that ACT Government ensure that all response to questions on notice and questions taken on notice are provided in a timely fashion.

1. Introduction

Presentation of Annual and Financial Reports 2020–2021

- 1.1. The *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* (Annual Reports Act) provides that annual reports must be prepared by Directors-General, public sector bodies, territory entities and others. Annual reports must cover the operations of the relevant entity over the reporting year.¹ The Chief Minister must make directions setting the form and content of annual reports. The direction applicable to annual reports for the 2021 calendar year and 2020–21 financial year is the Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Directions 2021.
- 1.2. The Annual Reports Act requires the responsible Minister for an annual report to present the report to the Assembly within 15 weeks after the end of the reporting year. Annual and financial reports for public entities were tabled in the Assembly between 8 October 2021² and 2 December 2021.³ A collated list of annual and financial reports is available online.⁴
- 1.3. During its inquiry, the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the Committee) examined all or part of the following annual and financial reports:
- *ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority Annual Report 2020–2021*.⁵
 - *Canberra Institute of Technology Annual Report 2021*.⁶
 - *Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate Annual Report 2020–2021*.⁷
 - *Community Services Directorate Annual Report 2020–2021*.⁸
 - *Education Directorate Annual Report 2020–2021*.⁹
 - *Major Projects Canberra Annual Report 2020–2021*.¹⁰

¹ A reporting year means a financial year or, if a period is stated in a direction made under section 8 of the Annual Reports Act, the stated period.

² ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 27, 8 October 2021, p. 334.

³ ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 36, 2 December 2021, pp. 451–453.

⁴ ACT Government, Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate, *Annual Reports*, https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/report/annual-reports (viewed 10 May 2022).

⁵ ACT Government, ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, <https://www.trainingfund.com.au/publications/> (viewed 10 May 2022).

⁶ Canberra Institute of Technology, *Annual Report 2021*. In accordance with the relevant direction, the Committee considered the report of the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) for the calendar year 2021.

⁷ ACT Government, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, <https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/functions/publications>.

⁸ ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/publications/annual-reports/2020-21/home> (viewed 10 May 2022).

⁹ ACT Government, Education Directorate, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, https://www.education.act.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-publications/publications_a-z/annual-report (viewed 10 May 2022).

¹⁰ ACT Government, Major Projects Canberra, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, <https://www.act.gov.au/major-projects-canberra/resources/publications> (viewed 10 May 2022).

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.4. The Committee held public hearings on 24, 25, and 28 February 2022. At the hearings, the Committee heard from ACT Government Ministers, as well as officials and representatives of the public sector bodies set out in the table below.

Entity	Portfolio responsibility
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.	ACT Government's central agency. Responsible for provision of strategic advice and support to the Chief Minister, the Directorate's Ministers and Cabinet on policy, economic and financial matters, service delivery, whole-of-government issues, and intergovernmental relations.
Community Services Directorate	Responsible for a wide range of human services functions in the ACT, including multicultural and community affairs; children and child development; youth and family support services and policy; therapy services; disability policy and services; homelessness; and community services.
Education Directorate	Responsible for the delivery of early childhood education and public primary, high school, and college education in the ACT. Contributes to the maintenance of standards in non-government schools and home education via accreditation and certification of senior secondary courses.
ACT Building Construction Industry Training Fund Authority	Provides funding for the training of eligible workers and for the development of skills identified as being in short supply in the building and construction industry.
Major Projects Canberra	Responsible for managing all aspects of major projects invested in by the ACT Government. Established on 1 July 2019 to lead the procurement and delivery of the Territory's infrastructure program.
Canberra Institute of Technology	Largest publicly funded registered training organisation in the ACT. Responsible for delivery of vocational education and training (VET).
Skills Canberra	Responsible for provision of strategic advice and overall management of VET in the ACT. Manages ACT and Federal funding for VET programs for a variety of initiatives addressing skills development for entry level and existing workers, as well as adult community education.

- 1.5. The Committee's inquiry was undertaken amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, public hearings for the inquiry were conducted remotely by videoconference.
- 1.6. Witness who appeared at the hearings are listed in Appendix A. Transcripts and footage from the hearings are available on the Legislative Assembly website.

Questions on notice and questions taken on notice

- 1.7. A total of 56 questions were lodged during the inquiry, as follows:
- 31 questions were taken on notice by Ministers and statutory office holders during the hearings. Some of these were later determined to have been answered during the relevant hearing.
 - 25 questions on notice were submitted by members of the Committee and visiting Members of the Assembly following the hearings.
- 1.8. A list of questions (including the date the question was asked, the intended recipient, and the subject of the question) is set out in Appendix B. Also included is the date on which a response was received. Where a response was not received as of the date of this report, this is indicated by the words 'not received'.
- 1.9. Responses to questions are also available on the Committee's website.

Acknowledgements

- 1.10. The Committee thanks everyone who participated in or otherwise assisted this inquiry. This includes ACT Government Ministers, Directorate officials, and statutory officers. The Committee also extends a special thanks to the Hansard and Broadcasting staff of the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

2. Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate

Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs

Matters considered

- 2.1. Mr Andrew Barr MLA appeared before the Committee in his capacity as Chief Minister on 24 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- The ACT Government's role in debate surrounding the Religious Discrimination Bill, and impacts on and support for the ACT LGBTIQ+ community.¹¹
 - Trans athletes' participation in sports, including a private Federal member's bill which seeks to exclude participation by trans Australians.¹²
 - Support for intersex people in health settings—particularly the Canberra Hospital.¹³
 - The *Capital of Equality* Strategy and associated Action Plans.¹⁴
 - ACT Government prohibition of conversion practices and associated legislation.¹⁵
 - SpringOUT and YES!Fest celebrations for 2022.¹⁶

Key issues

Capital of Equality Strategy

- 2.2. The *Capital of Equality* Strategy (the Strategy) sets out how the ACT Government will continue to make Canberra the most welcoming city in Australia for the LGBTIQ+ community. It is implemented through Action Plans. The first plan (2019-2021) laid a foundation to continue to improve services and eliminate disadvantage and discrimination for LGBTIQ+ Canberrans. The second plan builds on those actions and outlines further measures to improve the wellbeing and circumstances of the LGBTIQ+ community.¹⁷
- 2.3. The Strategy and Action Plans were discussed at hearing on 24 February 2022. There was a particular focus on diversity education in ACT schools and on inclusive health care.
- 2.4. Directorate officials noted that diversity education in schools is primarily occurring through the Safe and Supportive Schools program in the Education Directorate, and that additional

¹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, pp. 1–2.

¹² *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, pp. 2–3.

¹³ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, pp. 3.

¹⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, pp. 5–6.

¹⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, pp. 6–7.

