



ACT
Shelter

Working together for housing justice

Annual Report

2023/4

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Acknowledgement of Country

ACT Shelter acknowledges that we live, walk and work on the lands of the Ngunnawal, Ngambri and Ngarigu people. We pay our respects to their Elders – past and present.

We note Canberra's significance as a meeting place for neighbouring people: the Gundungurra to the north, the Ngarigo to the south, the Yuin on the coast, and the Wiradjuri inland.

As clan nations of the oldest continuing cultures in the world, we celebrate their enduring custodianship of the Capital Region. Sovereignty was never ceded. This land is, was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge the significant gap between housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader population in the ACT. There is an urgent need, to close that gap, to improve the emotional, physical, social, and spiritual health and wellbeing of Canberrans who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We respect the principles of self-determination and the need to do with, not for, or to, First Australians.

ACT Shelter was established in 1986 by advocates who were working together for housing justice. In that spirit, we commit to amplifying community voices through our systemic advocacy and reminding elected representatives of the promises they made in the Closing the Gap agreement they signed with the Commonwealth, and the need to make good on those promises.

Our Organisation

ACT Shelter was established in 1986 with the aims of alleviating housing poverty in the ACT by proactively lobbying for equitable access to, and outcomes from, our housing system, and working together with our members to progress the realisation of the Right to Adequate Housing for all Canberrans.

ACT Shelter adopts a rights-based, whole of housing system approach to our advocacy. We are an independent, member-based, not-for-profit peak organisation with more than 60 individual and organisational members.

Through engagement at a local level, the National Shelter Council, and partnerships with other peak organisations and researchers in housing and related fields, we are an informed voice to governments and other decision makers, providing policy and strategic advice and analysis on housing and related matters.

We operate with assistance from the ACT Government and the Commonwealth Government under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

Strategic Plan

Who we are

ACT Shelter is a not-for-profit peak organisation that provides advocacy and strategic advice on systemic housing issues affecting people in the ACT. We are an informed and independent voice on housing policy issues affecting the ability of people on low, moderate or no incomes to have a home that is safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable. The right to adequate housing for all Canberrans underpins everything we do.

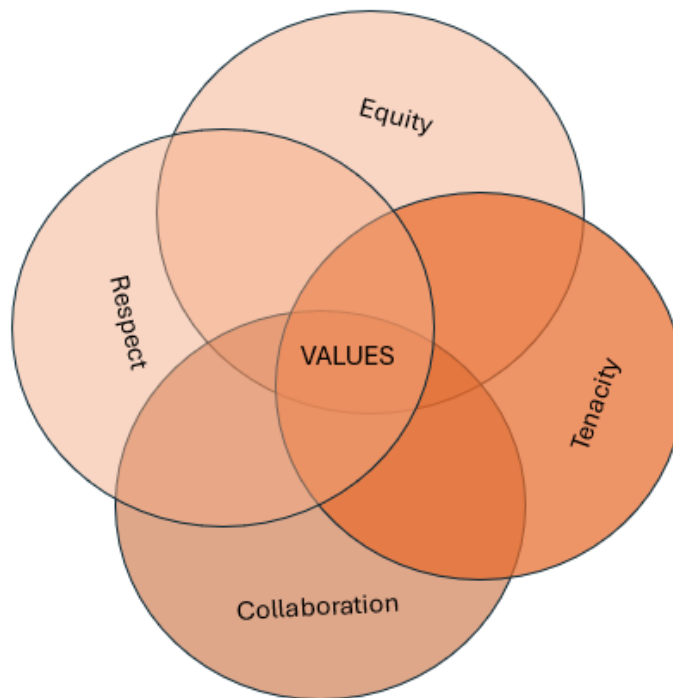
Our Vision

Everyone living in the ACT has a home that is safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable. Our vision means a housing system where ... Renting is an attractive long-term housing choice. Social housing meets community needs. Home ownership is possible for every income. Homelessness is addressed.

Our Purpose

Working together for housing justice.

Our Values



Equity

We believe everyone is entitled to safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable housing. We prioritise the needs of people with low, moderate and no incomes. We understand the complexities of vulnerable and marginalised populations.

