



Developing the next Age-Friendly City Plan (2025-2035)

Discussion Paper (short form)

This discussion paper is designed to provide you with background information and questions to help you consider your feedback to us.



Discussion Paper (Short form): ACT's next 10-year Age-Friendly City Plan

Introduction

The ACT Government's vision is for Canberra to be an inclusive, welcoming city, where growing older is celebrated and supported. We want to learn from the knowledge and experiences of older Canberrans¹ and ensure our services support their needs.

Developing the next Age-Friendly City Plan

The current [Age-Friendly City Plan](#) ends in 2024 so it is time to start developing our next plan. We want to hear from the Canberra community about what is working well and what can be improved to enhance the lives of older Canberrans. We want to recognise the great work the community is doing and acknowledge our shared endeavours to make Canberra a truly age-friendly city.

This discussion paper is designed to provide you with background information and questions to help you consider your feedback to us. You can choose to answer some or all of the questions contained in this discussion paper.

You can also provide your feedback to us in other ways. You can:

- Complete an on-line survey ([hyperlink to YourSay survey page](#))
- Attend a discussion at an ACT Library ([hyperlink to info on ACT Gov – AFCP webpage](#))
- Upload a written submission – this could take any format from a short letter to a detailed multi-page report ([hyperlink to YourSay submission page](#))

The Discussion Paper has five focus areas:

1. health
2. employment and financial security
3. housing
4. access and connection
5. respect, inclusion and belonging.

¹ In Australia, an older person is typically defined as being aged 65 years or older, or 50 years and older for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is the definition which will be used for the purposes of this paper. However, some data sources referred to in this paper define older people as 50 years and older or 55 years and older. Where this is the case, it will be highlighted.

These focus areas have been drawn from what we heard from Canberrans in previous consultations. They also align with the focus areas used in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Age-Friendly Cities Framework² and the ACT Wellbeing Framework³.

Health

People in our community want accessible and affordable services which support their health care needs.

What the data and research say

- Participating in regular exercise, sports, recreation and arts activities benefits the health and wellbeing of older people.⁴
- Older Canberrans rate their overall quality of life higher than other age groups.⁵
- Many older people have at least one or more long-term health conditions and face increasing barriers to accessing medical services due to long waiting lists and higher costs.⁶

Feedback from previous consultations

- Access to specialised services and mental health literacy can be a barrier to seeking support.
- Older people with disability, particularly women, may face additional barriers due to the cost of healthcare services.
- Service gaps exist in My Aged Care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, particularly for older people with disability.

What the ACT Government is already doing

- Implementing the [Re-envisioning Older Person's Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-2026](#) and the [ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030](#).
- Identifying a site for a dementia village (the former North Curtin Primary School).
- Funding initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of older Canberrans through the Seniors Grants Program.
- Promoting participation in arts and cultural events.
- Providing opportunities for older Canberrans to participate in outdoor activities through the [Better Places to Play: ACT Playspace Strategy](#).

² [The WHO Age-friendly Cities framework](#) includes 8 key areas (domains) which places can address to improve their structures and services to meet the needs of older people. These are: community support and healthcare, transport, housing, social participation, outdoor spaces and buildings, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, and communication and information.

³ [The ACT Wellbeing Framework](#) includes 12 key factors (domains) which impact on the quality of life of Canberrans. These are: health, safety, living standards, housing and home, environment and climate, social connection, education and life-long learning, time, identity and belonging, governance and institutions, access and connectivity, and economy.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Physical activity, 2022](#), ABS website, 2023, accessed 15 March 2024.

⁵ ACT Government, [Personal wellbeing – ACT Wellbeing Framework \[website\]](#), Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, 2023, accessed 15 March 2024.

⁶ Council on the Ageing (COTA), [State of the \(older\) nation](#), COTA, 2023, accessed 5 December 2023.