¹⁷ ACT Government, Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs, *Capital of Equality – ACT Government LGBTIQ+ Strategy*, <https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/policystrategic/the-office-of-lgbtqi-affairs/capital-of-equality-act-government-lgbtqi-strategy> (viewed 15 May 2022).

gender-affirming measures may be taken under the second Action Plan. Officials also drew attention to inclusive events for the LGBTIQ+ community around the ACT.¹⁸

- 2.5. Officials also commented on measures taken to improve health outcomes for the ACT's LGBTIQ+ community, noting that an item in the first Action Plan for the Strategy was a health scoping study which had been completed at the time of the hearing. With respect to implementing recommendations out of that study, officials stated:

[W]ork [is] being done on one of the recommendations...around a gender-focused health service. There is a jurisdictional scan and a co-design process that are just kicking off now, with some stakeholder engagement...to take place over the next few months. That will help to inform how that work goes forward.¹⁹

- 2.6. The Chief Minister stated that the second Action Plan for the Strategy would be launched in the (then) near future, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic had 'taken the attention of the government' resulting in delays to some projects.²⁰

Committee comment

- 2.7. The Committee welcomes the work that the ACT Government has done so far under the *Capital of Equality Strategy* to ensure the ACT is a welcoming and inclusive space for the LGBTIQ+ community. The Committee encourages the ACT government to continue this work, with a particular focus on promoting diversity education in schools and supporting LGBTIQ+ students, and on driving equity in healthcare outcomes.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support implementation of the *Capital of Equality Strategy*, with a particular focus on delivering inclusive education and equitable healthcare.

Sport and recreation

Matters considered

- 2.8. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Sports and Recreation on 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- Upgrades to ACT pools and leisure centres.²¹

¹⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, p. 4. See also *ECI QTON 2 ANSWER*, [p. 1]. The report is available online at <https://www.health.act.gov.au/news/lgbtiq-health-scoping-study> (viewed 16 May 2022).

²⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 24 February 2022, pp. 4–5. At The second Action Plan has now been released. See ACT Government, Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs, *Capital of Equality – ACT Government LGBTIQ+ Strategy*.

²¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 92–94. See also *ECI QTON 20 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

- Support and grants for athletes and sport organisations.²²
- Support for Olympic and Paralympic athletes.²³
- Facilities for the University of Canberra Capitals.²⁴
- Grants for sports and recreation infrastructure.²⁵

Key issues

Facilities for the University of Canberra Capitals

- 2.9. Minister Berry noted that the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) was closed by the Federal Government and the Sports Commission and that the ACT Government had been unable to negotiate with Federal Government for the facility to be restored.²⁶ The Minister observed that the ACT Government has continued to negotiate with Federal Government in relation to this matter, and that in the meantime the AIS has been and will continue to be used as a COVID-19 vaccination hub—particularly for children aged five to 11 years.²⁷
- 2.10. Minister Berry stated that the University of Canberra plans to construct basketball facilities ‘as part of their master plan’. However, this would not meet the needs of the Canberra Capitals in the short to medium term. The Minister stated that the ACT Government is open to discussions with Federal Government on this matter, and that if games are moved interstate due to not being able to secure a facility the ACT Government ‘will work with the Canberra Capitals on ways [to] support them financially.’²⁸

Committee comment

- 2.11. The Committee is concerned that closure of the AIS has limited the availability of sports facilities for the Canberra Capitals. While the Committee appreciates that the ACT Government is negotiating with Federal Government on a solution to this issue, and that the University of Canberra plans to construct a basketball facility, it remains unclear whether facilities will be available in the ACT in the short to medium term.
- 2.12. Noting the importance of the Canberra Capitals to the ACT community, the Committee considers that the resolution of this issue be considered a priority.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support the construction of a new arena for the Canberra Capitals.

²² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 94–95. See also *ECI QTON 22 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2]; *ECI QTON 30 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

²³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 96–97.

²⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 95–96.

²⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 98.

²⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 95.

²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 96.

²⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 96.

Grants for sports and recreation infrastructure

- 2.13. During the hearing on 28 February 2022, the construction of a new tennis centre in Amaroo and a new ice rink in Tuggeranong was discussed. Directorate officials noted that at the time of the hearing the ACT Government was assessing a proposal from Cruachan Investments relating to the construction of the new ice rink in Tuggeranong. A decision was expected in the following months. Officials stated that until a decision on the proposal was made, a timeframe for design and construction could not be provided.²⁹
- 2.14. In relation to the new tennis centre in Amaroo, Directorate officials further noted that the ACT Government had engaged a consultant on the preparation of an estate development plan for the site and was working closely with Tennis ACT and Tennis Australia on the project. According to officials, the next formal steps would be submission of an estate development plan for approval and finalisation of design requirements.³⁰

Committee comment

- 2.15. The Committee supports the construction of a new tennis centre in Amaroo and a new ice rink in Tuggeranong. The Committee is aware of strong interest in these projects and considers that timely updates should be provided to the community as work progresses.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate provide regular updates to the Canberra community—with particular focus on the Tuggeranong and Gungahlin communities—on development of the new ice rink in Tuggeranong and the new tennis complex in Amaroo.

²⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 98.

³⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 98.

3. Education Directorate

ACT Schools and learning outcomes

Matters considered

- 3.1. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared in her capacity as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs at a public hearing on 25 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- School infrastructure developments in the Gungahlin region.³¹
 - Support for LGBTIQ+ students, including the availability of Safe and Supportive Schools contact officers.³²
 - The Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project and procurement issues.³³
 - Tharwa Preschool enrolments.³⁴
 - The Impact of COVID-19 on ACT schools;³⁵
 - Funding for ACT Schools.³⁶
 - The Affiliated Schools program.³⁷
 - National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) reporting.³⁸
 - Trends in Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) results.³⁹
 - Alternative approaches to understanding and reporting on learning outcomes.⁴⁰

Key issues

Developments in the Gungahlin region

- 3.2. During the Committee's hearing on 25 February 2022, Directorate officials updated the Committee on the status of key infrastructure projects in the Gungahlin region, including

³¹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 10.

³² *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 10–12. In response to a question on notice, the Minister confirmed that between 2016 and 2022, there were 334 Directorate employees who completed the Safe and Supportive Schools contact officer training. Data is not broken down by teaching and non-teaching staff members. However, all public schools are required to identify at least two contact officers. See *ECI QTON 3 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

³³ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 14–24.

³⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 31–34. See also *ECI QTON 6 ANSWER*, [p. 1]; *ECI QTON 8 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 34–37.

³⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 37–39.

³⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 39–40.

³⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 26–27.

³⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 31–32.

⁴⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 26–27.

expansions to the Margaret Hendry school, Taylor high school and Kenny high school. It is also proposed to open a new school in Molonglo—the Evelyn Scott high school—in 2022.⁴¹

- 3.3. Officials noted that there have been delays to some projects due to wet weather and other factors beyond the government’s control. In some cases, priority enrolment areas had not been finalised. For example, in relation to the Kenny High School, officials stated:

We have been reviewing all of the neighbouring priority enrolment implications for neighbouring schools, such as Harrison School, which is nearby. We would be expecting, for example, a large portion of the children at the Throsby School to be going to east Gungahlin high. In short, we are doing that work, but we have not finalised that yet because enrolments have not opened for that high school.⁴²

Committee comment

- 3.4. The Committee notes that Gungahlin is a region experiencing fast population growth. The Committee considers that it is important for the ACT Government to continue expanding and building new facilities in the area to support high-quality education in the ACT.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to invest in high quality public schools in the Gungahlin area.

- 3.5. The Committee notes that the priority enrolment area for Kenny High School has not yet been finalised. The Committee considers that this should be completed as soon as practicable with a view to creating certainty for prospective students and their parents.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate finalise the priority of enrolment area for Kenny high school as soon as practicable.

Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project—procurement

- 3.6. The Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project is one of three school site upgrades of the Education Directorate’s Major Education Projects. It includes construction of three new learning communities for 450 places, a canteen, a STEM Area and small group facilities. According to information on the Campbell Primary School website, all construction and key landscaping ‘is on track for completion’ by start of Term 2 2022, with some landscaping work to continue into term 2 to fully establish lawns, plantings, and ramps in some areas.⁴³
- 3.7. On December 2021, the Auditor-General for the ACT tabled Report No. 13/2021, *Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project Procurement*, in the Assembly. The audit concluded

⁴¹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 10.

⁴² *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 10.

⁴³ Education Directorate, *School Modernisation Program*, https://www.campbellps.act.edu.au/school/modernisation_program (viewed 25 May 2022).

that the ‘procurement process for the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project lacked probity’ and that ‘tenderers were not dealt with fairly, impartially and consistently.’ The report made a series of recommendations to improve procurement and risk management processes, including ensuring that staff receive necessary training.⁴⁴

- 3.8. Procurement for the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project and related matters were discussed at the public hearing on 25 February 2022. Directorate officials explained that, as part of tender assessments in a construction environment, ‘a range of technical reports are produced, including advice on the design...sustainability and...finances of individual projects’. Officials further stated that:

All of those contribute to being inputs into the decision that the tender evaluation team makes by way of a recommendation to a delegate. The delegate is then responsible for taking the decision under the Financial Management Act and satisfying themselves of the outcome and the overall value for money and best interests of the territory being supported with the preferred outcome.⁴⁵

- 3.9. The Minister noted that Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project followed the ‘procurement process in place’ and that the ‘ACT government is taking...[the Auditor-General’s] recommendations seriously and will respond in due course.’⁴⁶
- 3.10. Also discussed was any action taken against the delegate involved in the procurement process. At the time of the hearing, Directorate officials declined to provide information on this matter. However, the Minister has since confirmed that no action was taken.⁴⁷
- 3.11. Officials observed that, since the audit, the Directorate has been working in partnership with Major Projects Canberra ‘to look at a range of process improvements’:
- ... firstly, looking at how we can improve communication protocols, the role of probity advisers and change management processes; secondly, looking at improving protocols and practices for record-keeping; thirdly, reviewing protocols for communication tenderers and stakeholders; and lastly, identifying areas for training and professional development. We are also looking at the role of probity advisers in all major projects since we received the report.⁴⁸
- 3.12. The Minister also noted that it would be appropriate for the Education Directorate to examine previous procurements, and that confirmed that the Directorate would be

⁴⁴ Auditor-General Report No. 13/2021, *Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project Procurement*, pp. 1, 8–9. Some Members of the Assembly also raised concern about transparency related to government contracting more generally. See, for example, *ECI QON 13 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁴⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 14. The Minister also explained that delegates are permitted to make decisions which differ from recommendations of the evaluation team. See *ECI QON 1 ANSWER*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 16.

⁴⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 24. Minister Berry wrote to the Committee to this effect. See Letter from Minister Berry to Committee Chair—disciplinary action against delegate—Campbell Primary School procurement.

⁴⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 14.

engaging PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake an internal audit.⁴⁹ In answer to a question taken on notice regarding the scope of the audit, the Minister stated:

[The] internal audit [commencing April 2022] will assess the effectiveness of... procurement operating model and is intended as a 'baseline' assessment. The outcome of this audit will be leveraged to help identify whether further or ongoing audit work may be required across system, project, or procurement specific activities. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) will determine the appropriate procurement values and reference points to deliver the audit outcomes.⁵⁰

- 3.13. The Minister also stated that the Directorate would 'actively support' an upcoming whole-of-government data collection exercise that will provide further insights into procurement practices across the ACT Government. According to the Minister, it is expected that this exercise will span procurement over multiple years, and across multiple Directorates.⁵¹

Committee comment

- 3.14. The Committee acknowledges the work the Directorate is undertaking to improve its procurement processes and encourages the Directorate to continue to identify potential gaps in its procurement and risk management arrangements and make necessary changes. In particular, the Committee considers that the Directorate should ensure adequate training is provided to all delegates involved in procurement processes. This is consistent with recommendations made in the Auditor-General's report.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate ensure all delegates are well-trained in procurement and probity processes and that supplementary refresher training is provided regularly.

National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)—reporting on strategic objectives

- 3.15. NAPLAN is one of the measures by which government, education authorities and schools can determine whether Australian students are meeting important education outcomes. Students in years three, five, seven and nine sit a NAPLAN test each year. The tests provide point-in-time information about student progress in the areas of literacy and numeracy and can be used to inform teaching and learning programs.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, Canberra, p. 14. See also *ECI QTON 5 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

⁵⁰ *ECI QTON 4 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

⁵¹ *ECI QTON 4 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

⁵² Education, *NAP Including NAPLAN and NAPLAN Online*, 4 April 2022, <https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/assessment-and-reporting/nap-including-naplan-and-naplan-online> (viewed 6 May 2022).

- 3.16. NAPLAN was discussed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials advised that while testing did not take place in 2020, the ACT 'is [now] wholly online for the conduct of NAPLAN' and is 'in...preparations' for NAPLAN 2022. Officials further noted that:

[W]e take account of things that might disrupt NAPLAN, be they low-level disruptions all the way up to a very significant disruption. That is, again, part of the planning [in 2022]. So far we are not seeing anything that suggests that NAPLAN will not go ahead [in 2022], but ... we are preparing for anything.⁵³

- 3.17. NAPLAN results are included in the Directorate's annual report as a way of reporting on strategic objectives. Directorate officials observed that there may be scope to broaden the metrics used to report on objectives to include formative assessments the levels of student identification with their school (the student's sense of belonging and related matters).⁵⁴

Committee comment

- 3.18. The Committee notes that performance reporting for the Directorate appears to rely heavily on NAPLAN results. Given testing did not occur in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no performance data was available for that year. In this context, the Committee considers there would be merit in using a greater range of measures in its annual reports, such as student identification and formative assessments.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate consider expanding the performance measures used in annual reports when reporting on its strategic objectives.

Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR)—student rankings

- 3.19. ATAR is a percentile ranking used by universities to assist in the selection of school leavers into undergraduate courses. A comparison of the Education Directorate's *Annual Report 2019-20* and *Annual Report 2020-21* indicates that there has been a decrease in students receiving an ATAR of 60 or above and 90 or above.⁵⁵ This was discussed at the Committee's hearings. Also discussed was an apparent gender gap in ATAR results.
- 3.20. Directorate officials stated that it was 'very difficult to ascertain specifically why...annual variations [in ATAR results] have occurred'. Officials stated that while gender gaps have not been analysed in depth, the Directorate remains vigilant in relation to this matter.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 26.

⁵⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 28. See also *ECI QON 4 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

⁵⁵ ACT Government Education Directorate, *Annual Report 2019-20*, pp. 299-300; *Annual Report 2020-21*, p. 313.

⁵⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 30.