Respect

We engage with professionalism in our organisation, with members and with stakeholders. We believe that respectful relationships are fundamental to driving change.

Collaboration

We develop and maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders. We participate in sector-level forums and partner with other organisations to maximise our impact. We are recognised for our expertise in systemic housing issues.

Tenacity

We focus on achieving our vision. We don't give up, even when the environment changes and the challenges seem impossible. We are resilient.

Our Goals

A strong voice for systemic housing justice.

Housing outcomes in the ACT are improved: every person can access a home that is safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable.

ACT Shelter is influential in all ACT government decisions on systemic housing issues.

There is a coordinated and informed sector response to advancing housing outcomes.

Candidates and political parties reflect ACT Shelter's advocacy.

Public discourse on housing reflects that housing is not just a commodity or financial investment: a secure home is a foundation for participating in community, socially, economically, and politically.

ACT Shelter is a capable and sustainable peak body.

Current funding level is retained in real terms, and additional funding is sought where needed to achieve our strategic intent.

Clear and effective governance and operational systems are in place.

Expert staff are recruited and retained.

Membership is representative of housing system stakeholders.

Executive Committee positions are filled with appropriately skilled volunteers.

ACT Shelter continues its effective collaboration on national housing policies with National Shelter.

Our People

ACT Shelter Executive Committee



Chairperson

Yvonne Gritschneider

Secretary

Sarah Spiller

Treasurer

Jon Lawrence

General Committee Members

Geoff Buchanan

Siobhan Cosgrave

Josh Hewitt

Vicki Wood

ACT Shelter staff

Chief Executive Officer – Travis Gilbert

Admin & Member Engagement Officer – Barbara Chevalier to March (Barbara started with Shelter in May 2016)

Office Manager – Jane Griffiths, from March

Policy & Research Coordinator – Deb Pippen

Public Officer

Deb Pippen



ACT Shelter Members 2023/24

ACT Shelter had 69 members in the financial year 2023/4

ACT Member Organisations (33)

ACT Council of Social Services	Families ACT
ACT Mental Health Consumer Network	Havelock Housing Association
ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service	Karinya House
Advocacy for Inclusion	Marymead CatholicCare CG
Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drugs Association	Meridian
Barnardos	Mental Health Community Coal
Beryl Women Inc	Migrant & Refugee Settlement : ACT Inc
Care Financial Counselling	Older Women Lost in Housing
CHC Affordable Housing	Safe Shelter
Capital Regional Community Service	Softlaw Community Projects
Canberra Youth Residential Service	Toora Women Inc
Carers ACT	St Vincent de Paul
Council on the Ageing ACT	Volunteering ACT
Doris Women's Refuge	Woden Community Service
Early Morning Centre	Youth Coalition of the ACT
ECHO Housing	YWCA
EveryMan	

Individual Members (25)

Chris Aitchison	Barbara Chevalier
Caroline Ambrus	Darlene Cox
Elentari Berryman	David Havercroft
Eddy Bourke	Jon Lawrence
Geoff Buchanan	Penny Leemhuis
Nicholas Cheeseman	Michael Lindfield

Chairperson's Report

It has been another busy year for the Executive Committee. We met six times during 2023–24, a combination of online and in person. We welcomed Josh Hewitt to the Executive Committee, and farewelled Vicky Wood in April 2024 who resigned from her position due to moving interstate. As always, I am grateful for everyone's contributions and commitment to providing governance and guidance across the important work that ACT Shelter does.

The Committee continued its work on strengthening ACT Shelter's governance and process arrangements including:

- The development of a risk framework stating ACT Shelter's risk appetite, assessing potential risks and outlining risk mitigating strategies. The framework will be reviewed yearly by the Committee and amended as needed throughout the year when organisational risks change
- The commissioning of a review and amendment of ACT Shelter's internal policies and procedure documents as recommended in last year's high-level Governance Review
- The ongoing implementation and delivery of ACT Shelter's Strategic Plan and Program Logic which were developed last year and are both available on ACT Shelter's website.

