

Commissioning Conversations #14

Welcome to 2023! We are looking forward to commissioning together with many cycles reaching critical design or investment phases this year.

In this edition:

- [Preparing for the year ahead](#)
- [Partnering for a strong and sustainable community sector](#)
- [Before and after – the commissioning difference](#)
- [Commissioning around the world](#)
- [Resource Spotlight: Lived Experience](#)
- [Key Upcoming Dates & Activities in 2023](#)

PREPARING FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

We are conscious the commissioning activity will increase in the year ahead. That increase can have a range of impacts on participating service providers and partners as well as the integration of other commissioning cycles. We are monitoring activity to give you a forecast and help you prepare to participate.

Here are some tips to prepare for commissioning in the year ahead:

Foundation knowledge

Ensure good commissioning understanding across your organisation or team. Refresh your understanding by watching the [What is Commissioning?](#) video online or reading the new commissioning website. Join a commissioning learning activity – for Commissioners that’s the [Community of Practice](#); for service providers or partners that’s the Sector Update Forums or the [ACTCOSS Commissioning Drop-in Sessions](#). If you have questions reach out to CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au or HealthCommissioning@act.gov.au

Participation preparation

For service providers and partners, we recommend reviewing the [Sector in Progress](#) pages to find commissioning cycles relevant to you and get in touch with the Commissioner or with CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au or HealthCommissioning@act.gov.au to express your interest or sharing insights or ideas.

- Now to August 2023 – a high number of cycles are assessing needs and service gaps (DISCOVER & STRATEGISE); you don’t need to wait for an invitation to provide insights.
- March to November 2023 – many cycles shift into DESIGN; express your interest in being involved in design activities that look at service specifications and/or service delivery models.
- September to end 2024 – multiple INVEST phases start – some procurement will begin in early 2023. We are looking at ways to streamline this process for the community and health sector.

Think system integration.

For Commissioners, we recommend reviewing the [Sector in Progress](#) pages and connecting with other Commissioners driving related commissioning cycles to share insights and examine integration opportunities across the system. If you need support or introductions get in touch with CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au or HealthCommissioning@act.gov.au.

For providers and partners think about opportunities for greater system integration that could be built into service and system design. While our processes are occurring around existing funding streams, we are seeking to achieve more system integration as one of the outcomes. We know that as service providers, your experience means you are well placed to contribute practical solutions that will lead to better experiences and outcomes for service users.

PARTNERING FOR A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SECTOR

The ACT Government has tabled its Government Response to the *Counting the Costs: Sustainable Funding for the ACT Community Services Sector* report, agreeing or agreeing in principle to all recommendations.

To address multiple recommendations in the review, the ACT Government will support the first stage of a Sector Sustainability Program with an investment of \$395,000 during the Budget Mid-year Review. The first stage will aim to identify how Government could work with the sector to ensure funding reflects real costs of services, and better understand the impact of increased demand.

We will commission the Sector Sustainability Program and help move to a sustainable resourcing and relationship model with the community sector in the ACT. This builds on the previously announced \$4 million over four years included in the 2021-22 Budget and a further \$8.9 million over four years in the 2022-23 Budget to support an increase in community sector indexation, reflecting welcome award wage increases.

Download a copy of the response: [Community Sector Reform - Community Services \(act.gov.au\)](#)

Read the media statement here: [Working in partnership for a strong and sustainable community sector - Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate \(act.gov.au\)](#)

BEFORE AND AFTER – THE COMMISSIONING DIFFERENCE

Sometimes it can be hard to see the impact and benefits of reforming the human service system and how government and the community sector partner. But commissioning is making a difference.

Here we share a few examples of how our collective efforts are shaping improvements in the system, in our partnerships and for our community.

Example 1: ACT Disability People’s and Carers Organisations

The ACT Disability People and Carers Organisations began delivery of advocacy with new grant agreements providing greater funding certainty and greater clarity to guide their work and impact.

Commissioning difference:

Before commissioning we had been providing short-term funding arrangements that were different for each organisation. This made it challenging for advocacy organisations to build trust or engage effectively and meaningfully with government or commissioners. Funding agreements focussed on outputs delivered by the advocacy organisations rather than understanding the impact of their work.

Commissioning is helping us build stronger relationships between government and nongovernment peak organisations while making advocacy more sustainable and aligned to identifying community needs.

Reform outcome: Improving sector sustainability through closer partnerships and better understanding of the needs of our service delivery partners.

Example 2: Safe and Connected Youth

Today the Safe and Connected Youth program is effectively meeting the needs of young Canberrans at risk of homelessness, with ongoing funding secured.

Commissioning difference:

Before commissioning we may have attempted to create a service or program without trialling it first; or without listening to experiences unique to Canberrans. We may have contracted one service provider after a competitive process resulting in a contract with limited flexibility to make continuous improvements to the way the program was delivered. If we approached the community need without collaboration or the flexibility to improve, we would not be supporting young people effectively today.

Commissioning is helping us deliver a more sustainable and supported program tailored to the needs of Canberra’s young people.

Reform outcome: Improving integration across the service system to support seamless and holistic care and transitions between services.

For more information: [Commissioning Case Studies - Commissioning \(act.gov.au\)](https://www.act.gov.au/commissioning)

COMMISSIONING AROUND THE WORLD

We are not alone in embracing commissioning. Communities, service providers and governments throughout the world and across Australia have come to the same conclusion – that we need to get better at responding to community need and evolving our human service systems.

