MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

I am delighted to launch *Empowering people: Community Services Directorate Strategic Plan 2018–2028*. The Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to building inclusive and equitable communities where everyone is respected and valued.

The Strategic Plan is collectively owned by our staff who, through a collaborative and robust engagement process, worked on its development. During the process, staff were guided by the following principles:

1. Positive life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are placed at the centre of what we do.
2. Grounding our work with a clear and stated purpose that promotes shared action.
3. Developing an integrated management framework that incorporates strategy, resources, culture, reporting, analysis and forecasting.
4. Planning is founded on a clear set of outcomes that help us determine effectiveness and success.
5. Building on the momentum from previous years.

The plan provides us with a clear purpose. Over the next 12 months, I look forward to working closely with all staff to cement the Strategic Plan into our business, in order to achieve the five aspects of our purpose:

- Intervening early to support positive life outcomes.
- Delivering the right services that are human-centred, holistic and tailored to those most in need.
- Building strong communities by using evidence-informed approaches to drive local solutions and connect people in their local communities.
- Fostering inclusive participation by empowering Canberrans to be involved in decisions that enable them to lead fulfilling lives.
- Driving collaboration and internal and external partnerships by building effective relationships and embedding cultural change to form an integrated and holistic human services system.

I am confident that this ambitious 10-year plan will enable us to achieve meaningful outcomes for the benefit of our community, clients, service partners, and staff.

Thank you to all who contributed to the development of the plan. I was impressed with the level of engagement at the team, division and executive level. Together we have captured the diverse views of our staff and work.

I look forward to continuing this conversation as we work together to implement the Strategic Plan and its Integrated Planning Framework.

**Bernadette Mitcherson**
Director-General, Community Services Directorate
CULTURAL INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The Community Services Directorate acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

We strive for positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through a genuine commitment to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement. This commitment is demonstrated through respectful interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, and strives to work with different communities differently, and continuously improve services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We are committed to reconciliation and will develop a Reconciliation Commitment to replace the Reconciliation Action Plan. The commitment will outline practical actions that will drive this commitment both internally and in the communities that we support. The Reconciliation Commitment will include key performance indicators to measure outcomes achieved. The following principles will guide our efforts to ensure cultural integrity:

- **Commitment to cultural proficiency** — continuously improving and embedding understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the workplace will lead to the development of culturally-proficient policies, and culturally-safe work spaces and services. As a key action, core cultural competency training will be reviewed regularly by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for accuracy and relevance, to recognise contemporary issues and cultural growth.

- **Authentic engagement and self determination** — we work to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans feel empowered to identify and lead within their communities. Engagement acknowledges cultural authority and seeks to understand and appropriately address local need by ‘listening to understand, not react’.

- **Building on designated positions** — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are valued at all levels of the workforce. We commit to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment more broadly by adopting new recruitment processes that value life experiences and cultural expertise.

- **Celebrating cultural identity** by promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, acknowledging country and participating in reconciliation activities. We will embed a culture of respect and appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their significant contribution to the community.

- **Delivering culturally-specific and accessible services** (targeted and universal) by understanding cultural preferences and being flexible in the way services are delivered to build trust and strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

- **Partnering with Aboriginal service providers** with a view to building trusting relationships and fostering self determination, leadership and improved outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
The primary purpose of the Community Services Directorate is to empower people to meet their full potential and enable the development of inclusive and strong communities.

We will do this by:

1. **Intervening early to support people** to be safe, to ensure basic needs are met, to enable active participation in community life and to support positive life outcomes.

2. **Delivering services** that are human-centred, holistic, tailored and integrated with a focus on ensuring the right supports are provided to those most in need. Services are grounded in robust policy that is evidence-informed and looks to proactively address risks, and build community resilience and self-determination.

3. **Building strong communities** with a focus on using evidence to inform services and programs, community development approaches that connect people to local communities, and maximising inclusion through targeted community-based programs. This includes alignment of government priorities and legislation to address community-identified needs.

4. **Fostering inclusive participation** by empowering Canberrans to participate in decision-making, to form community connections, and to live fulfilling lives, promoting cohesion, equity and inclusion for all. This includes respecting their lived experience and moving towards a strengths based approach within service delivery.