- 3.21. Directorate officials also emphasised that differences in ATAR results between 2019–20 and 2020–21 ‘do not constitute a trend’,⁵⁷ adding that there are many different causal factors that can influence education outcomes:

[These factors] relate to teachers and how teachers carry out their roles. They relate to leadership in schools. They relate to the climate, if you like, of a school. There are also factors that contribute to educational outcomes that are associated with the students themselves.⁵⁸

- 3.22. Directorate officials also noted that a student’s background can also have a ‘significant influence’ on their educational outcomes.⁵⁹

Committee comment

- 3.23. The Committee notes that there has been a slight decline in the percentage of students receiving an ATAR of 60 or above and 90 or above as well as the possible emergence of an academic gender gap. While these figures do not yet constitute a trend, the Committee believes that the ED should continue to monitor results over subsequent years—with particular attention to changes apparently linked to characteristics such as gender.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate monitor the results of ACT students. Should trends emerge, the Directorate should take further steps to understand and address the factors that may be contributing to the relevant changes, with a particular focus on any academic gender gap.

⁵⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p 30.

⁵⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p 31.

⁵⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p 31.

4. Canberra Institute of Technology Major Projects Canberra Skills Canberra

Vocational education and training

Matters considered

- 4.1. Mr Chris Steel MLA appeared before the Committee in his capacity as Minister for Transport and City Services, Skills, and Special Minister of State on 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- The Canberra Institute of Technology's (CIT) role as a public provider of vocational education and training (VET).⁶⁰
 - Procurement and construction of a new campus for the CIT in Woden Valley.⁶¹
 - Skilled migration and how this has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶²
 - Emerging trends in training for the building and construction industry.⁶³
 - Measures to address current and emerging skills shortages.⁶⁴
 - Measures to support women and people from diverse backgrounds to take up training and employment opportunities in non-traditional areas of VET.⁶⁵
 - Supporting and incentivising careers in physical trades.⁶⁶

Key issues

The role of the Canberra Institute of Technology as a vocational education and training provider

- 4.2. During the hearing on 28 February 2022, the CIT's role as a provider of VET to the ACT community was discussed—largely in the context of the *JobTrainer* program.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 70–82.

⁶¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 77–87. See also *ECI QTON 2 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2]; *ECI QTON 16–17 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁶² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 80–81.

⁶³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 87–88. See also *ECI QTON 18 ANSWER*, [p. 1]; *ECI QTON 18 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁶⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 88–89.

⁶⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 90–91.

⁶⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 81, 83.

⁶⁷ *JobTrainer* offers free vocational education and training to young people aged 17 to 24 years who have finished school and to job seekers across Canberra. It is jointly funded by the Federal and ACT Governments and facilitated through Skills Canberra. See ACT Government, Skills Canberra *JobTrainer*, <https://www.act.gov.au/skills/jobtrainer> (viewed 13 May 2022); Australian Government, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, *JobTrainer Fund*, <https://www.dese.gov.au/skills-reform/jobtrainer-fund>.

- 4.3. Officials noted that the CIT had been allocated 2,638 *JobTrainer* places, while private RTOs have been allocated 1,102. As to why the CIT had been allocated a higher number of places, officials indicated that this was because the CIT offered more short courses.⁶⁸ The Minister also emphasised the importance of the CIT to the ACT community:

We are strongly of the belief that a public TAFE is the foundation of our VET system here in the ACT and we have a commitment to provide at least 75 per cent of funding. We know the quality of training that CIT delivers. We can be confident in that training. That is why we provide opportunities for our public sector to have funding under *JobTrainer* but also the private sector has an opportunity.⁶⁹

- 4.4. Officials of the CIT indicated that there has been ‘a lot of interest’ in courses which the government has subsidised or offered free of charge under *JobTrainer* (although the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have made accurate assessments difficult).⁷⁰
- 4.5. Officials also noted that *JobTrainer* participants are demographically similar to participants in VET programs generally, stating that the VET system in the ACT ‘does very well’ for learners with disability, women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is reflected in the *JobTrainer* program.⁷¹
- 4.6. Also discussed were reasons why a VET student may *not* complete a course of study under the *JobTrainer* program. The Minister noted that one reason a student may not complete a full course or qualification is that they have obtained employment. Non-completion is not necessarily cause for concern.⁷² Officials of the CIT similarly noted that non-completion of a course may indicate that a student has achieved what they had intended to achieve.⁷³

Committee comment

- 4.7. The Committee considers that the CIT is and should remain a critical component of the Territory’s VET system, and strongly supports a high-quality, well-funded public VET system for the Territory. The Committee was pleased to hear that the CIT continues to meet student need and is a key contributor to education and employment outcomes for women, people with disability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the Canberra Institute of Technology as a public provider of vocational education and training.

⁶⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 70–71.

⁶⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 72.

⁷⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 79–80.

⁷¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 80.

⁷² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 78–79.

⁷³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 79. According to annual surveys conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), approximately 85 per cent of CIT students indicated that they had achieved the main reason for their training. This is above the national average.

Matching new and prospective apprentices with employers

- 4.8. Apprenticeship courses offered by the CIT were also discussed. Some concerns were raised that young people may be attracted by media advertising courses offered by the CIT, but find they are not able to enrol as they do not have a job provider.
- 4.9. Officials of the CIT stated that CIT trainers and assessors are very well connected with industry and can provide advice and referrals to young people seeking employment.⁷⁴ Officials also stated that people seeking to start an apprenticeship should not contact a job provider but rather the apprentice network provider—Sarina Russo—to connect with employers and training providers.⁷⁵
- 4.10. Officials noted that there may be rare cases where a young person is unable to be matched with a job provider and therefore could not take advantage of the apprenticeship training offered through the CIT. Officials indicated that they may be able to follow up on any specific cases of this kind with the prospective learner.⁷⁶

Committee comment

- 4.11. The Committee heard that there may be instances where a person is encouraged to pursue an apprenticeship through the CIT (for example, by advertising) but is unable to enrol in training as they do not have a job provider.
- 4.12. The Committee considers that there would be merit in the CIT ensuring that advertising makes clear the steps that a person should take to register for an apprenticeship. This might include directing viewers to relevant pages on the CIT's website.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Canberra Institute of Technology ensure that its advertising of apprenticeships is clear on the steps a person must take to register as an apprentice.

⁷⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 73.

⁷⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 74. Information on steps to becoming an apprentice—including connecting with a network provider and enrolling in a CIT course—is available on the CIT's website: https://cit.edu.au/apprentices_trainees/apprentices (viewed 15 May 2022).

