



2023-24 Budget Consultation

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

The annual budget consultation process 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 2023-24 Budget invests in the services and infrastructure that will grow and meet our community's needs in the years ahead.

We are increasing resources across our health system so that our doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health care workers can deliver the high-quality free public health care Canberrans need. We are investing in our education system, promoting new opportunities in the knowledge economy, and creating new jobs through diversification and encouraging skilled migration. We are protecting our natural environment and funding programs that will further reduce our carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.

The Wellbeing Framework assists us in making the best decisions on which investments and programs are going to contribute most to our quality of life. The 2023-24 Budget is the fourth since the Wellbeing Framework was released, and the Wellbeing Framework will continue to play an integral role in guiding policy design, strategy development, decision-making and investment in this and future budgets. The 2023-24 Budget provides investment in areas critical to our wellbeing and contributes to positive outcomes for Canberrans now and into the future.

The Government's task is to manage the growth of a modern city, by providing the housing, health and other essential services and facilities that make Canberra such an attractive place to live. We are investing now to make sure our hospitals and healthcare centres, our schools, social infrastructure and transport networks are ready in the new decade.

Looking ahead to the 2024-25 Budget, we are committed to listening to and considering the priorities of the Canberra community. Learning from the diverse experiences of the Territory's population, we can ensure that our resources are put to their best use for all Canberrans.

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 2023-24 Budget, including via the completion of an online survey and by providing written submissions through the Budget Consultation project page on the [YourSay webpage](https://yoursay.act.gov.au). The Government also met with a range of community and business groups in early 2023 to seek input from these groups on their social, environmental and economic priorities.



WHO WE ENGAGED

Written submissions have been received from 80 ACT residents, community and business groups, unions and other stakeholders (including a small number of items received either during finalisation or after publication of the 2022-23 Budget), and 114 people completed our survey questions.

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 2023-24 Budget being used to inform future budgets.

Written contributions received as part of the 2023-24 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 2023-24 Budget consultation process included a publicly available survey which sought feedback on the prioritisation of government expenditure, with a particular focus on wellbeing considerations. The survey was open from 22 December 2022 until 28 April 2023, and 114 completed responses were received.

ACT Government officials also held a series of round table meetings with key community and industry groups from 20 February 2023 through to 9 March 2023 to gain insights into the priorities of these organisations.

As may be anticipated, submissions, survey responses and direct engagement covered a diverse range of issues including: active travel; capital works proposals; community group support; community services (including support for disability and youth services); early childhood support; education; environment and the amenity of our city; government policy (such as proposed amendments to legislation); health services and mental health; housing support; seniors; social inclusion; wellbeing; and, workforce skills.

Key insights from the community

Community Services

- Feedback was received across the broad range of community services provided by the ACT Government. Child and youth support and early intervention/diversionary programs remain important to the Territory's population, in addition to disability support, and programs aimed at improving social inclusion and social connection. Submissions also identified the need for the Government to respond to rising cost of living pressures, with Canberra's community sector organisations seeking ongoing support for existing assistance programs. It was noted that pressures within the community were such that groups who had not traditionally sought assistance from community sector organisations were now coming forward for support (for example, from food service/pantry providers).
- As for prior years, a broad range of community sector organisations provided commentary on opportunities for service delivery improvement, and also highlighted the services they provide, ranging from education programs to crisis response, support for carers, through to advocacy and engagement activities. Within the sector, challenges were noted in terms of adequately addressing demand, staff burnout, and difficulty in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff.



Key insights from the community

Health

- Health services received significant commentary, reflecting its service delivery importance and the broad range of services required by the Territory's population. Submissions highlighted 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 (such as culturally-appropriate services for the Territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, or specialised supports for the LGBTIQ+ community).
- The importance of mental health and drug-treatment services was noted, and some organisations and individuals raised the importance of health-related education programs and early intervention assistance. The need to expand capacity of existing services and improve integration of services was also highlighted.

Economy, workforce skilling and capability

- A number of submissions called upon the Government to support job creation and, in turn, the local economy, through a range of mechanisms such as support for tourism (and associated venue infrastructure), innovation, and strengthened engagement with local business on matters of importance, such as the current regulatory environment.
- Input also highlighted concerns relating to the sustainability of some workforce sectors (including construction, early childhood education, and disability services) in the context of those sectors emerging from pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and entering an environment burdened by high inflation and workforce burnout, turnover, and shortages.