5. **Driving collaboration and internal and external partnerships**, by building effective relationships with other government and non-government partners. This includes embedding the cultural change needed to intervene early and improve life trajectories as part of an integrated and holistic services system.
**OUR COMMUNITY**

6,476 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People*

102,036 Families
(41,560 with children under 15 years*)

74,441 Children
(0-14 years*)

412,617 Canberra People*

55,822 Young People
(15-24 years*)

49,935 Seniors
(65 and over)*

105,039 Born Overseas*

201,425 Females*

16,719 People Who Need Assistance With Core Activities*

17,210 Child concern reports received~

939 children and young people in at least one out of home care placement during the year^*

80 young people were supervised in the ACT on an average day by Youth Justice†

160 women received return to work grants~

175 families and 265 children engaged in the Growing Healthy Families Program~

21,884 tenants provided with public housing~

4,585 people (1.3% of our population) received support from specialist homelessness services during 2016–17^*  

---

* Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profile, 2001.0  
~ Report on Government Services 2016–17; part F tables 16A.1, 17A.1, part G table 19A.3  
^ ABS 2017, Australian Demographic Statistics 3101.0  
# Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Youth justice in the Australian Capital Territory 2016–17, JUV 124
OUTCOMES

Supporting meaningful and life-changing outcomes is one of our core commitments. The following core outcomes will drive our business in the years ahead:

FOR OUR COMMUNITY

• **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership**
  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a strong voice, are decision makers on issues that impact them and lead in the achievement of positive life outcomes.

• **Independence and dignity**
  Individuals have access to information and supports that empower them to make informed decisions and undertake valued leadership opportunities in their communities.

• **A secure place to call home**
  People have equitable access to secure homes that are appropriate, affordable and meet their needs and circumstances, in order to support whole of life outcomes.

• **Safe from harm**
  People feel safe in their homes, community, and when accessing services. Social influences on personal safety such as culture, gender and intergenerational trauma are considered in policy and program development.

• **Inclusive communities**
  People feel a sense of belonging in their communities. They are valued, respected, have a voice, and are able to access formal and informal networks that support them to achieve whole of life outcomes. Local services take a whole of community approach and focus on building connections, local solutions and individual self-determination.

FOR OUR ORGANISATION

• **Leadership, advocacy and vision**
  The Community Services Directorate is a leadership organisation where we access leadership opportunities and are guided by strong values. The directorate is able to set a vision for reform within the broader human services system and advocates for this change through strong and respectful leadership approaches.

• **Sustainable and integrated services**
  Services are accountable, transparent, collaborative and evidence-informed. They champion innovative, digital and integrated responses that support clients to direct the outcomes that are important to them. Continuous improvement is driven by a robust evaluation and review cycle.
DRIVERS FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

There are internal and external risk factors that can impact on our capacity to achieve our purpose and core outcomes. These drivers will be investigated and further addressed through the Community Services Directorate Strategic Risk Plan and include:

RESOURCING
Alignment of resourcing is needed to meet competing priorities, increasing demand and complexity of workload. Increased complexity and demand mean that staff spend more time responding to individual cases or tasks which can increase the risk of staff burnout. Greater clarity on roles, responsibilities and core functions can prevent staff burnout and ensure a continued focus on high quality service delivery.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
The nature of our work has resulted in recruitment and retention challenges. High staff turnover can lead to the loss of corporate knowledge and the inability to attract experienced workers. Spreading resources too thinly can cause high turnover as suitably skilled staff are unable to use their skills and expertise to greatest effect.

SERVICE SYSTEM CHALLENGES
Service system challenges, such as gaps and silos, prevent services from being able to meet our holistic needs. Clients can find the service system difficult to navigate which can result in poor outcomes. Changes to funding arrangements at the national and local level can result in increased complexity and changes to eligibility, leaving a system unable to provide the continuum of care that clients need. System challenges need constant monitoring and mitigation.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION
When internal communications are limited, opportunities for partnerships and collaboration can be missed. This can result in duplication of effort, poorly designed responses, and a lack of understanding about key decisions.

PERCEPTIONS
Limited understanding of our role and poor community perceptions, can result in services and programs not attracting sufficient funding or prioritisation. As a result, long-term reforms can be overlooked in favour of short-term gains.

REACTIVITY
Reactive responses result in a lack of prioritisation of commitments. Leading to fewer planned, proactive and preventative responses. Innovation and reflective practice are difficult to achieve in overly reactive environments which can prevent the achievement of long-term change, and lead to further silos.
The Integrated Planning Framework (the framework) brings together our strategic, organisational and division level planning to support the achievement of the core outcomes.

The intent of an integrated approach is to ensure all levels of planning across the organisation align and contribute to our purpose, while enabling an agile response to emerging insights and changing needs.