⁷⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 74. See also *ECI QTON 31 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

5. Community Services Directorate

Youth Affairs

Matters considered

- 5.1. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs on 25 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- Youth grants, including the Youth InterACT Grant Program and Youth InterACT Scholarship Program.⁷⁷
 - Youth engagement on policy and programs.⁷⁸
 - Interchange Program—support for children exiting Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.⁷⁹

Key issues

Youth engagement on policy and programs

- 5.2. The ACT Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a non-statutory body that provides advice to the ACT Government on issues affecting young people; raises awareness as to their aspirations, needs and concerns; and facilitates interaction between young people, the Government, and the wider community. In 2020-21, the YAC met 12 times to provide strategic advice to the ACT Government on issues that affected young people.⁸⁰
- 5.3. The YAC was also heavily involved in the delivery of the ACT Youth Assembly (Youth Assembly), a full day forum held for young people to discuss matters of concern. The 2021 Youth Assembly was held on 25 June 2021 at the Australian National University.⁸¹
- 5.4. The role of the YAC and its value in providing a voice to young people was discussed at the hearing on 25 February 2022. A focus area was ensuring young people have opportunities for meaningful input into issues affecting their lives, with officials acknowledging the view among young people that ‘older, white public servants [should not be] sitting there telling ...[them] what to do’.⁸² The Minister noted that the Directorate continues to work with YAC to understand the priorities of younger people, and to avoid treating the YAC as simply another consultation stakeholder.⁸³

⁷⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 42–44. See also *ECI QON 19 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2]; *ECI QTON 10–12 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁷⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 42, 46.

⁷⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 46–47. See also *ECI QTON 13 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁸⁰ ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020-21*, pp. 33, 51. For further information about the YAC, including members’ lived experience with youth justice and out-of-home care, see *ECI QON 21 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁸¹ ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020-21*, pp. 158–159. The Minister advised that a report capturing discussions and recommendations from the Youth assembly, and a government response, will be released June 2022. See *ECI QON 18 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

⁸² *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 42.

⁸³ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 45.

- 5.5. The Minister observed that consultation fatigue had been raised in conversations with the YAC. Directorate officials explained that they are exploring solutions to this issue:

[W]e are working with the council to consider...existing mechanisms that we can utilise rather than starting a new consultation with the Advisory Council. We are seeking to help manage staggering the conversations and the consultations so that they are not all hitting at once.⁸⁴

Committee comment

- 5.6. The Committee acknowledges the important work of the YAC in providing strategic advice to government and giving a platform to young people to express their views.
- 5.7. The Committee considers that engagement with the YAC on policy and programs should be meaningful and should be managed in such a way as to avoid duplicating consultation. Accordingly, the Committee sees value in reporting the extent to which the YAC has been engaged and the extent to which recommendations (for example, those arising out of the Youth Assembly) have been implemented.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate expand its reporting on Youth Affairs to include advice and policy recommendations provided by the ACT Youth Advisory Council and Youth Assembly, in addition to updates on government responses and implementation of recommendations.

Early Childhood Development

Matters considered

- 5.8. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Early Childhood Development on 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- Current and future demand for services at Child and Family Centres.⁸⁵
 - Demand for and access to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments.⁸⁶
 - The role of Child and Family Centres and the Child Development Service in relation to raising the age of criminal responsibility.⁸⁷
 - Early years engagement officers.⁸⁸
 - Raising the eligible age for ASD assessments under the Child Development Program.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p 46.

⁸⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 114–116.

⁸⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 116–122.

⁸⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 116–117.

⁸⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 120–121.

⁸⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 119.

Key issues

Current and future demand for services at Child and Family Centres

- 5.9. During the Committee's hearing on 28 February 2022, current and future demand for services delivered through Child and Family Centres was discussed. It was noted that demand for services provided through Child and Family Centres had exceeded targets by approximately 33 per cent over the previous two years.⁹⁰
- 5.10. The Minister explained that demand for services is 'a fluid thing', and changes according to the needs of different communities—based, for example, on demographics, population, and supports required. The Minister also noted that demand for services evolves as the circumstances of the ACT community change and new or additional needs are identified by community sector partners.⁹¹
- 5.11. As to future demand for services and supports delivered through Child and Family Centres, the Minister stated that work to develop demand projections is underway.⁹² Directorate officials expanded on this matter, noting that introduction of new information technology systems in Child and Family centres had allowed the Directorate to gather more and better data. According to officials, this will 'really help' work to develop projections of demand.⁹³
- 5.12. Directorate officials indicated that demand may be difficult to predict due to the various services and supports that are offered through Child and Family Centres, the individual needs of communities and families; and the need to develop flexible responses.⁹⁴

Committee comment

- 5.13. The Committee is concerned that demand for services provided through Child and Family Centres is continuing to outstrip supply, with demand having exceeded targets by a considerable margin over the last two years.
- 5.14. The Committee appreciates that work is underway to improve the capacity ability to predict and respond to demand for services, and that demand can be difficult to predict as the circumstances of the community change. Nevertheless, the Committee considers that more could be done to ensure that demand for services is met, to avoid gaps in critical services for community members.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that Child and Family Centres can meet current and future demand as a matter of urgency.

⁹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 114. See also ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020–21*, p. 79.

⁹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 114–115.

⁹² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 114.

⁹³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 114–115.

⁹⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 114–115.

Child and Family Centres—Client satisfaction surveys

- 5.15. Directorate officials provided the following overview of the Child and Family Centres client satisfaction survey:

Each quarter we contact...clients after their case is closed and ask them a series of questions, including their satisfaction with the service that they received.⁹⁵

- 5.16. Whether the survey could be affected by selection bias was discussed during the hearing. Directorate officials made the following comments:

We are always looking at the information that we collect and whether we are collecting the best information that we need. [The] new child and youth record information system for the [Child and Family Centres]...gives us an opportunity to review our data and the way we are collecting it. One of the things that we are planning to do, now that that is in, is to look at the timing of when we collect information and whether...we have the right questions to capture the right information. We think frequency is something we also need to deal with.⁹⁶

Committee comment

- 5.17. The Committee is pleased to note that, according to surveys conducted by staff of Child and Family Centres, client satisfaction with services has remained very high during current and previous reporting periods.
- 5.18. Nevertheless, the Committee considers that there would be value in reviewing how the Client Satisfaction Survey is undertaken, to ensure that it accurately measures client satisfaction and is not affected by selection bias.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review how Child and Family Centres Satisfaction Surveys are undertaken and publish the results of the review.

Demand for and access to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments

- 5.19. During the Committee's hearing on 28 February 2022, demand for ASD assessments was discussed.⁹⁷ Members of the Assembly noted that community stakeholders had reported

⁹⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 116. Officials noted that the survey is conducted via phone calls from staff at the Child and Family Centre.

⁹⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 116.

⁹⁷ The CSD's Child Development Service provides ACT residents with free ASD assessments for children up to 11 years and 11 months. referral from a Paediatrician or Psychiatrist is required. While assessment services were strengthened in 2020–21, challenges associated with wait times, service demand, and the recruitment and retention of assessors persisted over the reporting period. See ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020–21*, p. 81.

large increases in lower-income families seeking ASD assessments for young people aged 12 years and older.⁹⁸

- 5.20. Officials stated that the Directorate does not have data on the extent to which families with children aged 12 years and over are accessing ASD assessments in the private market:

[W]e do not have a lot of interest in or requests through the Child Development Service for access to private psychologists for those older cohorts of kids. People understand that the Child Development Service is really focused on earlier support and earlier intervention for these kids. The service system around families would be encouraging them to go directly to private psychologists.⁹⁹

- 5.21. The Minister further indicated that obtaining data on people aged 12 years and over accessing ASD assessments may be difficult—largely owing to privacy issues. Moreover, data on the number of children aged 12 years and over accessing ASD assessments may not, on its own provide the information necessary to assess, for example, levels of demand for ASD assessments for this cohort.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, officials indicated that the Directorate would be willing to initiate conversations with stakeholders who may hold relevant data.¹⁰¹

Committee comment

- 5.22. The Committee is concerned that there appears to be a paucity of data as to the number and characteristics of those seeking assessments at this later life stage.
- 5.23. The Committee appreciates that the Directorate does collect data on people accessing ASD assessments in the private sector, and that there has been limited interest in the Child Development Service as means of referral to private psychologists and assessors. The Committee also notes the Minister's view that data on children aged 12 years and over accessing ASD assessment may be of limited use.
- 5.24. Nevertheless, the Committee considers that there would be merit in the ACT Government having access to data about the incidence of ASD assessments and diagnoses among people aged 12 years and over. This data might be used to understand reasons behind delays in accessing ASD assessments and designing appropriate solutions. The Committee also notes that the Directorate has indicated a willingness to initiative conversations with stakeholders who may hold relevant data.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government begin tracking the incidence of delayed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis, including by collecting and collating data from the Child Development Service and community stakeholders.