At the end of March 2024, we farewelled ACT Shelter's long-standing Admin and Membership Engagement Officer, Barbara Chevalier, into her well-deserved retirement. Barbara worked for ACT Shelter for nearly 6 years, and I would like to thank her for all her work, especially guiding and supporting me in my Chair role as well as the Committee.

As I step down from the role of Chair, I would like to close my report with thanks. Firstly, I thank the staff (Travis, Deb, Barbara and Jane) for their commitment, dedication and effort throughout the year and thank all our members, who continue to support ACT Shelter's work and share our vision that everyone in the ACT has a safe, secure and affordable home. A heartfelt thank you to my Executive Committee colleagues, you have been a great pleasure to work with over the last two years, bringing a variety of perspectives and skills which help us bring ACT Shelter's purpose and vision to life.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the ACT Government for their ongoing funding and support of ACT Shelter.

Yvonne Gritschneider – Chair

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Before turning to the policy and systemic advocacy bit of my report, I want to open by thanking our outgoing Admin and Member Engagement Officer, Barbara, who joined the team when we were still at Havelock House back in 2018. Barbara's contribution to our work, her collegiality and support provided to me has been enormous. Her good humour, intellect and ability with my foibles has been an added bonus. I reluctantly wish her all the best for her well-earned retirement.



In March we welcomed Jane Griffiths to the role of Office Manager. Jane brings a wealth of relevant experience with her and a commitment to ACT Shelter's purpose and values and is a welcome addition to our small team of three.

If a year could be defined by just three words, it is fair to say 'cost-of-living' dominated policy and politics in 2023/24.

For many Canberrans, particularly people renting privately on fixed and low to moderate incomes, housing costs are the biggest expenditure item in the household budget. For this reason, the human impact of housing and related policy decisions, programs, service delivery and tax settings received as much, if not more media and political attention than they have in any of my twenty years working in this space.

At a national level, there was substantial activity in the space that I had the privilege of being actively involved in, at various times, through my role as Vice Chair of National Shelter. This included lobbying in relation to the Housing Australia Future Fund and a Bill that would see the proposed National Housing and Homelessness Plan underpinned by rights-based legislation and a consultative mechanism that would bring lived experience to the table at a federal level for the first time.



I want to also acknowledge the work of our Policy and Research Coordinator, Deb Phippen, who has substantially elevated our outward facing and internal work and workflow since joining us in 2022. It was Deb who coordinated and wrote the submission to the National Cabinet following the communique that tabled a series of reforms that states and territories would be asked to implement to strengthen renters' rights and redress the inherent power imbalance that exists in residential tenancies law. It is a seminal document.

At a Territory level, ACT Shelter was actively engaged in the Commissioning for Better Outcomes from Housing and Homelessness Services process, the midpoint refresh of the ACT Housing Strategy, and Housing Choices work being undertaken by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

We also had a bit to say about the need to ensure ALL Canberrans get beneficial outcomes from our housing system, not just those who can afford to pay what the market asks, or live in the types of homes the market typically offers. Canberra's rental market continues to be a brutal place to try to make ends meet for far too many people and the waiting list for a secure, affordable-to-income, public rental home remains long, as does the wait time – particularly if you are not triaged 'priority'.

The mantra from politicians, when it comes to market priced housing was and is, 'supply, supply, supply!' The challenge for advocates for a fairer housing system is to convince those same politicians to apply the same philosophy to social and affordable rented homes. This means planned, recurrent infrastructure investment to scale up new supply and 'spot purchase' where appropriate, to bring us to the level needed to significantly reduce rental stress, the rental crisis in the private market, and reduce both the number of applicants on the waiting list for social housing and the time spent waiting for that life changing secure home they have already met eligibility criteria for.

In the 1950s and 1960s, public housing accounted for one in six homes financed and built in Australia. Over the past decade, fewer than one in fifty properties were publicly financed. The next decade provides reason for optimism – if – the Housing Australia Future Fund and related measures can survive the partisan short-termism that has dogged housing policy over the past year, decade and generation. Federal and ACT Government initiatives have the combined potential to change the lives of thousands of Canberrans over the next five years due to the groundwork laid over the past couple.