**BENEFITS OF INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PLANNING**

1. Enhance decision-making
2. Increase productivity and sustainability
3. Reduce volatility
4. Improve ability to meet strategic goals
5. Increase management accountability
6. Breakdown business silos
7. Develop business continuity

The framework relies on robust performance monitoring and risk management processes to inform practice, organisational effectiveness and future planning.

An outline of the Integrated Planning Framework is illustrated below:
ORGANISATIONAL PLANS

In addition to the Reconciliation Commitment, our other organisational plans will be developed in the first year of the Strategic Plan with three-year review cycles to ensure responsiveness to changing needs:

**OUR FINANCIAL PLAN** will ensure the business is financially sustainable into the future to be compliant and meet budget outcomes.

It will do this by:

- aligning budget indicators and output classes to the Strategic Plan outcomes
- communicating financial positions broadly and succinctly
- linking our day-to-day work with the financial landscape
- increasing financial literacy
- providing training for financial delegates.

**OUR WORKFORCE PLAN** will provide future-focused direction in the attraction and engagement of a skilled workforce that has the expertise to lead an agile organisation, reflecting the diversity of our community.

It will do this by:

- setting out the leadership framework for the organisation
- consistently supporting people in a positive way through staff engagement and retention strategies
- investing in tailored training and career planning to meet capability needs
- establishing flexible practices and a positive work-life balance culture
- promoting the positives of a diverse and multi-skilled workforce
- creating opportunities for internal collaboration and communication
- embedding continuous improvement through reflective practice and evaluation
- investing in technology to support staff and to manage organisational change.

**OUR STRATEGIC RISK PLAN** will identify internal and external drivers and risks to the directorate’s viability, equity, sustainability and effectiveness to ensure best practice governance that allows us to efficiently deliver our goals and objectives.

It will do this by:

- identifying, assessing and mitigating risks
- putting in place risk measures appropriate to the level of risk
- outlining regular risk assessment processes and review points
- identifying contingencies
- allocating roles and responsibilities in owning and managing risks.

**OUR DIGITAL AND DATA PLAN** will build capability to develop efficient and effective services through future planning and understanding of current and emerging needs. It will support evidence-based decisions by making information accessible, useful, meaningful, and connected, and empower Canberrans to access the services they need through digital platforms.

It will do this by:

- identifying opportunities for linking and reducing duplication in data and information management systems
- identifying trends and issues to inform planning, funding and programs
- embedding evaluation and use of common data standards
- investing in new technology, staff capability and change management to support digital transformation, including a focus on digital inclusion for Canberrans
- establishing data and information governance and infrastructure needed to achieve our digital and data goals.
DIVISIONAL BUSINESS PLANS

Annual divisional business plans will outline each division’s alignment with the purpose and core outcomes of the Strategic Plan, with a special focus on the needs of the division’s clients and service partners. Divisional business plans will include division-specific risks and capability needs, and the allocation of resources to achieve outcomes that meet the needs of the community.

Divisional business plans will be developed on a consistent planning template and shared to ensure all areas have line of sight to work happening in other divisions. This will enable improved information sharing, clarity of roles and functions, and support collaboration across areas with mutually reinforcing objectives.

REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

Three tiers of reporting will support us in monitoring performance against the Strategic Plan.

- **Strategic outcomes measures** will track our performance against the core outcomes identified in this plan. Strategic outcomes measures will be reported to Community Services Directorate Strategic Board of Management on a quarterly basis and made publically available via the ACT Government Open Access Scheme.

- **Critical indicators dashboard** will provide the Strategic Board of Management with important information to enable monitoring of strategic risks, including the drivers of change identified in this plan. Critical indicators will be reported to Strategic Board of Management on a monthly basis (unless otherwise indicated).

- **Operational performance and practice reviews** will support divisions in monitoring progress against division plans, including highlighting areas of risk, capability needs, and resource allocation. Reviews will be held quarterly through the Strategic Board of Management.

REVIEW AND FUTURE FORECASTING

Annual reviews of reporting results will be undertaken to enable responsiveness to changing needs, address any emerging sustainability concerns, mitigate risks and ensure organisational capability to meet future needs.

Trend analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes, social determinants, early intervention, and family violence will be used to adapt existing strategies as needed and to provide a robust evidence base for future strategic and organisational plans.
OUR ROADMAP

The Strategic Plan will be implemented over 10 years with three-year iterations of organisational plans.

Our roadmap identifies the key milestones to maintain momentum and drive the Strategic Plan forward.