⁹⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 117.

⁹⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 118. Officials stated that the CSD would 'certainly be keeping records if people were requesting assessments for children aged over 12 years.

¹⁰⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 119.

¹⁰¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 120.

Awareness of the need for and benefits of early diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- 5.25. Also discussed was awareness of the need for and benefits of early diagnosis of ASD. Directorate officials observed that ASD assessments are ‘pretty well known’, and there are good referral processes and information available to families. Those that support children in various settings are ‘well aware’ of how, when and why they would refer children and parents for assessment.¹⁰²
- 5.26. Officials also noted that work to raise awareness of developmental delay in children and the need for early intervention is being progressed via work associated with the *First 1,000 Days Strategy*, stating:

The work that we are doing around the Strategy...to increase people’s awareness is a co-design project with Health, Community Services Directorate and community services partners. We are asking those partners to check in with members of the community about how they could best support families to engage with services that they need, to know whether their children are meeting the correct milestones and to move their children into the best possible outcomes.¹⁰³

Committee comment

- 5.27. The Committee appreciates that there may be relatively broad awareness of the need for and benefits of early assessment and diagnosis of ASD and developmental delay. It also appears that the ACT government is progressing work to increase awareness of these matters among parents. Nevertheless, and consistent with the views expressed above, the Committee considers that more could be done to understand factors associated with the age of ASD diagnosis in the ACT, and where delays may be occurring.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify and address any delays in the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the ACT.

¹⁰² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 122.

¹⁰³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 123. The *First 1000 Days Strategy* is a community awareness-raising strategy developed by the Federal Department of Social Services. See Australian Government, Department of Social Services, *The First 1000 Days*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services-children-protecting-australias-children/the-first-1000-days> (viewed 10 May 2022). Supporting families to establish a strong foundation for good health, in alignment with the *First 1000 Days Strategy*—is a focus of the ACT Government’s Preventative Health Plan 2020–2025. See ACT Government, Health Directorate, *Healthy Canberra ACT Preventive Health Plan 2020–2025*, p. 11. <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/act-preventive-health-plan> (viewed 10 May 2022).

Disability policy and programs

Matters considered

5.28. Ms Emma Davidson MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Disability on 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:

- ACT Disability Strategy 2021-31.¹⁰⁴
- NDIS independent assessments proposal.¹⁰⁵
- Supports for individuals without NDIS plans.¹⁰⁶
- Data on types of support accessed by people with disabilities.¹⁰⁷
- Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029.¹⁰⁸
- Restrictive practices and related law reform.¹⁰⁹
- Respite and recovery grants.¹¹⁰

Key issues

Progress on measures under the Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029

5.29. The *ACT Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029* (Disability Justice Strategy) aims to achieve equity and inclusion for people with a disability in the justice system. Under the Strategy, the *First Action Plan 2019-2023* (First Action Plan) outlines the first for years of work and commitments made by stakeholders.¹¹¹

5.30. Officials provided updates on the First Action Plan, noting that a key achievement under that Plan has been the installation of eight disability liaison officers in ‘corrections, child protection, community corrections, Canberra law courts, [Director of Public Prosecutions] and police.’ Officials added that the disability liaison officers are ‘on the ground forming relationships...and are not only supporting individuals with a disability’:

There may be people who have never identified that they have a disability but who connect with the justice system and do not quite understand what their part in the justice system is or why they keep ending up in this space.¹¹²

5.31. Officials also spoke to ongoing work under the Disability Justice Strategy, noting that a best practice guide is being developed with ACT Policing to support interactions with people

¹⁰⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 56–57.

¹⁰⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 57–58.

¹⁰⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 59–60.

¹⁰⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 60–62.

¹⁰⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 62–63.

¹⁰⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 63–66.

¹¹⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 67–68.

¹¹¹ ACT Government, Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, pp. 57–58.

¹¹² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p 62.

with disability and was expected to be completed by the middle of 2022. The Disability Reference Group has additionally supported discussions in this area. Officials stated that ‘86 staff members [in] the justice system have already participated in easy English training’ to develop accessible documents for people with disability [with] lower levels of literacy.¹¹³

Committee comment

- 5.32. The Committee welcomes progress made so far by the ACT Government on the First Action Plan of the Disability Justice Strategy to ensure that the ACT justice system is inclusive and accessible for people with disability. The Committee is also pleased that the ACT Government is working to implement additional measures to improve support for people with disability in criminal justice settings.
- 5.33. The Committee encourages the ACT Government to continue supporting implementation of the First Action Plan and Disability Justice Strategy and looks forward to receiving updates on progress in the future.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support implementation measures under the *Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029* and associated Action Plans and continue to actively identify opportunities to better support people with disability in custodial and other criminal justice settings.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Matters considered

- 5.34. Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- Measures to address systemic racism in the ACT.¹¹⁴
 - Funding and support for Aboriginal Community-controlled organisations.¹¹⁵
 - Reporting on cross-directorate initiatives such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy (ATSIPP).¹¹⁶
 - Establishment of a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural precinct.¹¹⁷
 - Facilities for the Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp 62–63. Officials noted that the Directorate would be in a position to update the Committee on progress during hearings in relation to subsequent annual reports.

¹¹⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 124–125

¹¹⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 125–126

¹¹⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 126–127.

¹¹⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p 128.

¹¹⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p 129–131.

Key issues

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy—targets and reporting

- 5.35. The ACT Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy (ATSIPP) aims to reduce barriers to procurement encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises. It sets targets for public sector entities in relation to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises in government procurement. In 2020–21, the target was 1.5 per cent of addressable spend.¹¹⁹
- 5.36. At the hearing on 28 February 2022, the extent to which the Directorate had met ATSIPP targets was discussed. The Minister noted that the Directorate had not met the 1.5 per cent target for the financial year. However, the Minister explained that there has not been a significant amount of procurement through CSD since the ATSIPP came into effect.¹²⁰
- 5.37. Also discussed was whether there was a role for the Directorate (for example, through the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (AOTSIA) in supporting compliance with the ATSIP. The Minister observed that the ATSIPP is not the responsibility of the OATSIA, but rather of Procurement ACT.¹²¹ However, officials indicated that in promoting work through the OATSIA, the Directorate would continue to explore opportunities to help other Directorates meet their ATSIPP targets.¹²²

Committee comment

- 5.38. The Committee considers that the ATSIPP is critical to reducing barriers to procurement encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises, and to promoting economic participation for the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- 5.39. The Committee considers that there would be value in the Community Services Directorate supporting other Directorates to meet their ATSIPP targets. As part of this work, the Community Services Directorate should include in its annual reports information on performance in relation to cross-Directorate initiatives such as the ATSIPP.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate expand its annual reporting to include information on performance in relation to cross-directorate initiatives such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy.

