

2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS
8 November 2018

Community Services Directorate

OUTPUT CLASS 2 STRATEGY, PARTICIPATION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Output 2.3 Community Participation Veterans and Seniors

Topic: Strategic Indicator 6 PROMOTE AN AGE-FRIENDLY CITY TO ENSURE THAT THOSE AGED 60 YEARS AND OVER ARE INCLUDED IN, AND SUPPORTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY LIFE OF THE ACT

The Directorate promotes an age-friendly city through the implementation of the whole-of-government *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing* and its Action Plans and positive ageing programs such as the Seniors Grants and Sponsorship Program, the Seniors Card Program, Seniors Week and Elder Abuse Prevention Program, and Life's Reflections Photographic Competition.

An annual survey measures how satisfied seniors are with the essential features required to make an age-friendly city: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; community contribution and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services.

Strategic Indicator 6: The proportion of Canberrans who agree that Canberra is an age-friendly City for seniors

Original Target	Actual Result	Variance
2017-18	2017-18	%
80%	68%	-15%

Result

The result of 68% was provided by an age cohort of 18 years and above. However, 76% of those aged 60 and above in the cohort agreed that Canberra was an age friendly city for seniors.

ISSUE: SENIORS INITIATIVES**2018-19 ACT BUDGET SUPPORT FOR SENIORS****Seniors Rights Service**

- \$640,000 has been provided over four years to Legal Aid ACT to establish a Senior Rights Service. This service will be established as a specialist legal service for older people in the ACT who are experiencing, or vulnerable to, elder abuse. Elder abuse can include physical, emotional or financial abuse carried out by someone the older person trusts, such as a family member, carer or friend.
- The specialist service will have an emphasis on early intervention to prevent the escalation of elder abuse.
- The service will work with agencies and community organisations in the sector to improve community awareness of elder abuse, through community legal education and outreach, along with improving pathways for clients seeking assistance and support.

Older Persons Mental Health Intensive Treatment Offer

- Following the 2017-18 pilot for the Older Persons Mental Health Intensive Treatment Service, the ACT Government is boosting funding to \$744,000 in the 2018-19 year to continue this very important service for older Canberrans.
- This initiative will provide additional mental health support in residential aged care facilities- keeping people in their home environment and out of hospital.

Expansion of General Rates Aged Deferral Scheme

- The Government has expanded the General Rates Aged Deferral scheme by removing the income and unimproved land value thresholds.
- All property owners aged 65 and over with at least 75 per cent equity in their home can now access the Deferral Scheme. The Scheme allows eligible property owners to defer their annual General Rates payments until such time as their property is sold.
- The Government charges a low rate of simple interest on deferred amounts.

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Age Friendly Suburbs Project

- The ACT Government's Age Friendly Suburbs initiative delivers pedestrian upgrades that create more accessible suburbs, allowing people to stay healthy, active and engaged with the community. The 2018-19 upgrade program includes upgrades in Page and Hughes.

ACT Seniors Card Program

- The ACT Government provides funding of \$115,000 annually to administer the ACT Seniors Card Program. Currently, COTA ACT have the Deed of Grant to provide this service until 30 June 2019. The ACT Seniors Card provides seniors access to savings on a range of goods and services provided by participating businesses.

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ISSUE: VETERANS INITIATIVES

Talking points:

Grants

- The 2018-19 budget provides an additional allocation of \$80,000 to enable the separation of the ACT Participation (Veterans and Seniors) Grant program to create a dedicated Veterans grants program for projects and/or programs that support Veterans and their families.

2018-19 Funding

- Funding to support the ACT Government Veterans Employment Strategy has been received from 2018-19 (\$74,000). This funding will be used for a range of activities including:
 - establishing a register of former and current ADF members who are interested in employment in the ACTPS including a summary of their skills/training;
 - matching ACTPS vacancies with people on the register and forwarding the vacancies to them;
 - attending ACT based transition seminars to present information on the ACTPS;
 - running face to face induction programs with veterans who commence in the ACTPS;
 - assisting veterans with the transfer of entitlements on commencement;
 - establishing and maintaining mentoring arrangements for veterans; and
 - working with Executive Champions.

Key Information

- Nil.

Background Information

- Nil.

