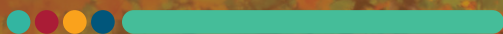




ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Annual Report
2025–2026

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Design: 2B Advertising and Design
Cover photograph: Grant O'Loughlan
Some design features in this report are based on the Nautilus artwork by Lynnice Church.

ISBN 978-0-646-74510-7

Accessibility

- This document is available online, in Word and PDF at **www.hrc.act.gov.au**
- Contact us for accessible formats such as large print.



Annual Report

2025–2026

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TRANSMITTAL CERTIFICATE



Caitlin Tough MLA
Minister for Human Rights
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
Canberra ACT 2601

2 October 2026

Dear Minister,

2025–26 ACT Human Rights Commission Annual Report

This report has been prepared in accordance with section 7(2) of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* (ACT) (Annual Reports Act), and in accordance with the requirements under the Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Directions 2026 (ACT) (the Directions).

It has been prepared in conformity with other legislation applicable to the preparation of ACT Human Rights Commission's annual report.

I certify that information in the attached annual report, and information provided for whole of government reporting, is an honest and accurate account and that all material information on the operations of the ACT Human Rights Commission has been included for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

I hereby certify that fraud prevention has been managed in accordance with the Public Sector *Management Standards 2006* (ACT) (repealed), Part 2.3 (see section 113, *Public Sector Management Standards 2016*).

Section 13 of the Annual Reports Act requires that you present the report to the Legislative Assembly within 15 weeks after the end of the reporting year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Penelope Mathew".

Dr Penelope Mathew
President, ACT Human Rights Commission

COMPLIANCE

The ACT Human Rights Commission (the Commission) must comply with the Annual Report Directions made under section 8 of the Annual Reports Act. The Directions are available at the ACT Legislation Register at www.legislation.act.gov.au

This compliance statement indicates the subsections, under Parts 1 to 5 of the Directions, that are applicable to the Commission.

Part 1—Directions overview

The requirements under Part 1 of the Directions relate to the purpose, timing and distribution, and records keeping of annual reports. The Commission complies with all subsections of Part 1 under the Directions.

To meet Section 15 Feedback, Part 1 of the Directions, contact details for the Commission are on page 5 and give readers the opportunity to provide feedback.

Part 2—Reporting entity annual report requirements

The requirements within Part 2 of the Directions are mandatory for all reporting entities and the Commission complies with all subsections as follows:

- transmittal certificate, see page 6
- organisational overview, see page 8
- performance, see page 20
- financial management reporting, see page 109.

Part 3—Reporting by exception

The Commission has no information to report by exception under Part 3 of the Directions for the 2025–26 reporting year.

Part 4—Annual report requirements

The following subsections of Part 4 of the 2026 Directions are applicable to the Commission:

- for information on justice agency complaints made to the Commission, see page 71
- for information relevant to the *Carers Recognition Act 2021*, see the annual report of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACSD).

Part 5—Whole of government annual reporting

All subsections of Part 5 of the Directions apply to the Commission. Information satisfying these requirements is reported in the one place for all ACT Public Service directorates, as follows:

- bushfire risk management, see the JACSD annual report
- human rights, see the JACSD annual report
- legal services directions, see the JACSD annual report
- public sector standards and workforce profile, see the annual State of the Service Report
- territory records, see the annual report of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic, Development Directorate (CMTEDD).

ACT Public Service Directorate annual reports are available at www.act.gov.au/open/annual-reports

ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

Established in 2006 under the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005* (HRC Act), the Commission is an independent agency. The President and other Commissioners of the Commission must act independently in exercising their functions under the HRC Act. The Minister for Human Rights (the Minister) may, in writing, direct the Commission to inquire into and report to the Minister in relation to a matter that can be complained about under the HRC Act.

Our vision is for an inclusive community that respects and realises human rights and ensures access to justice for everyone.

This reporting period saw the Commission update corporate documents including the privacy policy and the client services charter. These documents help clients understand the services of the Commission and what they can expect when engaging with staff at the Commission.

In developing the client services charter, the Commission consulted with the community through YourSay for a period of 8 weeks, as required by the HRC Act, and was pleased that feedback reflected the positive contribution the Commission makes to the Canberra community.

A range of internal policies and procedures were developed during the reporting period, with these documents supporting the work of the Commission by providing a consistent framework for staff when addressing privacy, service delivery, inclusion and risk.

The Commission undertook building work at the Allara Street premises to address identified hazards and ensure the ongoing safety of staff and clients when accessing the Commission's services. The Commission had been closed to walk-in clients since mid-2025 and was able to reopen to the public in April 2026.



From left, Victims of Crime Commissioner, Juliette Ford, Human Rights Commission President and Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Penelope Mathew, Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, Karen Toohey and Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, Jodie Griffiths-Cook.

As part of the President's role in managing the administration of the Commission, and as required under Division 3.9 of the HRC Act, the President is required to chair monthly Commission meetings. In the reporting period, 13 Commission meetings were held, progressing the Commission's strategic priorities, as identified in the strategic plan 2025–28 and enabling the smooth administration of the Commission.

