

Action on Housing & Homelessness

This note provides ACT-specific commentary and information on this action area from ACOSS 2019 federal election commitment priorities.

Question: What do you think the federal government needs to be doing to ensure adequate federal funding, provisioning and co-operation for affordable housing, including via COAG? Will you work to urge action on Universal Design Housing? What is your view on secure and adequate funding for specialist homelessness services?

The facts

- The ACT is in housing crisis – our rents continue to rise, and remain the highest out of all capital cities, according to March 2019 Domain data.¹
- In 2016-17, ACT specialist homelessness services assisted 4,585 clients, of whom 46.1% (2,053) were homeless.²
- In 2016-17, for 32.6% (1,084) of clients needing accommodation, that need was unmet.³

1 Domain, *Domain Rental Report: March 2019*, Domain, 10 April 2019, <<https://www.domain.com.au/research/rental-report/march-2019/#canberra>>, in L Bladen, *Canberra rents continue to rise, still most expensive capital city to rent a house*, Domain, 11 April 2019, <<https://www.allhomes.com.au/news/canberra-rents-continue-to-rise-still-most-expensive-capital-city-to-rent-a-house-817535/>>.

2 AIHW, *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2016-17*, AIHW, Canberra, 2018, Data tables: ACT, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2016-17/data>>.

3 *ibid.*

- Anglicare Australia’s *2019 Rental Affordability Snapshot* found that out of 1,377 rental properties in ACT/Queanbeyan none were affordable or appropriate for people living on Newstart or Youth Allowance.⁴

Housing stress in the ACT

Commonwealth Electoral Division	People in housing stress (%)	Children in housing stress (%)	Rental households in rental stress (%)	Mortgage households in mortgage stress (%)
Bean	6.1	9.1	15.4	4.6
Canberra	7.1	9.7	15.8	3.2
Fenner	8.2	10.7	15.8	5.7

Source: R Tanton & Y Vidyattama, *NATSEM Policy Note 2019/2*, data file, NATSEM, Canberra, 2019, <<https://natsem.canberra.edu.au/publications/?publication=natsem-policy-note-2019-2>>.

Speaking from experience...

“If this refuge wasn’t here I’d be out on the street. I would be living it rough. I would be still be down in the dumps.”

— Gary speaking about being homeless in Canberra following a relationship breakup.⁵

“My partner and I probably looked at every photo for rental accommodation on real estate websites and I don’t think we could find a single one with a modified shower or bathroom area.”

— Dougie Herd, *The Canberra Times*.⁶

“As a single mum on single parent pension there was nothing. Nothing. Some of these houses were tiny and awful. You walk out the back and there

4 Anglicare Australia, *2019 Rental Affordability Snapshot*, Snapshot: Anglicare ACT – ACT and Queanbeyan, Anglicare Australia, Canberra, 2019, <<https://anglicareras.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/act-and-queanbeyan.pdf>>.

5 ACTCOSS, *Stories of Home*, ACTCOSS, Canberra, April 2016, <<https://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/advocacy-publications/stories-home>>.

6 R Packham and E Kelly, ‘People with a disability face “impossible” search for accessible rentals in Canberra’, *The Canberra Times*, 18 February 2017, <<https://www.allhomes.com.au/news/people-with-a-disability-face-impossible-search-for-accessible-rentals-in-canberra-20170217-gtzo4r/>>.

was an alleyway with needles on the ground. That's not ok for my young son to live in that place.”

— *Trish.*⁷

“Finding a house in Canberra is like finding gold in an ocean or a needle in a haystack.”

— *Jacob, a newly arrived refugee.*⁸

Further reading

- [Submission: Australian Building Codes Board – Accessible Housing](#), November 2018
- [Factsheet: Housing affordability and homelessness in the ACT](#), June 2018
- [Submission: Housing Choices Discussion Paper](#), March 2018
- [Submission: Towards a New Housing Strategy – ACT Community Conversation](#), September 2017
- [Stories of Home](#), April 2016

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ACTCOSS is committed to reconciliation, acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to elders past and present.

ACTCOSS represents not-for-profit community organisations and advocates for social justice in the ACT.

⁷ ACTCOSS, op. cit.

⁸ *ibid.*