



2024-25 Budget Consultation

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

The annual budget consultation provides an important opportunity for the community to have their say on where spending should be targeted and how government services could be improved.

The 2024-25 Budget invests in community support, cost of living relief, improved access to affordable housing, social inclusion and safety to meet the needs of our growing community.

We are increasing funding to address the significant community need around health, family and domestic violence, specialist services for homelessness prevention and for services to assist those at the greatest risk of disadvantage and marginalisation. We are also increasing funding for education with a focus on the early years and lifelong learning. We are investing in essential services and infrastructure to meet the needs of all Canberrans, both now and into the future. We also continue to expand our accessible and efficient transport network, invest in combatting climate change and take steps to maintain our high level of community safety.

The Wellbeing Framework, now in its fifth year, assists us in making the best decisions on which investments and programs are going to contribute most strongly to the quality of life for Canberrans and is now embedded as a core component of Government policy development and decision-making. The 2024-25 Budget provides investment in areas critical to our wellbeing and contributes to positive outcomes for Canberrans now and into the future.

THE CONVERSATION

Budget consultation is a key element of the Government's budget planning framework through which it seeks views and suggestions from community members, businesses and local organisations on how government service provision can become even more efficient, innovative and deliver more for the Territory.

We invited community members, businesses, and local organisations to share their ideas for the 2024-25 Budget, by providing written submissions through the Budget Consultation project page on the [YourSay Conversations webpage](#) and [Treasury website](#). [Members of the YourSay Panel also had the opportunity to complete a survey](#). In early 2024, the Government also met with over 70 local community and business groups to understand key issues affecting their members and clients, and to seek input from these organisations on their social, environmental and economic priorities.



WHO WE ENGAGED

Written submissions were received from 103 ACT residents, community and business groups, unions and other stakeholders, and 1,734 people completed the survey through the YourSay Panel.

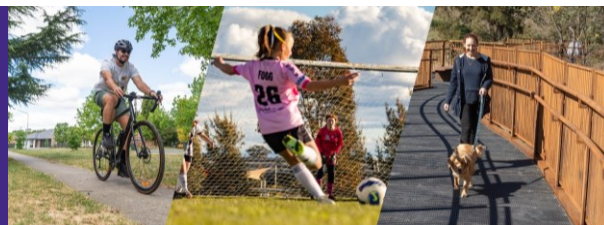
Members of the public, business and community organisations could provide written submissions regarding their views on longer term expenditure and revenue priorities and how the Government can best support the wellbeing of the Canberra community. The written submission process remains open, with any input received after publication of the 2024-25 Budget being used to inform future budgets.

Written contributions received as part of the 2024-25 Budget consultation process have been published, except where submissions were provided in confidence. All non-confidential submissions are available through the Budget consultation website.

The 2024-25 Budget consultation process included a survey, which sought feedback on the prioritisation of government expenditure, with a particular focus on wellbeing considerations. Access to the survey was available to the members of the YourSay Panel, which people were able to join if they wished to participate. The survey was open from 12 February until 3 March 2024, and 1,734 completed responses were received. A final report on what we heard from the survey is available to download from the YourSay website.

ACT Government officials also held a series of round table meetings with key community and industry groups from 12 February through to 28 February 2024 to gain insights into the priorities of these organisations.

As expected, submissions, survey responses and direct engagement reflected the diverse range of issues and priorities of Canberrans including: health services and mental health; community services (including support for disability, early childhood, children, youth and family services); transport including active travel; environment, climate change and the amenity of our city; housing support and affordability; education, training and skills; government policy (such as proposed amendments to legislation); economic growth including business, tourism, the arts, sporting events and capital works proposals; and police and emergency services.



Key insights from the community

Community support, social inclusion and safety

- Submissions around community support, social inclusion and safety were leading themes of budget community submissions, with comprehensive feedback received based on the community services provided by the ACT Government. Submissions identified the need for the Government to continue to respond to rising cost of living pressures, noting pressures within the community were such that similar to prior years, more cohorts of people were seeking support through food pantries and other service providers. Vulnerable Canberrans and those experiencing hardship were also a focus, including those experiencing disability, with an emphasis on young people, women and girls, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and those experiencing mental ill health and addiction.
- A broad range of community sector organisations provided commentary on opportunities for service delivery improvement, encouraging the continued efforts towards implementing existing Government plans and strategies, and highlighting the services they provide and how these can create synergies with Government services. Programs ranging from crisis response, education programs, support for carers, through to advocacy and engagement activities are being offered within the sector. Challenges were highlighted within the sector, including funding levels versus rising demand, staff burnout, and challenges in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff.
- The increasingly complex needs of vulnerable people and the interrelation of disadvantage, housing pressures, cost of living pressures, mental health, and drug and alcohol misuse were raised, along with the potential for this disadvantage to contribute to interactions with the judicial system. It was also noted that addressing these aspects of disadvantage earlier, and addressing gaps in the justice system, may improve criminal justice outcomes.