What ACT Government would like to know:

1. What change/s would most improve health outcomes for older people?
2. How can we improve mental health supports for older Canberrans?
3. How can we promote better understanding of mental health among older people and their carers?
4. How can we improve access to affordable health care?
5. How can we improve access to health care via digital platforms?

Employment and financial security

An age-friendly city provides opportunities for older people to contribute their knowledge and skills and share their life experience through voluntary or paid employment.

What the data and research say

- Older workers bring valuable ideas, experience, and skills to the workforce.⁷
- 13.5% of older people were employed either part time or full time in 2021.⁸
- Some older people continue to work or volunteer for meaning and purpose, but others need to work for financial security.
- 24% of older Australians have experienced discrimination in the workplace or when seeking employment.⁹

Feedback from previous consultations

- Age-related workforce discrimination is common.
- The cost of living is impacting older Canberrans, particularly their ability to pay for utilities.
- Financial literacy is needed to enhance the financial wellbeing of older Canberrans.
- The eligibility criteria for Seniors Card benefits can disadvantage older Canberrans who want or need to remain employed.

What the ACT Government is already doing

- Supporting flexible work and employment opportunities in the ACT Public Service for older Canberrans.
- Changing the ACT's discrimination laws so all ACT Government workplaces must take steps to eliminate age-based discrimination.

⁷ P Brough et al., [Multigenerational workplaces research: Final report](#), Griffith University: Brisbane, Australia, 2023, accessed 15 March 2024.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Australian Capital Territory 2021 census community profiles](#), ABS website, 2021, accessed 5 December 2023.

⁹ Council on the Ageing (COTA), [State of the \(older\) nation](#), COTA, 2023, accessed 5 December 2023.

- Enhancing the ACT Seniors Card Program following an independent review.
- Delivering energy efficiency and support programs.
- Offering discounts, rebates and subsidies for older Canberrans through [Cost of Living Support](#).

What the ACT Government would like to know:

6. How can we better recognise, celebrate and value the skills, contribution and experience of older people in workplaces?
7. How can we support older people to remain in or re-enter the workforce?
8. What safeguards can be put in place to prevent age discrimination in the workplace?
9. How can we support older Canberrans facing financial difficulties?

Housing

Secure, suitable, and affordable housing supports older people to age independently and remain active in their community.

What the data and research say

- Canberra is among the most expensive cities in which to rent in Australia and Canberrans on low incomes are experiencing high levels of rental stress (paying more than 30% of their income on rent).¹⁰

Feedback from previous consultations

- Canberrans want more affordable, appropriate housing to help them live safely, independently, and comfortably, in the place they want, for as long as possible.

What the ACT Government is already doing

- Implementing the ACT Housing Strategy.
- Funding a free Housing Options Advisory Service through the Council of Ageing ACT (COTA ACT).
- [Mortgage relief](#) and [rates assistance](#) to support older people to stay in their homes if they are in financial difficulty.
- Designing and developing dedicated, long-term public housing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

¹⁰ ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS), [2023 Cost of living report: the gendered nature of cost of living for low-income households in Canberra](#), ACTCOSS, 2023, accessed 5 December 2023.

What ACT Government would like to know:

10. How can we make housing in Canberra more suitable for older Canberrans?
11. What are some alternative housing models for older people?
12. What are some of the ways we can support people at higher risk of homelessness?
13. Are there any other issues or concerns we should be considering in relation to housing for older people in Canberra?

Access and connection

Active ageing is supported by:

- accessible and affordable public transport.
- clean, well-maintained and secure environments.
- information to help people stay connected.

What the data and research say

- Over 90% of older Canberrans agree Canberra is a good place to live with good quality facilities, services and access.¹¹
- Older people are often excluded from accessing services if they cannot use digital technologies.

Feedback from previous consultations

- More public transport options are needed to support inclusion and access, including expansion of the flexible bus service.
- Older people want more opportunities to contribute to the design of Canberra's town centres and suburbs.
- Services need to be more accessible with language support, and options for face-to-face contact.

