



ACT
Government

2019

ACT Government response to the Standing Committee on
Environment and Transport and City Services

Inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms

Presented by Andrew Barr MLA

Chief Minister

Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the report from the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services on its Inquiry into a Territory Coat of Arms.

The Committee inquiry process specifically addressed two questions:

1. Whether there should be a Coat of Arms for the Australian Capital Territory (in addition to the City of Canberra Coat of Arms).
2. What symbols might be included in the design of an ACT Coat of Arms.

The ACT Government's submission addressed the two questions and the response can be found [here](#).

The Report addressed a range of views from organisations and individuals who chose to bring forward their opinions, knowledge and expertise.

The Committee's report raised interesting questions relating to the ownership and custody of the City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

It also uncovered a vast wealth of knowledge amongst a small number of citizens of the history and significance of the current Coat of Arms and also passion for symbols which are more reflective of the inclusive and progressive society we are today.

The ACT Government has heard the range of views expressed through the Committee and would also like to thank those individuals and organisations who contributed to the Committee process, many who gave freely of their expertise and knowledge in this area.

The ACT Government recognises the value and importance of our symbols and emblems as a reflection of our values as a society.

From the 68 submissions the Committee made five recommendations to which the ACT Government has responded below.

Responses to the Standing Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify the legal standing of the City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

Agreed

It is the ACT Government's conclusion that the City of Canberra Coat of Arms should remain as an official symbol of the City of Canberra but there is no legal impediment to the Territory creating its own Coat of Arms for the Australian Capital Territory.

As was discussed through the Inquiry process, there are strong arguments either way regarding the "ownership" of the City of Canberra Coat of Arms. Through its further investigation since the Committee's report, the ACT Government has been unable to determine with absolute certainty the "legal standing" of the City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

The key issue is whether the Commonwealth of Australia or the ACT is the corporate successor of the Federal Capital Commission. There is an argument both ways.

On the one hand the argument can be supported that the ACT Government is the true successor of the Federal Capital Commission due to the similarity in its function and role. On this basis, it could be said that the ACT "owns" the City of Canberra Arms.

However, the *Australian Capital Territory (Self Government Act) 1988 (Cth)* does not explicitly list the Arms as a matter for which the ACT Executive has responsibility for governing.

It is significant that there have been prior attempts by the Commonwealth to formally transfer the arms to the ACT. However, due to uncertainty as to whether the ACT is the corporate successor of the Federal Capital Commission and has authority to govern in relation to the Arms, this approach was abandoned.

Recommendation 2

Dependent on the legal standing of the City of Canberra Coat of Arms, the Committee recommends that the ACT Government either adopt a Coat of Arms for the territory or update the City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

Agreed

Noting the response to the Committee's first recommendation, the ACT Government agrees to adopt a new Territory Coat of Arms or insignia.

To assist in informing this response back the Committee the ACT Government conducted a survey through the recently established YourSay Community Panel. The survey sought to explore the broader community's current knowledge of and potential preference for changes to the City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

The survey opened on 11 November 2019 and closed on 17 November 2019. It was completed by more than 1,300 people. The survey's participants were broadly representative of the demographics of the ACT. The survey questions and the survey results are attached to this response.

When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed the Coat of Arms is symbolic of the Canberra and the ACT as we know it today, 38% agreed or strongly agreed and 50% said they disagreed, strongly disagreed or couldn't say. 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The results demonstrate many Canberrans do not feel the current Coat of Arms adequately represents the community of Canberra and the ACT.

The adoption of a new Territory Coat of Arms, while retaining the City of Canberra Coat of Arms, would bring the ACT into line with other Australian jurisdictions. It would allow community organisations to adopt the Coat of Arms or symbol which best reflects their organisation.

The ACT Government is cognisant of the view in the community, expressed through the committee process that to create and adopt a new Territory Coat of Arms is not a high priority for our community. Furthermore, as the Committee's report outlined, the process of adoption is potentially complex and there are several paths the ACT Government could follow for formal adoption.