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ISSUE: ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION**Talking points:**

- The ACT Government is committed to supporting older people in our community and reducing the instances of elder abuse.
- The 2018-2019 budget provides \$640,000 over four years to Legal Aid ACT to establish a Seniors Rights Service.
- This service commenced operations on 01 July 2018 to provide a specialist legal service for older people in the ACT who are experiencing, or vulnerable to, elder abuse. Elder abuse can include physical, emotional or financial abuse carried out by someone the older person trusts, such as a family member, carer or friend.
- Over 2017-2018, the ACT Government continued to respond to the Older Persons Abuse Prevention and Referral Information Line (APRIL) to provide information and referral on matters relating to elder abuse. Eighty-one calls were received by the service in 2017–18.
- On 1 July 2018, the functions and phone line of APRIL were transferred Legal Aid ACT's Seniors Rights Service to provide callers with direct access to support from this service.
- The Seniors Rights Service has recently been renamed the Older Persons ACT Legal Service (OPALS) in response to stakeholder feedback.
- To help stop elder abuse, it is important the community learns what elder abuse is, can know the signs, understand the rights of older people and how these rights can be protected.

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ISSUE: COST OF LIVING FOR SENIORS**Talking points:**

- The ACT Government has a suite of measures to ensure we are looking after the most vulnerable in our community, including seniors on fixed incomes, such as the pension.
- In order to make concessions accessible to more households and targeted to those who are most vulnerable, the energy and utility concession and the water and sewerage rebate was combined into one concession from 1 July 2017. This has provided extra relief to vulnerable seniors who are currently renting who were not able to previously access the water and sewerage rebate.
- The ACT Government offers a rates deferral program for older Canberrans who are on fixed incomes. The program allows eligible residents to defer their rates payments until such time as their property is sold. This can assist people who own significant property assets but have fixed or limited income. In the 2018-2019 budget, this program was expanded by removing the income and unimproved land value thresholds so more senior Canberrans can defer their annual rates to help with their cost of living.
- Since 14 January 2017, the Government has offered free off-peak travel on Action buses for seniors aged 70 and older. This can relieve transport cost pressures and ensure seniors can get around the city and remain connected members of society. This program was extended for another 12 months under the current budget.
- The Government funds the ACT Seniors Card, which is currently available to all ACT residents aged 61 and over who are retired or work less than 20 hours per week.

Key Information

- Nil.

Background Information

- Nil.

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Seniors & Veterans

ISSUE: AGE FRIENDLY CITY SURVEY

Key points:

- The *Age Friendly City Survey* opened on 12 March 2018 and closed on 12 April 2018. Hardcopy surveys were available during Seniors Week (12-18 March 2018) and distributed to various community locations, including ACT Public Libraries, community centres and seniors centres. The survey was also available on-line at the YourSay website.
- 768 responses were received with 80 per cent of those responding over the age of 60 and 47 per cent over the age of 70.
- 63 per cent of survey respondents were female and 36 per cent were male.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents (92 per cent) indicated that they had the information and support needed to stay connected and healthy.
- Respondents were most likely to select 'searching online' as their most preferred information source. While the preference towards accessing information online declined with increasing age of respondents, online was still the most preferred information source for all age groups, including respondents over 80 years, who were more likely to select online than newspapers as their preferred information source.
- Survey respondents were clear on their infrastructure needs such as housing and transport. 72 per cent of respondents said they have access to secure housing and accommodation.
- Survey participants were asked about how they are involved in the community with 70 per cent responding they 'help family and friends' and 53 per cent indicating they 'volunteer their time and skills'.
- The importance of the need for senior Canberrans to be treated with respect was highlighted as an important factor to Canberra as an age friendly city.
- The survey results will inform a Statement of Commitment, to be issued early in 2019 which will set out key priorities and recommendations to inform all areas of the ACT Government about planning to include the

needs of older Canberrans and to support the continuing development of Canberra as an age friendly city.

Key Information

- The survey results point towards a need for improvements to information provision and access to services for older Canberrans, particularly for those who are not able to easily find information online.
- A high number of comments were received about the need to address negative attitudes towards older Canberrans. 29 per cent of respondents indicated they had experienced age discrimination, particularly while being served and in employment.
- Respondents commonly listed the need for more affordable housing, and more ground-level, single story, smaller-scale properties that are not apartments.
- There was also a high number of additional comments about transport, parking and a need for safer walkways.

