



dhcs | ACT
community
partners

strategic plan

2003–2005

department of disability, housing & community services | ACT

inclusive of all Canberrans
prosperous, progressive, skilled and creative
cohesive, fair, tolerant and optimistic
committed to protecting the vulnerable and supporting those in need
gives its children every chance to realise their potential





strategic plan 2003–2005

Rationale

The Strategic Plan for the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services for 2003 to 2005 identifies the Department's strategic themes for the next three years, building on the activities since 1 July 2002 when the Department was established.

The Government has entrusted the Department with an important responsibility—that of improving the co-ordination and focus of services provided to those sectors of the community in need of the range of services within the portfolio. The Department has successfully brought together a number of related functions that previously operated in the separate portfolios of health, education and urban services. The Department is also taking a lead role in several whole of Government projects. In so doing the important task of integrating the development of policy and the delivery of a range of quality services to the community has begun.

The Strategic Plan has been developed in the context of the ACT Government Vision:

Shaping Canberra's Future

The Government's vision is of a community that:

- is inclusive of all Canberrans;
- is prosperous, progressive, skilled and creative;
- is cohesive, fair, tolerant and optimistic;
- is committed to protecting the vulnerable and supporting those in need; and
- gives its children every chance to realise their potential.

The Government's policy priorities for the Department are that we deliver the following outcomes for the Canberra community:

1. Responsive programs and services for people within the community, particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, older persons, those with mental illness, substance abuse, disabilities and respite care needs;
2. Efficient and effective delivery of disability, housing and community services;
3. Accessible, safe and affordable housing; and
4. Community involvement in disability and housing issues.

Our Responsibilities

Through our direct service delivery, and our purchased and subsidised programs, we support tens of thousands of Canberrans every day. Our client base ranges from those people in need of crisis accommodation through to those who receive concessional travel on the public bus system. Many of our clients are experiencing some form of disadvantage, as a result of disability, low income, developmental delay, complex personal circumstances, or lack of access to information and support. In the context of our responsibilities, we are committed to supporting each of our current and future clients in a manner which recognises the stage of life and circumstances in which they find themselves, and to facilitating an outcome which is focussed on their individual needs.

The Department willingly accepts its responsibility to the community and the Government to invest in services and support systems that will allow our clients to live fulfilling lives and to participate to the fullest possible extent in the everyday life of their community.

To achieve this we will work together to continue to build a Department that is fully integrated and a workforce that values the opportunity to work together. We will focus our efforts on being a place where people want to work and there is a record of achievement. Our service will be respected and valued by our clients.

We will develop services that are better integrated with human services in the wider government and non-government sectors. In particular, we will develop our programs and policies in the context of whole of government plans and priorities. Through partnerships we will provide leadership in building a stronger community.

We will pursue specific policy imperatives, for example, through the response to the Affordable Housing Taskforce, the development of an ACT Homelessness Strategy, and the implementation of the Government Response to the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services.

Statement of Purpose

We deliver high quality, co-ordinated services to significant sectors of the community through engaging and involving our clients, building community partnerships, contributing to good governance and performing as a best practice organisation.

building community
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Values

The Department is committed to a culture based on these values:

- A participative and consultative workplace
- Transparency in our work practices and decision-making processes
- Respect for each other and for our clients
- Work practices that focus on our strengths, acknowledge where we could do better and encourage us to learn from both
- Acting with honesty and integrity

Principles

The following principles underpin the operation of the Department:

- We employ a client service orientation that values their capacity to make decisions and is committed to making a difference in the quality of their lives through continuity of care and the provision of appropriate services.
- We demonstrate initiative, encourage innovation and embrace diversity in an environment of change and development.
- We have a strong commitment to workforce development and to building a skilled team with high professional and ethical standards.
- We foster a culture of continuous improvement to support best practice in our delivery of services and rigour in our accountability for outcomes.
- We have a strong organisational culture that is clearly communicated throughout the Department.