The ACT Government commits to progressing adoption of the new Territory Coat of Arms at a rate that does not detract from other priorities. This will also be done in a way that allows community organisations to adopt the new Coat of Arms over time and in a way that minimises expense.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government engage in community consultation to determine the final design for any new Coat of Arms for the ACT.

Agreed

The Committee process and the research conducted through the YourSay Community Panel will assist the ACT Government in scoping an appropriate engagement process to develop new Territory Coat of Arms.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that in consultation with the community the ACT Government redesign the ACT Flag.

Agreed in principle

The redesign of an ACT Flag will be considered following the process to adopt a new Territory Coat of Arms.

It is important to note that a new ACT Flag does not need to carry the Coat of Arms and as the City of Canberra Coat of Arms will maintain its status, changes to the ACT Flag are not necessary immediately.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends the ACT Government develop a guideline on the appropriate use of the ACT's Official Symbols and make this publicly available.

Agreed

Following the development of a new Territory Coat of Arms and a new Flag, a set of guidelines and consistent artwork for all the ACT's symbols will be developed and made publicly available.



ACT
Government

YOURsay
Community panel



YourSay Community Panel

2019 Coat of Arms Survey

27 November 2019





Background: The ACT Government sought to explore the community's current knowledge of, and potential preferences for changes to, the City of Canberra Coat of Arms.

Purpose: The survey results will form part of the ACT Government's response to the Standing Committees' report in the Legislative Assembly by December 2019.

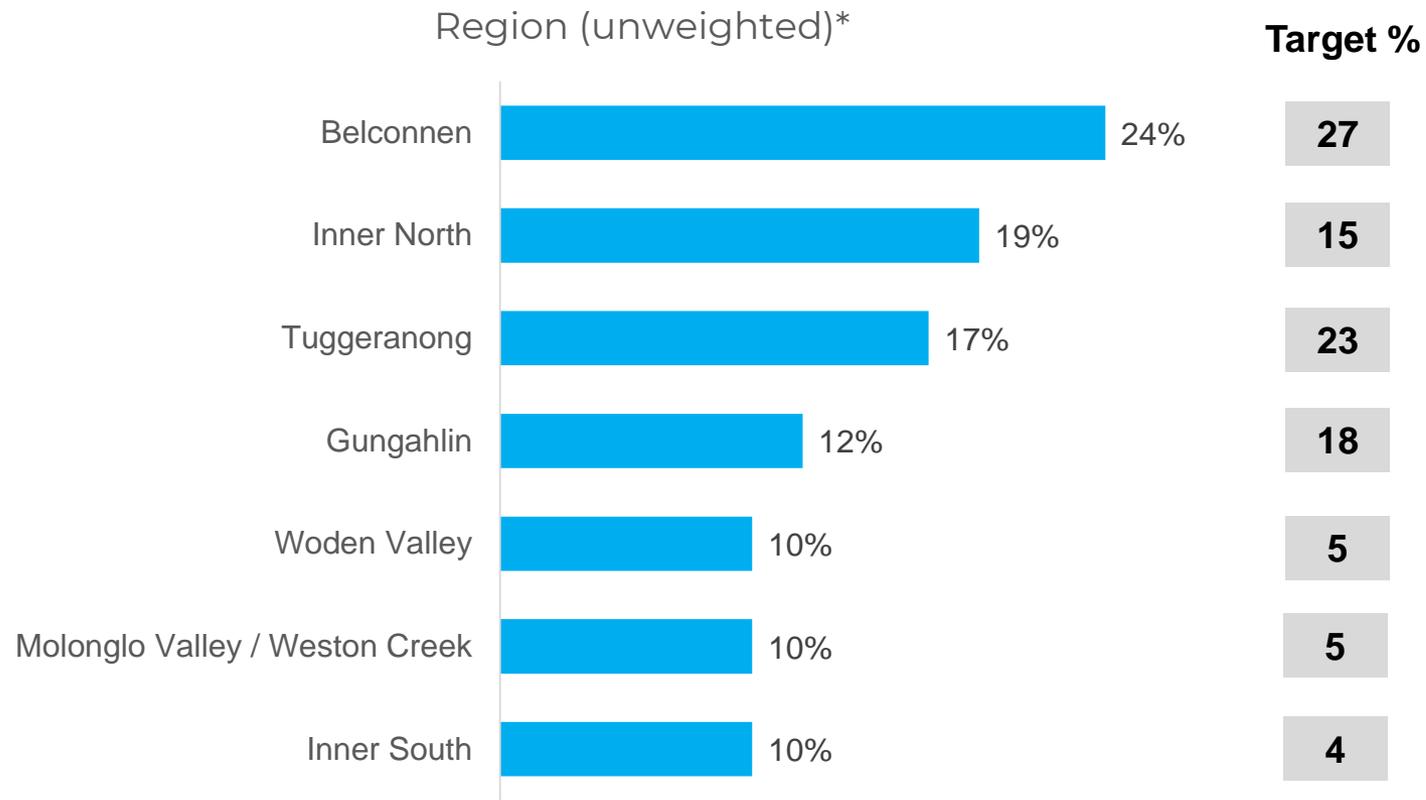
Timeframe: The survey opened on **11 November** and closed on **17 November 2019**.

