



Stronger foundations, unfinished work: ACT Shelter responds to the 2026–27 ACT Budget

The 2026–27 ACT Budget marks a genuine step forward on housing, but does not match the scale of the housing crisis, ACT Shelter said today.

“This is the most substantive housing budget the ACT has seen in years, and we commend the Government for injecting vital funds into growing and maintaining public housing, crisis rental support, and frontline homelessness services. However, the reality is that the level of ambition and investment must continue to grow if we are to truly shift the dial on the housing crisis,” said Corinne Dobson, CEO of ACT Shelter.

While ACT Shelter welcomed the Government’s commitment to deliver 450 new public housing dwellings, expand community housing, and invest in maintaining and upgrading public housing, it warned that these measures are not enough to reverse the long-term decline of social housing.

“Every additional social housing home changes a life. For people trapped in housing stress, experiencing homelessness, or stuck on the waitlist, these investments matter enormously.

“But we need to be honest about the scale of the challenge. Even if the Government’s stated budget commitments are met in full, social housing will continue to decline as a proportion of overall housing in the ACT, and too many Canberrans will remain locked out of safe, stable and affordable housing.

“This Budget does not reverse that decades-long trajectory, nor does it chart a credible path toward the Government’s own social housing targets for 2030. We need a sustained, multi-year commitment to significantly and permanently grow our social housing safety net.”

ACT Shelter also welcomed continued funding for existing frontline homelessness services, as well as an additional \$5.171 million over four years to target chronic homelessness, youth homelessness, and support people escaping domestic and family violence through expanded Housing First supports and the Housing Asset Assistance Program.

“This funding is essential to sustaining frontline responses for people at risk of, or currently experiencing, homelessness, and comes at a time when homelessness services are operating at or beyond capacity,” said Ms Dobson.

“The ACT continues to experience the highest rates of chronic homelessness in the country, and wraparound supports and Housing First models are vital to supporting long-term housing stability and wellbeing for people with complex needs.”

ACT Shelter also welcomed the restoration of rental crisis support through the new \$5.2 million Housing Crisis Support Fund, following strong advocacy from the community sector after the previous program was discontinued.

"We know that relatively modest financial assistance can be the difference between a household staying housed and falling into homelessness. The return of rental crisis support is welcome and overdue. It is also important that this measure is properly resourced to ensure effective administration and financial counselling for vulnerable private renters."

While ACT Shelter broadly supports the continued reduction in stamp duty as part of the ACT's transition toward a fairer, more efficient revenue base based on annual land tax and rates, Ms Dobson said the organisation is deeply concerned by the decision to provide a 50 per cent remission of the Lease Variation Charge (LVC) for 'missing middle' housing developments.

"ACT Shelter does not support the reduction in the Lease Variation Charge for market housing. The LVC is an established and well-designed value-capture mechanism that ensures the community shares in the uplift created when planning decisions increase private land values.

"There is no clear evidence that the LVC constrains housing supply in the ACT. The real barriers lie in construction costs, labour and workforce shortages, and infrastructure delivery.

"Weakening the LVC is a step backwards that reduces the public return on planning decisions, delivers windfall gains to private developers without delivering additional supply or more affordable housing, and undermines a source of revenue that funds social housing and essential services and infrastructure."

Ms Dobson welcomed the ACT Government's decision to provide \$1.077 million over four years to support the continued operation of ACT Shelter. After years of funding inadequacy and uncertainty, this funding provides a measure of stability and enables ACT Shelter to continue its vital work as the Territory's independent voice for housing justice.

"Tackling the housing crisis is the defining social and economic challenge of our time," Ms Dobson concluded. "We urgently need political leadership backed by sustained, long-term investment that matches the scale of need. This Budget takes a welcome step forward, but it must be the beginning of a much larger and more sustained effort — because only sustained investment over time will deliver a housing system that is genuinely fair, inclusive, and capable of meeting the needs of all Canberrans."

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ACT Shelter is a not-for-profit peak body providing an informed and independent voice on housing policy issues affecting the ability of Canberrans on low, moderate or no incomes to have an affordable, safe and secure home.