Our Clients

The Department has relationships with different groups. Its clients are people:

- With a disability
- With a developmental delay
- In public, community and supported housing
- Who are at risk of or who are homeless
- Who are experiencing financial or material disadvantage
- Who receive concessions and community services
- Who are tenants or users of community facilities

These clients are sometimes supported by family members, or carers and sometimes community advocacy or support organisations. The Department also has a relationship with community organisations (which includes those that support individuals) with which it shares responsibility, in partnership, for the delivery of services. The Strategic Plan has attempted to capture all of these relationships.

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Departmental Structure

Disability ACT

Disability ACT is working with other agencies to establish appropriate systems in which to develop and provide a range of high quality, sustainable support options for people with disabilities who live in the ACT and the families who care for them, through:

- Developing, promoting and providing leadership in relation to the implementation of government policy on disability matters;
- Planning, allocating funding and monitoring services;
- Developing the workforce;
- Further developing a culture of integrity and accountability;
- Developing the informal support network in the community;

- Providing a range of specialist and support services through both direct service delivery and funded organisations;
- Implementing the Government Response to the Recommendations of the Report of the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services;
- Sharing responsibilities, encouraging people to take account of their responsibilities;
- Developing and managing relationships with other government departments, agencies, non-government organisations and members of the disability community;
- Forming strategic alliances with key stakeholders in the ACT; and
- Building the capacity and capability of the disability community sector.

Housing and Community Services ACT

Housing and Community Services:

- Provides services and client outcomes for clients in public and community housing, supported accommodation and those who receive community services, such as emergency relief;
- Builds stronger communities, developing the capacity and capability of the community sector, with which the Department shares responsibility for the development and delivery of services, building better partnerships with them and encouraging participation and innovation from clients and service providers;
- Fosters early intervention practices in service providers to ensure sustainable tenancies and a transition to independent living for those who are homeless;
- Improves asset and resource management to ensure housing and community facilities meet clients' current and future needs; and
- Continues to reform and develop the workforce and implement initiatives to perform as a best practice organisation.

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Therapy ACT

Therapy ACT provides a multidisciplinary therapy and support service for people with disabilities and delays in their development aged from birth to 65 years of age including assistance with physical, intellectual, communication and other functional difficulties. Therapy and support services are available for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social work and psychology.

Organisational Support Services

Finance and Budget

Finance and Budget is responsible for the provision of financial management, advice and support services to the Department, Senior Executives and the Office of the Minister. The group undertakes day-to-day financial management activities, as well as providing advice in relation to strategic matters. Areas of particular strategic interest include social housing asset management, inter-governmental financial relations, asset redevelopment opportunities, departmental and community facility management, as well as whole of department budget development and organisational performance reporting.

Policy and Organisational Services

Policy and Organisational Services is responsible for the provision of organisational support services for the Department, as well as the provision of whole of department strategic policy, governance and media/communications advice to the Senior Executive and the Office of the Minister. On a day-to-day basis, the group is responsible for human resources, industrial relations, training, Occupational Health and Safety, ministerial, cabinet and assembly matters, freedom of information, IT, public interest disclosure, privacy, government accountability and reporting matters, whole of department strategic policy, data and research, and communications matters.

Building stronger communities,
developing the capacity of the community sector

Inter-Governmental Context

As well as ACT Government funding, the Department operates within the bounds of joint Commonwealth/Territory programs.

The Department has entered into the following Commonwealth/Territory agreements:

- Commonwealth/State/Territory Disability Agreement;
- Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement;
- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Memorandum of Understanding;
- Indigenous Trilateral Housing Agreement; and
- National Data Agreements.

Commonwealth/State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA)

Under the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement, the ACT is responsible for administering accommodation support and other support services such as day activity programs and respite care.

On a snapshot day in 2001, 825 consumers received CSTDA-funded services in the ACT. In the same period, there was an estimated 39,000 people aged under 65 in the ACT with a disability and 10,500 with a severe or profound core activity restriction. Intellectual disability was reported by 62% of consumers as their primary disability with the age profile of consumers in the ACT slightly younger than for all capital cities (AIHW, 2003).

Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (CSHA)

Under the public housing program, the ACT Government provides long term social housing assistance to low-income households unable to access appropriate or affordable housing in the private rental market. Public housing is the major housing assistance program funded under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. The assistance provided under the Agreement includes public and community housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, crisis accommodation, home purchase assistance and private rental assistance.

The ACT faces a growing housing need that was identified through the Report of the ACT Affordable Housing Task Force released in December 2002. The Report showed that approximately 8% (9,200) of all ACT households were experiencing housing stress due to spending over 30% of their income on housing. The ACT vacancy rate at 30 June 2002 was less than 3%. Housing assistance in the ACT is characterised by a relatively high proportion of public housing to total housing stock. In 2001–02, there were 11,008 occupied public rental dwellings in the ACT, which was 8.6% of all households in the ACT in 2001, compared to 4.5% nationally.

prosperous, progressive,
skilled and creative



Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Memorandum of Understanding

Under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Memorandum of Understanding, funded services aim to provide transitional supported accommodation and a range of related supported services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In the ACT, in 2001–2002 there were 33 SAAP funded services. These agencies supported an estimated 1,900 clients in this period, representing 69 per 10,000 of the population aged 10 years and over, compared with 56 per 10,000 nationally (SAAP NDC Annual Report 2001–02).

Indigenous Trilateral Housing Agreement

This Agreement pursues equitable housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT by establishing a framework for a partnership between the Commonwealth, the ACT Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, and in the planning, delivery and administration of housing and related infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT.

National Data Agreements

National Housing Data Agreement

This Agreement provides a framework for collecting information to enhance our understanding of how housing contributes to the achievement of whole of government outcomes, departmental outcomes and research agenda and priorities in each jurisdiction. Collection of housing data that is consistent with other programs, such as those relating to income support, health and community services, will enhance the breadth of compatible information available. The information collected will enable assessments to be made of the role of housing in contributing to the reduction of poverty, advancement of welfare, and quality of life for individuals and the community as a whole.

National Community Services Information Agreement

The Agreement provides for the establishment of the national infrastructure and decision-making processes needed to integrate and co-ordinate the development of consistent national community services information. These processes are necessary to improve national community services information and, improve access to quality information by the community, service providers, consumers of services and governments. The broad objectives of this Agreement are to improve the quality of, and access to, national community services data, to reduce duplication of data development and data collections, and to ensure more compatible national data among agencies, within and across the different community services authorities, across State, Territory and Commonwealth authorities and with other human service sectors including health.

cohesive, fair, tolerant and optimistic

Strategic Themes

Undertaking our role in the Government's vision for Canberra over the next three years requires us to focus on five strategic themes.

Strategic Theme 1

Engaging and Involving Our Clients

Our clients are our primary concern. Using a person-centred approach and respecting their capacity to make decisions, we are working closely with them to address their needs and where appropriate, those of their families, carers and guardians.

Strategic Theme 2

Improving Outcomes for Our Clients

We are working to ensure that the services and programs we provide are meeting the complex needs of our clients at all ages and stages of their lives and in whatever circumstances they may find themselves.

Strategic Theme 3

Building Better Community Partnerships

Through a focus on community development and consultation, we are building closer partnerships with community organisations and the wider Canberra community to ensure that we deliver services of a high standard to them.

Strategic Theme 4

Serving and Contributing to Good Governance

We are responsive to the policies of the Government. Through the provision of support to the Minister and the Chief Minister and through strong relationships with those government departments that are our partners, we are developing an exemplary standard of accountability, supporting the infrastructure of government and upholding the practice of good governance.

Strategic Theme 5

Performing as a Best Practice Organisation

Our workforce is a crucial resource. We are establishing organisational systems to develop every staff member as a highly professional, respected and responsive officer working as a member of an effective team in a well-respected organisation.



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