Sample: **1,359** YourSay Community Panel members completed the survey.

Weighting: The results have been weighted to reflect relative population proportions.



Demographics



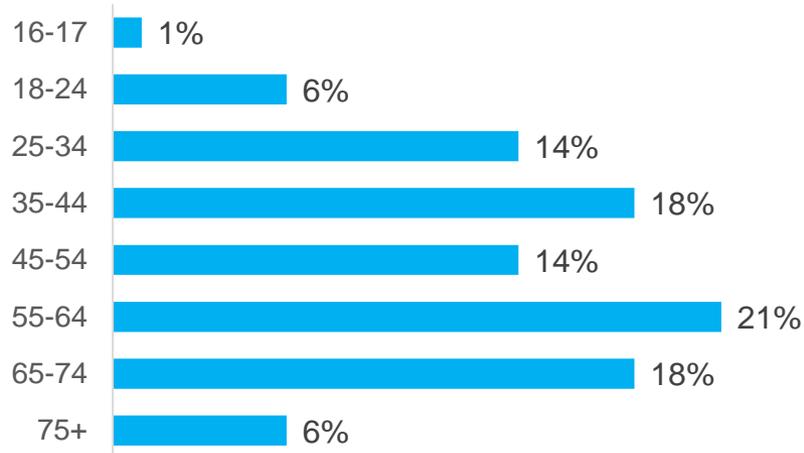
*Due to rounding may not add up to 100

n = 1,359



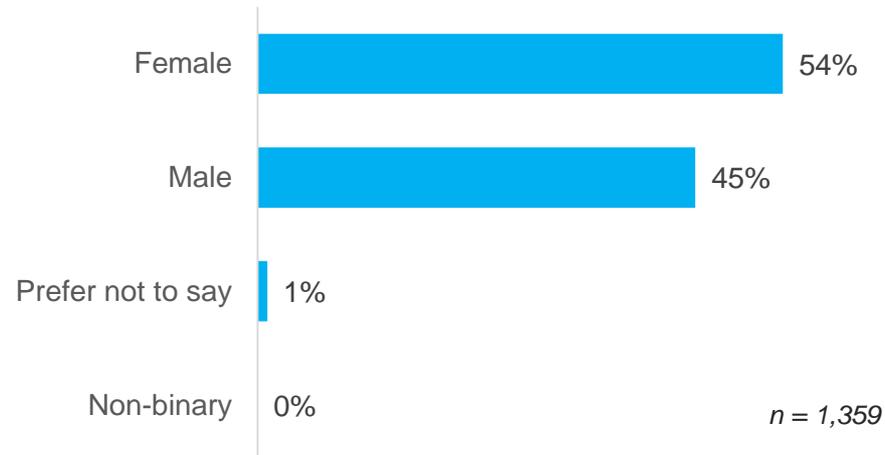
Demographics

Age (unweighted)*



*Due to rounding may not total 100

Gender (unweighted)