All three parties in the ACT Legislative Assembly recognise the need is great and have proposals that would benefit the people for whom we exist to advocate for better outcomes from our housing system. I look forward to working collaboratively with members and stakeholders to ensure these outcomes can be realised over the course of the next Assembly term.

I will close by thanking and acknowledging the contribution by our voluntary Executive Committee members, most notably outgoing chair, Yvonne Gritschneider, whose leadership has been invaluable. To our members, thank you again for working together for housing justice with ACT Shelter during the year.

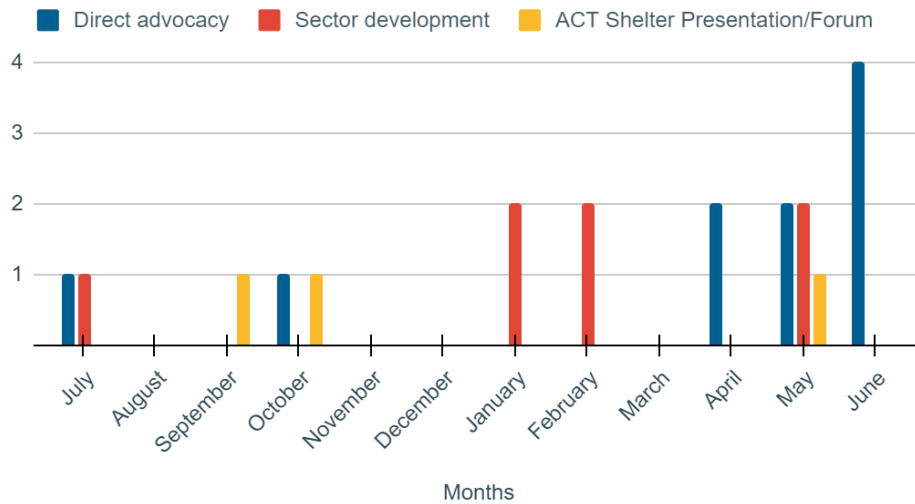
Travis Gilbert



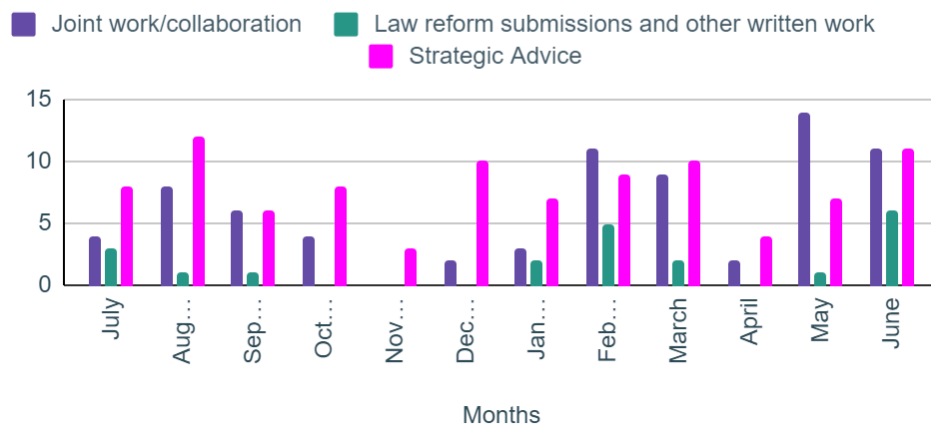
Highlights from our work

The charts below provide an overview of work for our one full-time and two part-time staff. They do not capture administrative or governance work by staff and the Executive Committee.