What the ACT Government is already doing

- Engaging with older Canberrans on the design and development of suburbs and urban renewal projects through consultation.
- Implementing the [Age Friendly Suburbs Program](#) which focuses on improving access to neighbourhoods by older people and those with more specific mobility needs.
- Promoting the benefits of the Seniors Card, including access to concessions.

¹¹ ACT Government, [Connection to Canberra – ACT Wellbeing Framework \[website\]](#), Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, 2023, accessed 15 March 2024.

- Piloting dementia-friendly spaces in ACT Government shopfronts and supporting dementia-friendly audits for ACT Government events.

What the ACT Government would like to know:

14. How can we make public transport easier to access?
15. How can we make it easier for you to navigate digital and/or online services and platforms? Please tell us more about your experiences.
16. How can we design spaces to support you to be active members of your community?

Respect, inclusion and belonging

Most people want and need to feel respected, included, and socially connected. Being able to participate in community activities and to live free from discrimination or abuse promotes active ageing.

Respecting and celebrating the contribution older Canberrans make to the socio-cultural fabric of our city benefits people of all ages. It is an opportunity for us to value people's stories and their life experiences, to help us collectively grow. It facilitates relationships across generations and improves inclusion and belonging.¹²

What the data and research say

- Older Canberrans report highest levels of inclusion and belonging.¹³
- Older Canberrans report high levels of volunteering, and the strongest sense of social connection of all the age groups in the ACT. However, they are less likely to participate in community events and activities.¹⁴
- Volunteering can benefit older people by improving life satisfaction, and bringing a new sense of purpose, identity and sense of belonging.¹⁵

Feedback from previous consultations.

- Activities and outreach need to be tailored for harder to reach communities, including for isolated LGBTIQ+ people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, and people with disability.
- Create more opportunities for leadership, representation and community participation.

¹² World Health Organisation, [Creating age-friendly cities and communities \[website\]](#), accessed 21 March 2024.

¹³ ACT Government, [Sense of belonging and inclusion - ACT Wellbeing Framework \[website\]](#), Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, 2023, accessed 20 March 2024.

¹⁴ ACT Government, [Social connection - ACT Wellbeing Framework \[website\]](#), Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, 2023, accessed 07 March 2024.

¹⁵ J Stuart et al., [The impacts of volunteering on the subjective wellbeing of volunteers: A rapid evidence assessment](#), What Works Wellbeing, 2020, accessed 15 March 2024.

- Actively address ageism and other forms of discrimination.
- Fund services to address abuse and mistreatment of older people.
- Better support existing older volunteers to continue in their roles.

What the ACT Government is already doing

- Promoting volunteering opportunities, intergenerational initiatives, and more age-friendly communication and information through the Age-Friendly City Plan.
- Promoting the achievements of older Canberrans.
- Funding initiatives to promote social participation through the ACT Seniors Grant Program.
- Delivering dementia training to all staff working in Access Canberra Service Centres
- Implementing actions for the ACT under the first *National Plan to Respond to Abuse of Older People 2019-2023* and supporting development of the Second National Plan

What the ACT Government would like to know:

17. How can we better celebrate the contribution older Canberrans make to the fabric of our city?
18. What are some of the ways we can address social isolation and enhance connection and a sense of belonging for older people from all backgrounds in Canberra?
19. How can we support you to participate in community events and activities?

20. What other ideas do you have for how we can make Canberra a more Age-Friendly City?

Next Steps

Please send us your feedback by 28 June 2024.

You can provide your feedback by:

- completing an [on-line survey](#)
- attending an [in-person discussion at an ACT Library](#)
- [uploading a written submission](#) – this could be everything from a short letter to a detailed multi-page report (hyperlink to YourSay submission page)

Don't forget you can choose to answer some or all of the questions contained in this discussion paper.

Once we have considered all feedback provided through the consultation process, we will create a listening report which summarises the key themes, current problems and new opportunities. Then, we will draft the next 10-year Age-Friendly City Plan for launch in 2025.