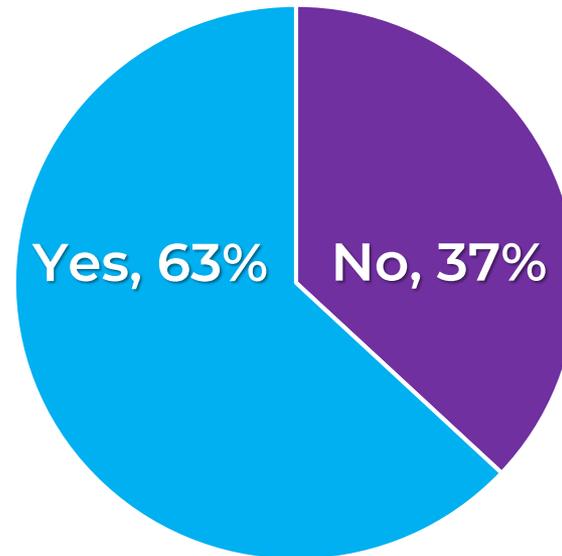


n = 1,359



Awareness of Coat of Arms

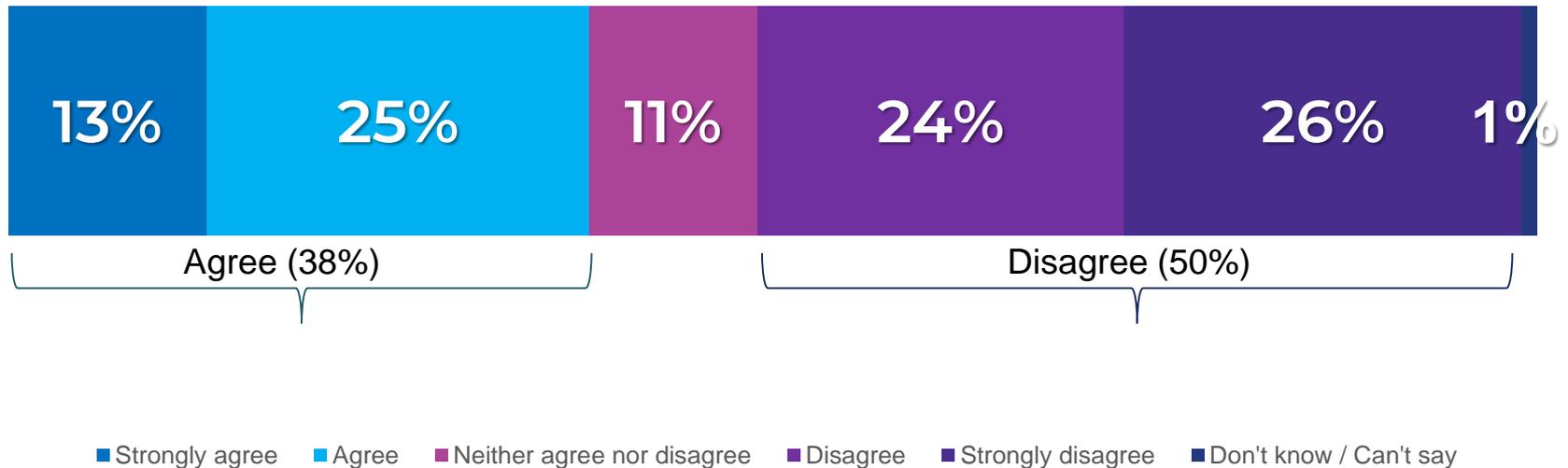
Q: Before today, were you aware of the City of Canberra Coat of Arms?





Symbolic representivity

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree, that the Coat of Arms is symbolic of Canberra and the ACT as we know it today?