Commissioning may look a little different in other countries or communities but we share key principles – a strong focus on the relationship between government and service providers; and inclusive collaboration to design services to meet community need.

We stay across commissioning practices and approaches in other countries and jurisdictions to continuously improve our approach here in the ACT. Here are some recent discoveries:

- [Commissioning Relationships](#) from the Human Learning Systems 2022 Conference in the UK reinforces our approach to partnerships.
- [Civil Society Organisations as System Stewards](#) – a call to action for Commissioners to understand their role not only for a commissioning cycle but for system reform.
- [SA Health Commissioning Framework](#) demonstrates the importance of transparency and shared accountability for commissioning across a health system.
- [Commissioning policy projects in New Zealand](#) helpful in understanding why our DISCOVER phase is so integral to an effective commissioning cycle.

Have you come across something useful or insightful? Share it with us CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au

Help Commissioners discover - share your insights

Commissioners develop [discovery papers](#) to bring together what we know about needs, gaps, delivery models. This includes elements like program or delivery insights, data, lived experiences perspectives, best practice examples, formal reviews or feedback.

The discovery paper is a key foundation document to inform all commissioning activities and helps all participants understand the starting position for needs assessment, potential service options and delivery models.

When a cycle is in the DISCOVER phase you can help the Commissioner by:

- sharing your insights; best practice examples; lived experience or client perspectives - as a sector provider or partner.
- sharing insights from another commissioning cycle or government activity or government research or insights – as a public servant or related Commissioner.
- Reminding commissioners of what has been shared previously so that it can be included in Discovery and you don't need to say or share it again during strategy and design sessions.

Everyone has the opportunity to see what the Commissioner has brought together when the draft discovery paper is published online like the [Child, Young and Family Services Program \(CYFSP\) Draft Discovery Paper](#).

Here are the current Commissioners and commissioning cycles in DISCOVER that could benefit from your insights. Send an email and we will connect you to the Commissioner.

CYCLE & COMMISSIONER	SEEKING SECTOR INSIGHTS	CONNECTING GOVERNMENT INSIGHTS
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (Whole of Government) CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au HealthCommissioning@act.gov.au	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service gaps • Emerging needs • Service choice • Lived experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Commissioning Cycles • ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Agreement • Our Booris, Our Way • Next Steps for our Kids
Veterans Homelessness CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service gaps • Emerging needs • Existing services for veterans • Lived experiences. • Best practice to link and coordinate services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Commissioning • Mental Health Commissioning • ACT Carers Strategy
Job Readiness Program (delivered through Canberra Institute of Technology) CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived experiences – have you or do you know someone who has benefited from the Program? • Opportunities to connect vocational training to workplaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the Gap • ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Agreement

Children's Services Program CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service gaps • Emerging needs • Lived experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Homelessness Commissioning • Mental Health Commissioning • Next Steps for our Kids • Safe and Connected Youth • Our Booris, Our Way
Community Development Program CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How your organisation is providing services • Lived experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Homelessness Commissioning • Mental Health Commissioning • Next Steps for our Kids • Safe and Connected Youth • Our Booris, Our Way
First Nations Justice Program (delivered by Justice and Community Safety) CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service gaps • Emerging needs • Lived experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the Gap • ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Agreement

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: LIVED EXPERIENCE

The newly appointed Commissioning Lived Experience Advisory Panel (the Panel) has met for the first time to finalise how the Panel will operate and help inform commissioning cycles.

Lived experience, gathered in a range of respectful ways, should be woven into the commissioning process, so that together – government and non-government partners - can listen, understand, and redesign from the human experience of our services, systems and supports.

Supported by resources like the [guide to lived experience in commissioning](#) and a [tool in the lived experience checklist](#), the Panel intends to support planning, offer advice on gathering approaches and connects Commissioners with relevant existing lived experience insights.

Thank you to Lisa Kelly from Carers ACT, Catherine Mellors from Woden Community Services, Beth Garwood from MIEACT and Linda James from CREATE Foundation ACT who are the founding members of the Panel.

For more information on the Panel or to seek advice from the Panel contact your strategic commissioning team CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au or HealthCommissioning@act.gov.au

KEY UPCOMING DATES & ACTIVITIES 2023

- [March – Homelessness – First procurement processes open](#)
- March – ACT Health and Community Partner webinar
- [1 March – Child, Young People and Families – Government Interface Workshop](#)
- [29 March – Child, Young People and Families – Needs and Problem Framing Workshop](#)
- [April – Homelessness – First procurement process closes](#)
- [April/May – Community Support – Procurement process opens](#)
- [27 April – Child, Young People and Families – Current service user journeys and experiences World Café](#)
- [May – Community Support – Procurement process closes](#)

Stay informed of the indicative commissioning schedule via the [commissioning calendar](#), a tool to support your participation.

This indicative calendar can include 'to-be-confirmed' dates that may change but will be confirmed via email invitations to commissioning activities. Check the sub-sector pages for further insights on timings and processes where you may be a participant.

SUBSCRIBE

If you are interested in regularly receiving Commissioning Conversations, please email CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au and ask to be added to the distribution list.

USEFUL LINKS

- [Joint ACT Government Commissioning website](#)
- [Commissioning Calendar](#)

[Post-activity survey](#) **Follow us on social media**

Community Services Directorate



ACT Health Directorate



www.act.gov.au/commissioning