

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)

Date of consultation:	1 September 2047
Group consulted with:	ACTCOSS
Number of attendees:	12
Name of organisations:	ACTCOSS, AIRA, Woden Community Council, Diversity ACT, ANU School of Legal Practice and ECHO, Women's Centre for Health Matters, Canberra Quakers, People with Disabilities ACT, Women with Disabilities ACT, Unions ACT, Havelock Housing Association, Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform.

Key themes arising from the consultation

- Low quality rental accommodation in the ACT causes financial hardship for people who live in them due to the high costs of utilities.
- Location of public, community and affordable housing needs to recognise the different needs of different tenants, such as a reliance on public transport, access to support services and employment.
- Security of tenure will help people to move into and stay in private rental accommodation.
- There are limited accessible dwellings available on the rental market and the ones that are (for purchase or rent) are not targeted to the people who need them.

Key quotes

- "Poor people get the worst houses in the ACT rental market."
- "Stable housing provides people with the opportunity to access health care, re-enter the work force and utilise support services."
- "There are not enough beds in crisis accommodation for women."

What is working well?

- The Public Housing Renewal Program.
- Support for young people to get into public and supported housing.
- Upgrades to Public Housing especially the replacement of inefficient appliances.
- Mixed use developments (improves access to facilities).
- Use of old government buildings within suburbs to support people experiencing homelessness and other problems – the location works well for people.
- Decentralisation of public housing.
- Rental rate adjustments for people on income based rents.
- Introduction of vacancy tax.
- ACT Government acknowledgment of problem and willingness to engage and consult people who work in the industry.

What could be improved?

- Engagement with public housing tenants.
- Support for homelessness services.
- Aggregating services to facilitate pathways and improved access.
- Building condition and appliance efficiencies within private rentals.
- Engagement with other sectors such as banks, developers and lenders.
- Information for public housing tenants about opportunities to improve their accommodation, relocate, etc.
- The type of dwellings available (housing diversity).
- The ‘leaking’ of affordable accommodation out to the private market.
- Supply and quantum of affordable housing stock needs to be increased and only made available to people who need it.
- Accessible dwellings are poorly marketed.

New ideas

- Creation and identification of pathways for people transitioning through different type of accommodation.
- Ensure services and information about services is available after hours which is when many people in crisis need assistance.
- Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act to allow service providers and accommodation providers (such as community housing providers) to work together.
- Development of Crown lease clauses that mandate that properties must be used for affordable housing purposes.

- Public housing tenants need incentives to relocate and better utilise properties – incentives could include covering relocation costs, new and efficient housing or housing within the same suburb.
- Ensure there are services available to assist people seeking crisis accommodation - including interpreters and health care workers.
- Incentives could be introduced for private rental properties that are accessible and meet universal design standards and are made available for people who most need them – such as rates reductions, tax remits and access to complementary services such as maintenance of gardens.
- Accessible dwellings could be marketed like EER' e.g. star rating or 'tab' on Real Estate domains like All Homes.
- Mandatory social inclusions into new developments for minimum affordable and accessible dwellings – ensure they are quality and suitably targeted.