Symbolic representivity

Q. You said that somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that Coat of Arms are not representative of Canberra, why is that?

Top 15 mentions (negative sentiment)



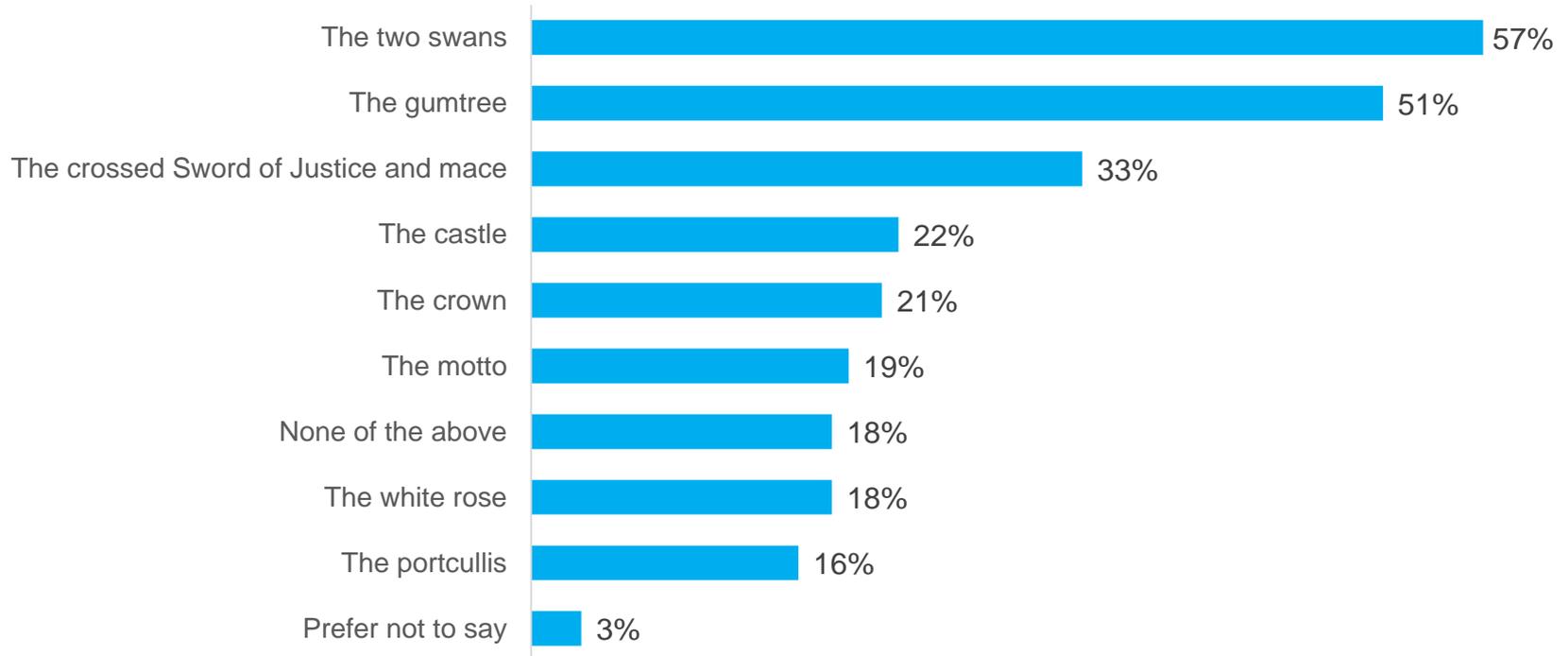
Top 5 mentions (negative sentiment)

Word	Percentage
Queen	10%
British	9%
Outdated	8%
Monarchy	6%
Castle	6%



Existing emblems

Q. Are there any emblems (symbols) from the City of Canberra Coat of Arms that you would like to see reflected in a new Coat of Arms for the ACT? (Multiple Choice)





New emblems

Q. If there were to be a new Coat of Arms for the ACT, what other emblem/s (symbols) would you like to see included?
(Multiple Choice)