Infrastructure

- We received a range of feedback on the services that improve the amenity of our city, particularly those related to public infrastructure. It was noted that local construction businesses rely on projects of varying scope and duration – with a balanced program that includes small, medium and large-scale projects providing an optimum pipeline of work across the sector.
- A number of specific infrastructure projects were put forward for Government consideration (such as sporting and entertainment venues), and commentary highlighted the importance of effective planning in infrastructure delivery, with feedback noting that active travel such as cycling and footpath networks should be a focus of design and planning considerations. Linkages were also noted between active travel assets and outdoor activity, and the physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits they generate.

Government policy

- A significant number of submissions put forward diverse suggestions as to how the Government's existing policy framework could be changed or enhanced. A preference was expressed that the Territory's regulatory requirements should not further increase without consideration of the potential for conflicting demands or additional costs associated with compliance.
- Feedback indicated the community's preference for engagement on new ACT Government projects, and recognising our city's growth, commentary highlighted the need for well-developed planning and regulation frameworks (considering building and construction matters but extending to areas such as disability-related rights and legislation).



Key insights from the community

Climate change and environment

- Respondents said that the general amenity of our city and its surrounds is important, and that ready access to green spaces and recreational areas should be a focus of planning and development (considering matters such as biodiversity, air quality, and land conservation and management).
- Participants noted the Government should be actively working to promote sustainability and reduce its environmental impacts, with greater emphasis on recycling. The Government was called upon to continue support for low-income and vulnerable households to transition away from gas and towards electrification and energy-efficiency (for example through installation of insulation), with such programs targeted towards those in need.

Housing

- Housing affordability and social housing were key topics identified by many organisations and individuals, including highlighting linkages between housing availability and the broader wellbeing of the community (such as the impacts of rental stress). Housing pressures were noted as a concern in attracting skilled workers to the ACT to fill skills shortages.
- The need to investigate housing options (including rental assistance/controls) for various segments of Canberra's population was also raised by some participants (focussing particularly youth but extending to senior women and asylum seekers).

Judicial services and safety

- The judicial services and safety category received commentary across a range of areas, ranging from women's safety (including domestic and family violence prevention), proposed areas for legislative review (such as human rights and ensuring sufficient protections are in place), and suggestions for changes to the Territory's judicial systems, including assurance that those in need assistance can access legal support services.
- The Government was also encouraged to continue efforts towards implementation of existing plans or strategies, such as the *Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029*, and limiting or disrupting cycles of judicial system interaction, noting linkages to precursor issues, such as housing stress or drug and alcohol misuse.

Education

- Submissions reiterated the importance of the ACT Government in providing a strong education system (from early childhood through to higher education), ensuring that our children can learn, develop, and reach their potential.
- Respondents indicated that the Government should continue efforts to ensure that teachers are being 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).



Key insights from the community

Wellbeing

- Wellbeing considerations were evident in a number of submissions, either directly linking suggestions or proposed improvements to specific [wellbeing domains](#), or suggesting how a given proposal will impact upon community wellbeing more broadly.
- Input also encouraged greater leverage of the wellbeing framework into existing or new areas of government service delivery, such as incorporating climate change considerations into planning and design activities, including greater electrification, or using existing data to highlight potential areas of wellbeing concern, such as analysis of student attendance records.

Other topics

- Other topics raised included options for alternate mechanisms for Government service delivery or improved integration, planning matters (for example, those with linkages to but extending beyond the infrastructure sector, such as population growth and subsequent impacts on public transport services/requirements), justice and health advocacy on behalf of the Territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, city amenity, and arts and entertainment.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We have used your ideas to help inform the priorities for the ACT's 2023-24 Budget.

The 2023-24 Budget is building the hospitals and schools that maintain our standard of living beyond anywhere else in the country. It is supporting our economy to create thousands more secure local jobs.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback. The 2023-24 Budget is available online and may be viewed at: <https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget-2023-24> and all non-confidential submissions may 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 will help inform the development of the 2024-25 and future budgets.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

80

written submissions received **until**
27 June 2023

114

responses to the
online survey

1,429

unique visitors to our
[Input Received](#) page*

1,375

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

Note: *: over the period 22 December 2022 (2023-24 Consultation process launch) to 27 June 2023 (delivery of the ACT 2023-24 Budget).