Health and community wellbeing

- Submissions around the provision of health services were another leading theme of the community submission process, reflecting its service delivery importance and the wide range of services required by the Territory's population. Submissions identified the need for additional support for vulnerable cohorts and the importance of non-government partners in delivering specialised assistance for people who may otherwise have difficulty accessing services, for instance culturally-appropriate services for the Territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, or specialised supports for the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Growing emphasis was placed on mental health treatment, including access to specialised treatment, increasing numbers of young people requiring support, early intervention and assistance, and support for those with co-morbidities related to alcohol and other drug use. The need to improve the integration of existing services and improve capacity of these services was also mentioned.

Environment, climate and transport

- Submissions received highlighted the growing focus on caring for our environment and the capacity to leverage volunteers to provide positive outcomes for both our bushland parks and urban environment.



Protecting and increasing biodiversity and caring for our waterways, along with environmental grants and funding for community-based environmental organisations.

- Helping to adapt to climate change and measures to assist Canberrans move away from a reliance on fossil fuels and towards greener energy choices was a continuing theme, especially around how we can facilitate those on lower incomes transition away from gas and towards electrification and more energy efficient housing.
- Submissions noted the importance of an effective public transport network, active travel options, and well-planned transport infrastructure in getting around our city, along with improving the amenity of our city and public spaces to encourage people to make alternate transport choices away from the use of private vehicles.

Housing and home

- Access to affordable, appropriate and secure housing, and social housing continue as key topics identified by many organisations and individuals, noting that housing costs is a large contributing factor to cost of living pressures experienced by many Canberrans and vulnerable groups within our community.
- Barriers to the supply of affordable, social and community housing were raised along with the need for additional funding and improved maintenance of public housing stock. Housing pressures were noted as a concern in attracting skilled workers to the ACT to fill skills shortages, recognising that many people and households on lower incomes within the private rental market would be considered to be in housing stress.

Jobs, sport, arts, culture and entertainment

- Numerous submissions called upon the Government to support job creation and, in turn, the local economy, through investment in a range of sectors such as supporting sports, arts and the creative sector, as well as other sectors including the tourism industry.
- Submissions also identified ongoing challenges relating to the sustainability of some workforce sectors with Canberra's labour market struggling to meet demand for skilled workers across multiple sectors. Both household consumption and business confidence has been impacted by increasing interest rates.

Education and life-long learning

- Submissions repeated the importance of the ACT Government providing a strong education system for all age brackets, reiterating the importance of literacy and numeracy, along with the provision of appropriate infrastructure to ensure that our children can learn, develop, and reach their full potential.
- Respondents also indicated that the Government should continue efforts to ensure that teachers are supported in performing their duties in a safe working environment and that capacity concerns are being addressed through the delivery of new schools in regions of growth. Our schools should be modern, accessible and well-equipped facilities in which to teach and work, and both students and staff should



have access to necessary support services (for example, learning plans for students with disability, and ongoing professional development opportunities for teaching staff).

WHAT'S NEXT?

We used your ideas to help inform the priorities for the ACT's 2024-25 Budget.

The 2024-25 Budget invested in initiatives to further strengthen our high-quality public health and education services and to deliver more urban and social infrastructure. The investment will also lead to sustaining local jobs, economic growth and social outcomes over the coming years.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback. The 2024-25 Budget is available online and can be viewed at: <https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget-2024-25/home> and all non-confidential submissions can be viewed at: <https://www.budgetconsultation.act.gov.au/input-received>

The written submission process remains open – written submissions can be provided at any time and can help inform the development of the 2025-26 and future budgets.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

103

Written submissions received until
25 June 2024

1,734

responses to the YourSay Panel
survey

2,406

Unique visitors to our
[Budget Consultation YourSay](#) page*

* Over the period 18 December 2023 to 25 June 2024.