¹¹⁹ Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020-21*, pp 425–426.

¹²⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p 127. In answer to a question taken on notice, the Minister noted that the CSD had in fact exceeded the 1.5 per cent target (achieving 1.79 per cent). Housing ACT also spent additional funds supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in ways that are outside the scope of the ATSIPP target. See *ECI QTON 28 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

¹²¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 100–102.

¹²² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p 126.

Gender equity

Matters considered

- 5.40. Ms Yvette Berry MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Women on 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- Gender-responsive budgeting processes, including the role of the Office for Women.¹²³
 - Implementation of the first Action Plan for the *ACT Women's Plan 2016–26*, with a focus on gender impact analysis.¹²⁴
 - Progress on the second and third Action Plans for the *ACT Women's Plan 2016–26*.¹²⁵
 - Gender equity in government procurement.¹²⁶
 - Staffing within the Office for Women.¹²⁷
 - Active transport and women's safety.¹²⁸
 - Use of public transport and other public services by gender.¹²⁹

Key issues

Gender equity in procurement practices

- 5.41. The Second Action Plan 2020-22 under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* focuses on the ACT Government's commitment to achieving 'Equity Together'. An objective of the Plan is to foster gender equity in Canberra workplaces, including in traditionally male-dominated trades and occupations such as the building and construction industry.¹³⁰
- 5.42. At the public hearing on 28 February 2022, gender equity initiatives were discussed. It was noted that a contract relating to women in construction was awarded the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), notwithstanding that the CFMEU had no women on its Board.¹³¹ Minister Berry explained that the intention of awarding such contracts is 'to increase the number of women...in organisations like CFMEU', stating:

In peak construction bodies that with small numbers of female representation, it is our goal to improve those situations so that there are more women within that sector. We have already aimed for that target of 10 per cent, and to achieve our

¹²³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 100–102.

¹²⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 102–104.

¹²⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 105–106.

¹²⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 107–110.

¹²⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 110–111.

¹²⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 111–112.

¹²⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 113.

¹³⁰ Community Services Directorate, *Second Action Plan 2020-22*, <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/women/womens-plan-2016-26/second-action-plan-2020-22> (viewed 18 May 2022)

¹³¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 106.

target we developed these programs to ensure that that can occur in a safe way, so that women and girls seek out work in construction and are welcomed onto construction sites and other male-dominated workplaces¹³²

- 5.43. Also discussed were gender equity strategies and their role in procurement processes. Questions were asked as to the extent to which tenders are awarded to entities with gender equity strategies, and whether any preference is given to such entities.¹³³
- 5.44. In response to a question taken on notice, Minister Berry explained that there were two actions under the First Action Plan of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*, that relate to the use of gender equity strategies in procurement:
- Develop template and guidance material for Directorates and funded contractors to develop gender equity strategies.
 - Establish procurement strategies that prioritise contractors with equity strategies.¹³⁴
- 5.45. The Minister also noted that in late 2018, Procurement ACT incorporated a survey into the Whole of Government Professional Services Panel to better understand the proportion of suppliers that have established gender equity strategies. The survey indicated that a high proportion of suppliers have policies and strategies in place to promote gender equity. Outcomes of the survey were also used to inform statutory and policy elements of the ACT Government Procurement Framework which promote gender equality in procurement.¹³⁵
- 5.46. However, the Minister also noted that these measures are of the tender evaluation or contract management stages of individual procurement. There is no reporting obligation to identify if a procurement has included a gender equity strategy.¹³⁶

Committee comment

- 5.47. The Committee strongly supports increasing the representation of women in traditionally male-dominated trades such as construction through further ACT Government initiatives.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support women entering traditionally male-dominated trades and occupations.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise organisations with a gendered focus in tender processes where procurement relates to initiatives supporting gender equity.

¹³² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 108.

¹³³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 108–109.

¹³⁴ *ECI QTON 24-26 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

¹³⁵ *ECI QTON 24-26 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

¹³⁶ *ECI QTON 24-26 ANSWER*, [p. 2].

- 5.48. The Committee is also pleased to note that the ACT Government has implemented targets for female representation across several traditionally male-dominated industries such as construction. However, the Committee is of the view that more could be done to improve representation for women in industry. One way this could be achieved is via changes to government procurement arrangements, including the setting of more ambitious targets.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce targets for their procurement practices relating to gender equity and equal representation on private sector boards.

Responsibility for preparing the annual women's budget statement

- 5.49. During the hearing on 28 February 2022, application of a 'gender lens' to the ACT Budget was discussed. Officials noted that the Directorate is continuing to progress gender-responsive budgeting, including producing an annual women's budget statement. Officials noted that the Directorate has engaged experts to source examples of international best practice and is working closely with the wellbeing framework team in the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Directorate (CMTEDD).¹³⁷
- 5.50. It was suggested during the hearing that gender-lens budgeting would more appropriately sit with CMTEDD, in accordance with international practice. It was noted in this regard that the wellbeing framework sits in that Directorate. In response, officials stated:

[We are] working very closely with Treasury and the CMTEDD team...and will continue to work with the wellbeing team as they...look at this [matter] from a whole-of-government perspective. Where these things are successful is when you have that influence and it infiltrates across all aspects of government and policy decision-making. A centralised agency and the wellbeing indicators are a great way for that to happen.¹³⁸

Committee comment

- 5.51. Evidence before the Committee indicates that while the CMTEDD is responsible for the ACT Budget, responsibility for the women's budget statement rests with the Community Services Directorate. The Committee notes that work appears to be underway to centralise budgetary processes—including a more gender-focussed budget for the Territory. In line with this, and with international practice, the Committee considers that responsibility for the annual women's budget statement should be transferred to the CMTEDD.

¹³⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, pp. 100 – 101.

¹³⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 101.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that responsibility for the annual women’s budget statement be moved from the Community Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate, in line with the approach taken in other jurisdictions.

