

2019

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**Annual Update of the ACT Housing Strategy and Implementation
Plan**

Ministerial Statement

**Ms Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for
Housing and Suburban Development**

I am happy to update the Assembly today on the work the government has undertaken in the first year since the release of the *ACT Housing Strategy*. In addition to this ministerial statement the government has prepared the first annual progress report card on delivery against the Strategy, which I have released today.

The *ACT Housing Strategy* reflects the voices of our community. It recognises that a secure home is fundamental to people's lives and to their wellbeing. It is a roadmap for housing in the ACT into the next decade, and it acknowledges the unique and complex challenges that exist in the ACT housing market and puts in place strong policy interventions to meet the Territory's diverse and changing needs.

The Strategy builds on the 2007 *Affordable Housing Action Plan* which set a foundation for a long-term commitment to provide housing for all households and income levels. The Strategy takes a holistic view of housing and has a focus on affordability, increasing social housing assistance and reducing homelessness.

The *ACT Housing Strategy* contains five strategic goals to deliver on its vision and each strategy goal contains a range of objectives and actions to deliver on the goals. In total the Strategy includes 74 actions for the government to progress over the next 10 years.

The government also developed an implementation plan detailing the actions arising in the Strategy to track and monitor progress against the housing strategy. This is a living document that will evolve as the government delivers on the Strategy and provides a basis for the annual report cards, the first of which I have released today.

I am happy to report the government has made good progress in the first 12 months of the Strategy:

- Of the ten actions identified for delivery in the 2018-19 financial year all are either underway or complete
- Of the six actions identified for delivery in the 2019 calendar year, five are either underway or complete
- A further 39 actions, identified in the Implementation Plan for delivery as part of ongoing or annual commitments are underway or are complete.

A significant amount of work was undertaken during the Strategy's first year and I will highlight a few of the key achievements.

The first goal of the ACT Housing Strategy is an 'equitable, diverse and sustainable supply of housing for the ACT community'. Key to this is the provision of land and housing development opportunities to meet demand. The 2019-20 Indicative Land Release Program provides for the release of land in both urban renewal and greenfield locations.

A key action is to dedicate at least 15 percent of the annual land release target to the provision of community, public and affordable housing. The 2019-20 Indicative Land Release Program achieves this objective by dedicating 18 percent of dwelling sites to affordable, community and public housing.

In 2017, at the Housing and Homelessness Summit, I announced the Affordable Housing Innovation Fund. Stage 1 funding supported Community Housing Canberra to develop its affordable rental real estate model, HomeGround. The fund also provided funding towards two co-housing projects. Stage 2 projects, which were recently announced, will support projects which increase the

supply of specialist disability accommodation, supportive housing for older women, an affordable rental housing model, the improved use of underutilised community facility land and the development of a home share model.

The ACT Government is continuing to build strong partnerships with the community sector to effectively address homelessness in the ACT. Earlier this year, the government released the findings of a study into the support requirements and accommodation options for people in the ACT with high and complex service needs, to inform progress against goal 2 of the housing strategy. The findings of the study have supported the progress of several initiatives and is being used to inform future planning across the specialist homelessness sector.

The government has also directed significant funding towards helping people who are 'falling through the gaps' or who are emerging as priority groups at risk of homelessness.

The 2018-19 Budget included \$6.5 million in additional funding to support frontline homelessness services, particularly focussing on women and children escaping domestic and family violence, older women and asylum seekers. This funding also includes expanding the reach of the ACT's central intake point , OneLink).

Part of this funding established a new \$1.9 million service to support older women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, run by the YWCA. The service, known as NextDoor, provides dedicated early intervention support for older women at risk of homelessness and is targeted towards women over the age of 50 or 45, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Earlier this month, I announced a new partnership with CatholicCare and St Vincent De Paul to support 20 individuals with high and complex needs who are sleeping rough into permanent housing. This new program called '*Axial Housing*' will take a housing first approach and provide a home to people who are sleeping rough and bring the supports they need to stay housed long-term. This model has been very successful overseas, and I'm looking forward to seeing the results of this new approach.

Supporting the third goal of the ACT Housing Strategy is the government's plan for *Growing and Renewing Public Housing*. This plan details how the public housing portfolio will be managed over the next five years. The plan guides investment of \$100 million – a record, nation leading funding commitment to public housing – and includes targets to grow and renew public housing so that the portfolio meets current and future tenant needs. The ACT Government is committed to renewing and growing public housing, with 1,200 new homes to be delivered under the plan, with an extra 200 homes for people in need of housing.

The fourth goal of the ACT Housing Strategy, to increase affordable rental housing, has also seen significant progress, with the commencement of the Land Tax Exemption Pilot Scheme in March this year. Under the scheme, eligible landlords may apply for a land tax exemption when they enter into an agreement with a registered community housing provider to rent their property at 25 per cent less than market value.

A barrier for low to moderate income earners trying to enter the rental market is the upfront costs associated with commencing a new rental tenancy. So, in December last year, the government established a new digital service, known as *Rental Bond Help*, to assist low to moderate income earners with an interest free loan to help pay for their rental bond. Between November 2018 and 30 June this year, 644 new digital applications were received.

Another focus of the strategy is to work closely with the community housing sector to grow and diversify its capacity. In June, the release of land via an expression of interest process for affordable housing in Taylor makes available six lots comprising a total of 59 dwellings, which is restricted to registered community housing providers.

The ACT Government is also supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed community housing providers in the ACT to build their capacity. This work has been guided through dedicated consultation workshops with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Under Goal Five of the ACT Housing Strategy, the government is working to provide Canberrans with more affordable homes for purchase. In this first year of the strategy the government's Affordable Home Purchase Program was developed to assist low to moderate income earners enter the home ownership market.

The program has received approximately 135 eligible applicants and five developments with an affordable dwelling requirement on offer to the eligible applicants.

In the second year, further work will be done to grow and diversify the community housing sector. This will include investigating mechanisms to reduce the cost of land to support affordable rentals. The Land Tax Exemption pilot has been extended, and further financial incentives will be investigated to encourage the delivery of affordable home purchase dwellings on privately held leases.

I look forward to updating our community as this work progresses.

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