

Families ACT's commentary on ACT 2022-23 budget announcements

This is a brief commentary on announcements in the 2022-23 ACT Budget. For a comprehensive overview and analysis of budget announcements affecting young people (12-25 year olds), please refer to the [Youth Coalition of the ACT's budget briefing](#). For a comprehensive overview and analysis of spending across the broader ACT community, please refer to the [ACTCOSS Budget Bulletin 2022-23](#). For more information on all the budget announcements, please refer to the [ACT Governments budget 2022-23 papers](#).

Overview

Overall, Families ACT welcomes the 2022-23 ACT Budget which delivers much needed funding across a wide range of areas including health care, education, community services, homelessness services, public housing and public transport. There is a continued strong focus on protecting the health of Canberra's community and boosting the ACT's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are pleased that the Government continues to recognise the importance of the work of community sector organisations by providing them with funding to support vulnerable children and families in the Territory.

However, we share the concerns of our members about the disproportionate investment in ACT public service infrastructure and workforce versus funding of front-line NGO community services in the ACT. Our members still feel the impact of the COVID19 pandemic resulting in increased demand for their services compounded by the rising cost of living expenses. It appears for example that the vast majority of Domestic and Family Violence funding is going to Government capacity building and services delivered by Government agencies leaving DFV NGO frontline services stretched and scrambling to keep pace.

We are very concerned about this imbalance especially in light of the current Commissioning process and its guiding principles of collaboration and true partnership where we and many of our members have continually been told that there won't be any additional funding for our services. We agree with ACTCOSS that while a strong ACT public service is important, Government needs to ensure that a fairer share of resources is provided to front-line community services who are best placed to deliver much needed support to the community.¹

¹ ACTCOSS media release: ACT budget – treading water (2 August 2022)

Key ACT 2022-23 budget announcements

Families ACT welcomes the following ACT 2022-23 budget announcements:

- Additional funding for the construction of new accommodation for the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation (page 82, 2022-23 Budget outlook document)

This additional funding allows our member Gugan-Gulwan to continue and expand their vital services to the Aboriginal community in a new, fit-for-purpose building.

- Additional \$28 million over four years to community sector organisations in recognition of the Fair Work Commission's recent decision to increase national modern award wages by 4.6 per cent (page 78, 2022-23 Budget outlook document)

Families ACT welcomes this announcement allowing community sector organisations to increase their existing staff wages.

- \$68.7 million to begin implementation of the Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy 2022-2030 by expanding investment in targeted, culturally safe and therapeutic family support services and providing safe, stable living arrangements for those children who require out of home care (page 79, 2022-23 Budget outlook document)

We welcome the funding to begin the implementation of the *Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy* on which we provided written feedback during its drafting. We are interested to see the details about which support services will be commissioned as part of the implantation. We will continue to work with the ACT Government on these important child protection reforms.

- More than \$95 million over four years in additional funding for social housing and homelessness including a \$30 million investment to deliver promised public housing and \$57.3 million to undertake public housing repairs (page 73, 2022-23 Budget outlook document)

In line with our [policy brief](#), we welcome the ACT Government's continued investment to improve social housing and housing affordability for Canberrans. We also approve of the additional \$57 million for public housing maintenance and the additional \$30million for the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program. We will continue to advocate for stable, affordable housing options in the ACT as this is an essential element in people feeling connected and able to contribute to their community.

Closing comment

We believe that the lack of a funding allocation for services to support raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility is a glaring gap in the budget. The ACT Government has assured the sector that the legislation necessary to raise the age will be introduced later this year, however the success of this shift in the way we manage children exhibiting anti-social behaviours is dependent on funding a comprehensive safety net of early intervention and diversion services. This is a priority which Families ACT is advocating for as part of the Raising the Age coalition.