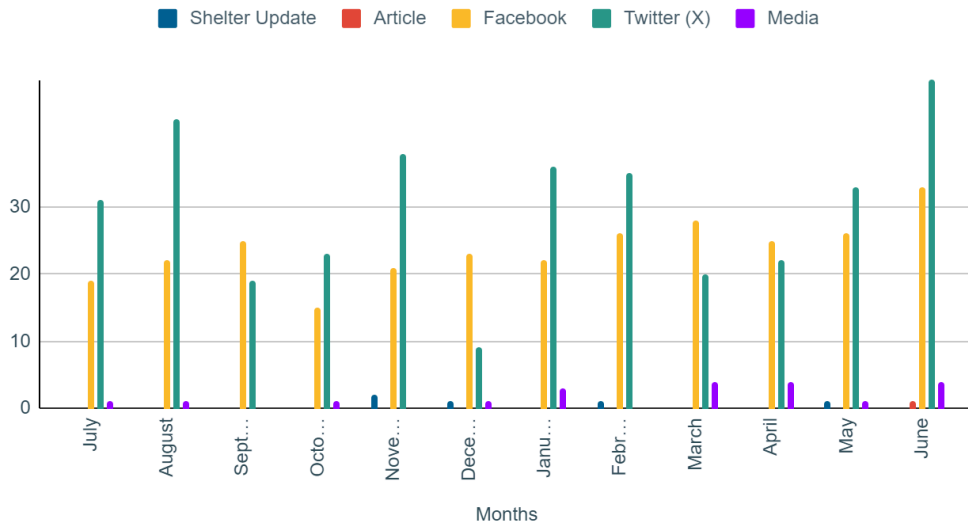
Direct advocacy, Forums, Sector development



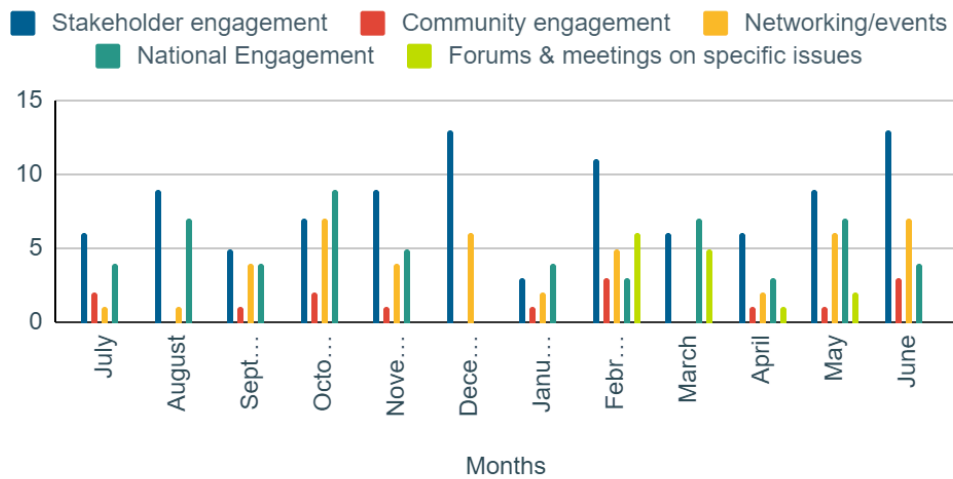
Joint work, law reform, other written work & Strategic Advice



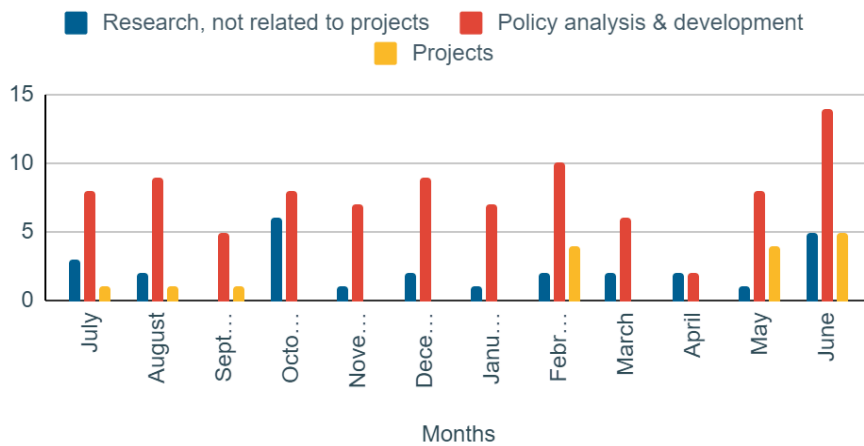
Comms and Media



Engagement, Networking



Research, Policy analysis, Projects



The following highlights represent a sample of our work.