Background Information

- Participants in the survey were self-selected and the majority of responses were received via hardcopy surveys which were primarily available at community venues and events, including Seniors Week events.
- To build on the results of this survey further exploration is needed to consider the views and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, culturally and linguistically diverse seniors, LGBTIQ seniors, seniors with disability and seniors who are isolated and not as actively involved with the community.

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ISSUE: VETERANS EMPLOYMENT – ACT GOVERNMENT

Talking points:

- The ACT Government Veterans Employment Strategy aligns with the broader focus of the ACT Public Service to build a diverse, agile, responsive and innovative public service that delivers the ACT Government’s priorities and provides effective services for the ACT community.
- The Strategy focuses on assisting veterans as they transition from the Australian Defence Force into civilian employment.
- The Government’s vision is to make the ACT Public Service a leader in the recruitment and retention of veterans.
- We want to model this behaviour to businesses and companies across the Territory, as it is my firm belief that employing veterans, who are some of the most highly trained and skilled workers available, will be greatly beneficial to the Territory. It is also an important way we can honour the service they have given to Australia.
- Late last year, an all-staff survey was undertaken to determine the number of veterans employed by the Service and gain an understanding of their experience of entering the ACT Public Service. 134 responses were received. The results of the survey are now informing further actions for the ACT Public Service.
- A network of Executive Champions is being established. These ACT Public Service senior executives are looking at the best way they can support veterans with the transition into civilian life and employment in the ACT Public Service.
- A number of ACTPS employees attended the ACT ADF transition seminar on 18-19 April 2018 to provide background about the ACTPS, information on conditions of employment and promote employment possibilities.
- Seven senior executives in the ACT Public Service participated in Exercise Executive Stretch on 22-23 April 2018. This program is run by the Department of Defence to provide an opportunity for employers to see and experience first hand what Reservists do.

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- The HR system has also been updated to enable self-identification of veterans.
- Funding to support the ACT Government Veterans Employment Strategy has been received from 2018-19. This funding will be used for a range of activities including:
 - establishing a register of former (and possibly current) ADF members who are interested in employment in the ACTPS (this would include a summary of their skills/training);
 - matching ACTPS vacancies with people on the register and forwarding the vacancies to them;
 - attending ACT based transition seminars to present information on the ACTPS;
 - running face to face induction programs with veterans who commence in the ACTPS;
 - assisting veterans with the transfer of entitlements on commencement;
 - establishing and maintaining mentoring arrangements for veterans; and
 - working with Executive Champions.

Key Information

- Nil.

Background Information

- The ACT Government Veterans Employment Strategy was launched on 13 September 2017.
- Responses were received from 134 veterans who are now working in the ACT Public Service.

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ISSUE: ACT SENIORS CARD**Talking points:**

- The 2016-17 Budget announced changes to the eligible age for the ACT Seniors Card from 60 to 65 by 2025.
- The eligibility age is being gradually transitioned to allow households to adjust to this change.
- After the initial increase to 61 in 2017-18, the eligibility age will increase by another year every two years until it reaches 65 in 2025. The following table indicates the age applicants must be to apply:

Date of birth	Eligibility age
Before 1 July 1957	60 years
1 July 1957 to 30 June 1958	61 years
1 July 1958 to 30 June 1959	62 years
1 July 1959 to 30 June 1960	63 years
1 July 1960 to 30 June 1961	64 years
After 30 June 1961	65 years

- The Government is committed to supporting members of our community who are most in need of assistance. The Seniors Card is not means tested and as such is not targeted according to financial need.
- Gradually increasing the eligibility age for the ACT Seniors Card better reflects increased life expectancies, and helps to ensure assistance is targeted where it can be most effective.
- This initiative is consistent with changes to the Commonwealth pension age which is also increasing.
- Western Australia is also increasing the eligibility age of its Seniors Card from 60 to 65 over a similar transitional period. The eligible age in Western Australia is currently 62, increasing to 65 by 2025.

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- While the eligibility age for the ACT Seniors Card is set by the Government, businesses remain free to offer discounts to seniors of any age.

Key Information

- Nil.

Background Information

- Nil.