First Action Plan of the ACT Women’s Plan 2016–2026—implementation of recommendations

- 5.52. Gender impact analysis introduced under the first Action Plan of the *ACT Women’s Plan 2016–26* was discussed at the hearing on 28 February 2022. In response to a question taken on notice, Minister Berry noted that the Gender Impact Analysis Tool was developed to support ACT Public Service employees to undertake better analysis of the impact their programs and services will have on men, women and gender diverse individuals and provides a template for preparing a Gender Impact Statement where this is required. The tool was designed to also be of use to the broader ACT business and community sectors.¹³⁹
- 5.53. Minister Berry noted that the use of the tool across the is not tracked, and the Directorate does not collect statistics on requests for assistance associated with the tool or preparing a Gender Impact Statement. It was estimated that requests for assistance occurred 20 times during 2021. Minister Berry noted that in the 2021–22 Budget process, all business cases were accompanied by a Wellbeing Impact Assessment, which also considers gender.¹⁴⁰
- 5.54. During the hearing, officials also noted that there are measures in place to encourage people to seek information and assistance about gender impact analysis, and these have generated ‘really fruitful and productive conversations’ about how men and women might be impacted differently by a policy or program.¹⁴¹

Committee comment

- 5.55. The Committee considers that the Gender Impact Analysis Tool is a valuable means of measuring the impact of policies and programs and identifying areas where there may be gendered differences in how they are received. While noting that it was not intended for formal reporting to attach to use of the tool, the Committee considers that collection of data on use of the tool is used is vital to assessing its effectiveness. The Committee holds the same view in relation to other measures arising out of the first Action Plan.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review all the progress made on the recommendations from the First Action Plan of the *ACT Women’s Plan 2016–2026* and report their findings to the Assembly before the end of 2022.

¹³⁹ *ECI QTON 23 ANSWER*, [p. 1].

¹⁴⁰ *ECI QTON 23 ANSWER*, [pp 1–2].

¹⁴¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 103.

Gender and other demographic data on the use of government services

- 5.56. During the hearing on 28 February 2022, the collection of gender data on the use of public transport and active travel was discussed. It was noted that there was no gender reporting on the use of public transport (for example, data on registrations for MyWay cards).¹⁴²
- 5.57. Minister Berry noted that while data on the use of public transport was not monitored, efforts would be made to improve the collection and sharing of information relating to this issue. Directorate officials elaborated as follows:

All the feedback that we receive from a multiple variety of sources, including questions such as from this committee, we can use to inform actions under our third action plan. We are very happy to take any advice that we receive for things to throw into the mix for the third action plan.¹⁴³

Committee comment

- 5.58. The Committee considers that the ACT Government should collect gender-based data on the use public transport and active travel. This data may be used to develop and refine measures to increase women's safety. The Committee is of the view that there would also be merit in collecting such data in relation to the use of other government services.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government start collecting gender disaggregated data for government services and initiatives (for example, public transport) to better understand the gendered use of such services and initiatives and make any consequent improvements.

Multicultural Affairs

Matters considered

- 5.59. Ms Tara Cheyne MLA appeared before the Committee in her capacity as Minister for Multicultural Affairs on 25 and 28 February 2022. The following matters were considered:
- Canberra's status as a Welcoming City.¹⁴⁴
 - Cancellation of the National Multicultural Festival (NMF) in 2021 and 2022, and the use of unspent funds.¹⁴⁵
 - Aged care for Canberra's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 113.

¹⁴³ *Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2022, p. 113.

¹⁴⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 51.

¹⁴⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 54.

- Funding to ACT Community Languages.¹⁴⁷
- Information Packs outlining health issues for ACT CALD women.¹⁴⁸
- Impact of COVID-19 on Australian Citizenship ceremonies.¹⁴⁹

Key issues

Canberra's status as a Welcoming City

- 5.60. Welcoming Cities is a national network of cities, shires, towns, and municipalities that are committed 'to an Australia where everyone can...participate in social, cultural, economic, and civic life.'¹⁵⁰ A central element of the Welcoming Cities network is the Welcoming Cities Standard (the Standard), which establishes a framework for local councils to benchmark their diversity and inclusion policies and practices; identify opportunities for improvement; and assess progress over time.¹⁵¹
- 5.61. Canberra became a member of the Welcoming Cities network in 2019 and achieved the 'Committed' level on the standard at this point. This indicates that Canberra has made a public statement of intent to champion principles of welcoming and inclusion.
- 5.62. At the hearing on 25 February 2022, Canberra's status as a Welcoming City was discussed. Minister Cheyne stated that Canberra achieved the 'Established' level (the second level according to the Standard) towards the end of 2021. The Minister added that the Canberra is believed to be one of four cities in Australia to have achieved the 'Established' level, and that the ACT Government is committed to achieving the 'Advanced' level.¹⁵²

Committee comment

- 5.63. The Committee welcomes the ACT Government's efforts to undertake accreditation as a Welcoming City, as this sends a strong signal in relation to the ACT's commitment to multiculturalism and inclusion. The Committee additionally believes that through the process of gathering evidence for the accreditation process, the ACT Government will be able to identify strengths and areas needing improvement.
- 5.64. The Committee is pleased that the ACT has achieved the 'Established' level and encourages the ACT Government to continue its efforts to achieve higher levels of accreditation.

¹⁴⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 49–50.

¹⁴⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 50–51; See also *ECI QTON 14 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2]; *ECI QON 25 ANSWER*, [pp. 1–2].

¹⁴⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, pp. 52–54.

¹⁵⁰ Welcoming Australia, *Welcoming Cities*, <https://welcoming.org.au/initiatives/welcoming-cities/> (viewed 13 May 2022).

¹⁵¹ Welcoming Australia, *Standards & Accreditation*, <https://welcomingcities.org.au/the-standard/> (accessed 13 May 2022). Levels are 'Committed', 'Established', 'Advanced', 'Excelling' and 'Mentoring'.

¹⁵² *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 48.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that ACT Government continue to pursue higher levels of accreditation as a Welcoming City.

Cancellation of the National Multicultural Festival

- 5.65. The NMF is held in Canberra's central business district in February each year. To enable multicultural communities to participate in the 2021 NMF, \$88,780 was made available through the 2020-21 Participation National Multicultural Festival Grant program.¹⁵³ However, the NMF was cancelled in 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.66. Planning for the 2023 NMF was discussed during the hearing on 25 February 2022, with Directorate officials advising that planning for the NMF's 25th anniversary celebrations in 2023 was underway.¹⁵⁴
- 5.67. Support provided to multicultural groups to offset the cancellation of the NMF in 2021 and 2022 was also discussed. In this regard, the Minister outlined how unspent funding had been used to support multicultural organisations:

[W]e had a grant funding round for the National Multicultural Festival that was bigger than previous years, and groups have applied for that. It is \$177,560, to be exact. We were able to secure agreement from the Treasurer to repurpose those grants, not so much for the festival, but to work with the community groups who had applied for those grants to support them with their own events that they might wish to hold throughout the year, or through the opportunities that we have been able to create with Australia Day and with the Canberra Day events.¹⁵⁵

- 5.68. The Minister noted that celebrations for Australia Day 2022 included support for nine multicultural organisations, and that the ACT Government had received 'good feedback from the community' regarding the celebrations.¹⁵⁶ In addition, the Minister observed that approximately \$400,000 in unspent funding been repurposed from the cancelled NMF festivals to support Canberra Day and, as a result, infrastructure and participation costs for multicultural organisations were expected to be waived.¹⁵⁷

Committee comment

- 5.69. The NMF is significant not only in terms of celebrating diversity, but also in providing access to government grants and opportunities for multicultural organisations. As a result of the cancellation of the NMF, multicultural organisations may have missed fundraising opportunities and other related support in 2021 and 2022.

¹⁵³ Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020-21*, p 51.

¹⁵⁴ Community Services Directorate, *Annual Report 2020-21*, p 51.

¹⁵⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p 51.

¹⁵⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p 51.

¹⁵⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 25 February 2022, p. 51.