The year provided many opportunities for us to inform and influence decision-making in a range of policy, program, funding and service delivery reform processes, as housing took centre stage in policy and politics. It is hard to recall a time when such sustained media interest and political attention have focused on housing – in particular, the housing circumstances of people who rent or are in the early years of servicing a mortgage.

Law Reform

As already alluded to, 23/4 was a very significant year in relation to national focus on tenancy law, as renting was recognised as a tenure that needed to be addressed consistently across the country. As National Cabinet developed the A Better Deal for Renters reform package, peak housing and renter advocacy groups across the country sought to impart our knowledge to ensure that reforms were appropriate, realistic and beneficial. This involved a range of work for ACT Shelter during the year, most substantially being the National Nine project outlined below. Advocacy work also extended to that focussed on the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

At an ACT level, ACT Shelter undertook a range of work related to tenancy and other laws. We provided a submission in relation to the development of what was to become the April Residential Tenancies Act amendments. The Government described them as in part implementing the national Better Deal for Renters reforms relating to removing loopholes for excessive rent increase, streamlining processes for victims/survivors of family violence and break lease fees.

National Engagement

During the year we continued our longstanding involvement with a number of national networks and organisations. Through these relationships we also participated in national work and meetings with Federal politicians and bureaucrats. The CEO and Policy and Research Coordinator also attended the AHURI National Housing Conference.



The National Association of Renters' Organisations (NARO)

In light of there no longer being a funded Tenants' Union in the ACT, ACT Shelter has an active working relationship with the National Association of Renters' Organisations. It was necessary for this unfunded network of specialist tenancy legal services to provide their expert advice to Housing Ministers and National Cabinet once it announced its intention to 'put renters' rights front and centre'. ACT Shelter contributed to this work by producing the National Nine Report outlined below.

<https://www.tenantsrights.org.au/naro>

Healthy Homes for Renters

Healthy Homes for Renters is a national campaign to lobby governments to recognise and address the linkages between emissions reduction targets, housing as a social determinant of health, and residential tenancy law. ACT Shelter supports this campaign and our Policy and Research Coordinator attends regular meetings.

The campaign seeks to make tangible differences to the lives of the more than 7 million Australians who rely on private, community, community-controlled or public landlords to provide places that they call home.

www.healthyhomes.org.au

National Shelter

ACT Shelter is a member of the National Shelter Council. The Council brings together seven State and Territory Shelters, the National Association of Renters' Organisations, Community Housing Industry Association, and national member organisations – the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association, Rights and Inclusion Australia, St Vincent de Paul and Community Housing Limited.



The Shelter network is the primary vehicle through which we work to produce coordinated responses to decisions regarding housing and homelessness at a national level. Through the network we engage directly with Ministers and federal bureaucrats. Through the Council's National Policy Group we develop national policy positions. ACT Shelter also contributes to the production of the annual National Shelter and SGSEP [Rental Affordability Index](#)¹, an indicator of rental affordability relative to household incomes.

www.shelter.org.au

Homelessness Australia and Australians for Ending Homelessness

ACT Shelter engages with both Homelessness Australia and Australians for Ending Homelessness.

www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au www.aeah.org.au

¹ <https://shelter.org.au/category/publications/rental-affordability-index/>

Community Housing Industry Association

ACT Shelter is an invited guest at fortnightly national hook-ups with the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA), together with Power Housing Australia, CHIA state affiliates, and state and territory Shelter affiliates in jurisdictions where there is no funded CHIA affiliate. We have long enjoyed good working relationships with the CHIA, and its predecessor, the Community Housing Federation of Australia, through our respective memberships of the National Shelter Council.

[Community Housing Industry Association](#)

ACT Engagement

At a local level ACT Shelter was involved with many stakeholders in a variety of forums spanning the gamut of housing related policy including:

- Engagement in the co-design process to commission better outcomes from homelessness services in the ACT
- Regular participation in advisory bodies, interagency forums, reference groups and task forces at an ACT level
- The Housing Strategy Implementation Group – ACT Shelter has been an appointee to this group since 2018. Through this mechanism we provide strategic advice to the on the implementation of the Housing Strategy
- ACT Housing Solutions Innovation Group
- The ACTCOSS Peaks Forum
- The Australian Services Union housing and homelessness network
- The Community Housing Industry Association (ACT Region)
- The Elder Abuse Network
- Community Services Directorate (CSD) and Community Sector meetings
- Growing and Renewing Innovation Partnership (public housing)
- The Growth and Renewal Information and Support Partnership
- Homeless Connect steering committee
- Housing for Health
- The Housing Strategy Implementation Group
- The Housing Supply Working Group – Rights and Inclusion Australia
- The Rights and Inclusion Australia Housing Solutions Group
- The Joint Pathways Executive and Membership
- The Leadership Group chaired by the Mental Health Community Coalition
- One Link Governance Group
- Peaks CEOs
- The Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum.



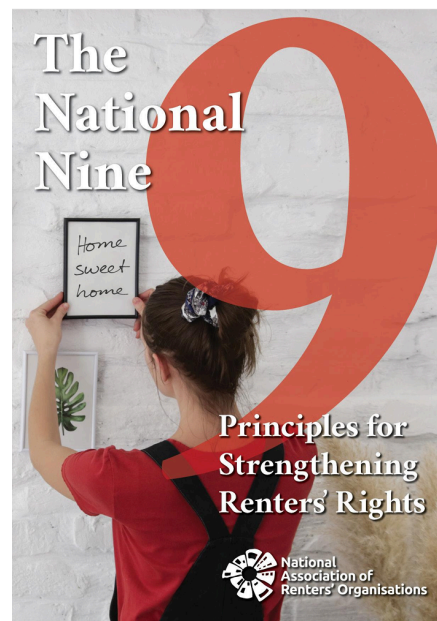
Throughout the year we met with MLAs, Ministers, their advisers and Directorates.

Other Work

Projects

[The National Nine – Principles for Strengthening Renters’ Rights](#)

ACT Shelter was commissioned to produce this brief report providing expert guidance for the national proposals developed by Housing Ministers for consideration within the National Cabinet to improve our rental housing system and better ensure renters have access to safe, affordable, appropriate and secure homes. This report is a useful reference for anyone seeking an overview of the most significant national issues for renters across the country. It also provides links to relevant research.



The official launch included an overview of the report’s key recommendations. This was followed by a panel conversation exploring the challenges facing renters and our rental housing system as we seek solutions and identify priorities for a national tenancy reform agenda. To view the webinar, click [here](#).

[Residential Tenancies Act Amendments 2024](#)

On 9 April the ACT Attorney-General tabled the Housing and Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment Act 2024. The Bill covers a range of changes to different Acts and incorporates 60 amendments to the RTA, as well as other changes to the Unit Titles (Management Act) and the Housing Assistance Act. The Bill was presented and passed on 26 June 2024.

In addition to feedback to proposed changes as a stakeholder, we produced a comprehensive overview of the changes to assist members and stakeholders in understanding the extent of the amendments.

Forums and Events

September 2023: ACT Shelter hosted a presentation by staff from the Justice and Community Services Directorate about the tenancy law changes and how they interacted with community housing and occupancies.²

October 2023: ACT Shelter & ACT Council of Social Services Joint Forum: Election 2024

² [Reforms to tenancy and occupancy laws in 2023](#)

February 2024: ACT Shelter, in partnership with Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug Association (ATODA ACT), promoted an Alcohol Prevention Package ACT (APPA) training for housing sector workers.

Policy and research

We undertook a range of policy, research and advocacy work during the year including:

- NARO and National Shelter submissions as well as presenting to the national Inquiry into the Worsening Rental Crisis in Australia
- Submission to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services Inquiry into the Property Developers Bill
- ACT Budget submission.

Communicating with our members and stakeholders

We communicated regularly with members and stakeholders throughout the year through [email updates](#), daily [Facebook](#) posts and [Twitter/X messages](#). We also conducted a consultation with our members regarding the new Strategic Plan.

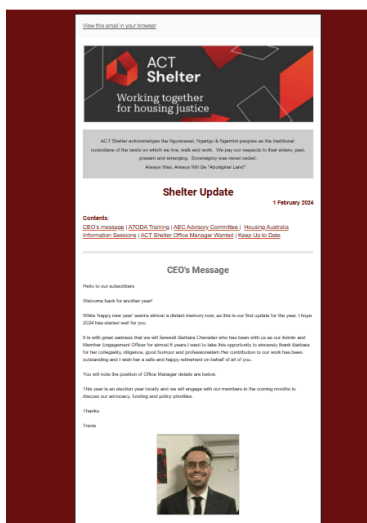
Email Updates

28/5/2024 - [ACT Shelter Update](#)

2/2/2024 - [ACT Shelter Update](#)

18/12/2023 - [ACT Shelter Update](#)

17/11/2023 - [ACT Shelter Update](#)



Internal Governance and Administration

In the final year of our three year boost in funding under the ACT Government Parliamentary Agreement, we had the financial resources to complete a range of significant governance projects that had been stalled over the previous years of lean funding.

Governance Review

This review was initiated in the previous financial year and was concluded early in 2023/4. The objective of this review was to deliver an independent review of ACT Shelter's governance and reporting framework to ensure elements within the framework are fit-for-purpose, operating effectively and where identified, to identify opportunities for further strengthening of the ACT Shelter's governance arrangements.

Policy and Procedures Review

A recommendation of the governance review was a review and amendment of ACT Shelter's internal policies and procedure documents. This commenced late in the financial year and it is anticipated will require some ongoing staff resources.

Risk Framework

The development of a risk framework stating ACT Shelter's risk appetite, assessing potential risks and outlining risk mitigating strategies. The framework will be reviewed yearly by the Committee and amended as needed throughout the year when organisational risks change.

Strategic Plan

The ongoing implementation and delivery of ACT Shelter's Strategic Plan as presented at last year's AGM.

Program Logic

Within the Commissioning Process, ACTCOSS and the Youth Coalition of the ACT consulted with ACT community sector peaks to develop a draft program logic template suitable for peaks. ACT Shelter was one of the first peaks to create a program logic, which fed directly into the development of the new Strategic Plan.

Treasurer's Report

Year ended 30 June 2024

ACT Shelter ended this year with a surplus of \$13,891, down from \$57,076 last financial year. Overall revenue for the year was \$384,585, a small decrease from 2022-23.

Revenue was down due to a reduction in grant funding, which was partially offset by a 330% increase in bank interest earnings.

Expenses increased due to increased staff and consultation costs. The increased staff costs were largely due to award wage increases and staff reclassifications. The consultation costs related to a governance review and policy development work.

The Association ended the year with Retained Earnings of \$337,997 (up from \$324,106 in 2022-23).

We remain in a relatively strong position, however uncertainty about our funding position beyond 2024-25 will require careful management of expenditure in the year ahead.

I thank Jane Griffith for her careful work in managing our daily bookkeeping since joining us earlier in the year and also a big thanks to Barbara Chevalier for her continued support including for facilitating the financial audit.

Jon Lawrence

Treasurer

November 2024

Find the full financial statements for 2022-23 on the [ACT Shelter website](#).

Financial Statements

ACT Shelter Association

A.B.N 13 348 226 983

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue	4	384,585	387,418
Employee benefits expenses		(278,568)	(251,091)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(2,767)	(3,512)
Consultation		(42,472)	(265)
Audit fees		(3,200)	(3,300)
Rent		(13,261)	(12,781)
Dues and subscriptions		(7,103)	(12,243)
Computer maintenance		(3,955)	(6,197)
Insurance		(2,868)	(2,586)
Conference and training		(3,663)	(9,911)
Other expenses		(12,838)	(28,456)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		13,891	57,076
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year		324,106	267,030
Retained surplus at the end of the financial year		337,997	324,106

Statement of Financial Position As At 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	323,516	328,314
Trade and other receivables	6	36,128	25,129
Other assets	7	7,269	6,453
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		366,912	359,896
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property plant and equipment	8	8,577	7,554
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		8,577	7,554
TOTAL ASSETS		375,489	367,450
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Employee Benefits	9	18,572	20,656
Trade and other payables	10	18,921	22,688
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		37,492	43,344
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		37,492	43,344
NET ASSETS		337,997	324,106
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		337,997	324,106
TOTAL EQUITY		337,997	324,106



ACT
Shelter