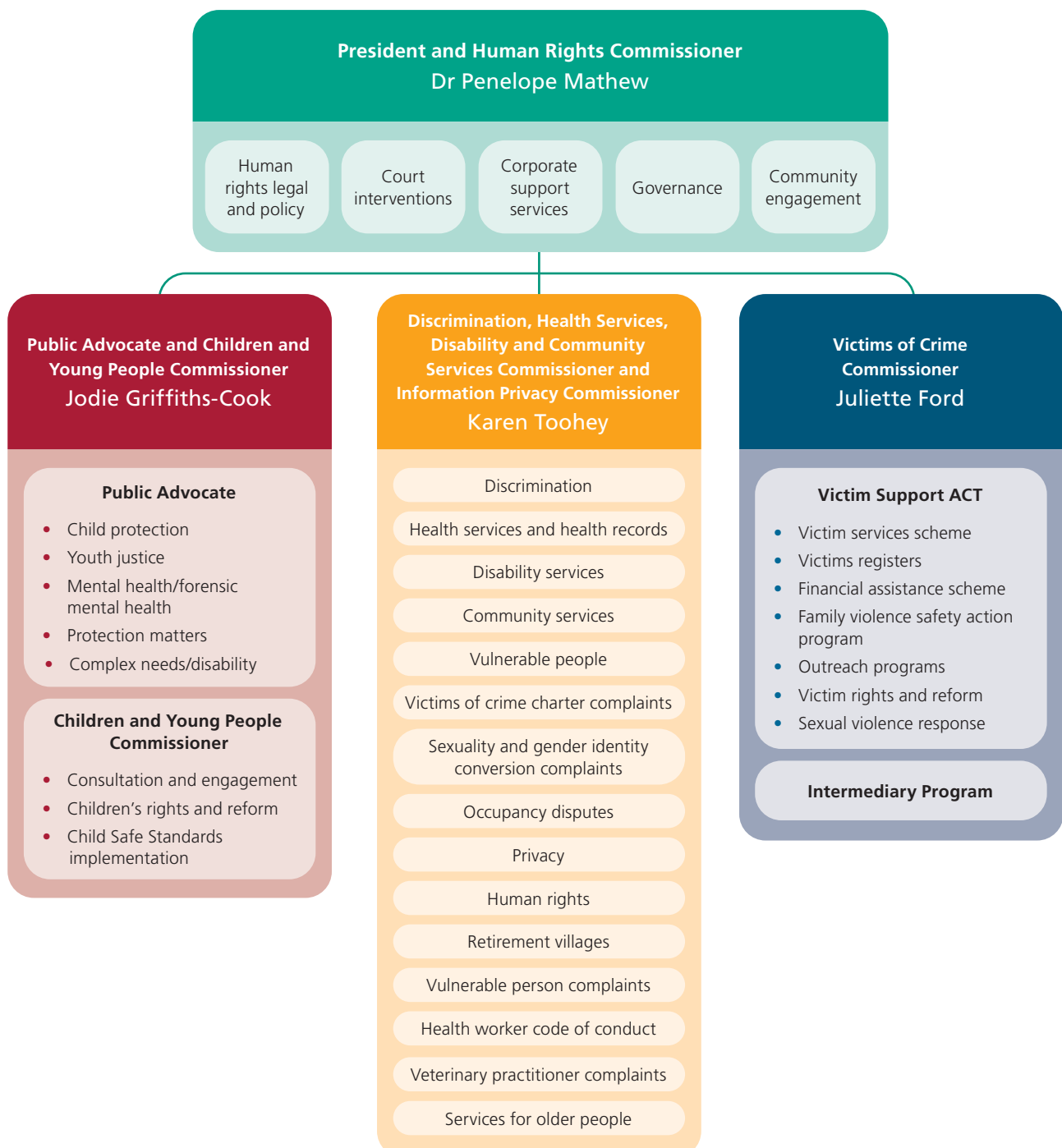
During the reporting period, the appointment of a new Victims of Crime Commissioner meant that 5 people led the major functions of the Commission during 2025–26:

- President, Dr Penelope Mathew
- Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Penelope Mathew
- Public Advocate, Jodie Griffiths-Cook
- Children and Young People Commissioner, Jodie Griffiths-Cook
- Discrimination Commissioner, Karen Toohey
- Health Services Commissioner, Karen Toohey

- Disability and Community Services Commissioner, Karen Toohey
- Information Privacy Commissioner, Karen Toohey
- Victims of Crime Commissioner, Margie Rowe (acting for the period 1 July 2025 to 20 February 2026) and Juliette Ford (from 23 February 2026).

Remuneration for these executives is determined by the Remuneration Tribunal under section 10, *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995*.

ACT Human Rights Commission structure



Together the Commission achieves its outcomes and objectives by working independently and collaboratively across the 4 areas of the Commission to:

- promote understanding of human rights, and engagement with human rights issues, by the ACT community
- review laws, including draft legislation, policies and procedures, through legislative scrutiny and use of the audit power in section 41 of the *Human Rights Act 2004* (the HR Act)
- provide oversight of public authorities and access to remedies where rights are breached or at risk—for example, through complaint handling, advocacy for victims of crime, intervention by the Public Advocate, and working as part of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the UN's Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)
- support courts and tribunals through strategic use of the intervention power in section 36 of the HR Act, the Public Advocate/Children and Young People Commissioner (PA/CYPC) role in tribunal matters and with witness intermediaries
- listen to, stand with and advocate for those in the ACT community who are most at risk, or who have experienced violations of their rights or standards of service provision
- provide safe, responsive and accessible services for ACT community members so they can safely raise their concerns and use the services of the Commission to address risk, exclusion, discrimination, safety and barriers to participation in public life in the ACT.

Staff survey

During 2025, the ACT Public Sector conducted its biennial staff survey.

The Commission's 2025 results were pleasing, with an approximate response rate of 64 per cent (up from 59 per cent in the 2023 staff survey). Of these responses, 90 per cent of staff reported they were satisfied with their jobs and 94 per cent of respondents indicated that their teams work effectively together.

Survey responses also highlighted that senior leaders provide clear strategy and purpose (72 per cent of respondents). This result reflected the work that

was done to develop the Commission's strategic plan and implementation through planning days. These planning days continue to provide important opportunities for the Commission to come together and collaboratively share ideas.

Based on the feedback received through the survey, the Commission will continue to focus on improving learning and development opportunities, as well as identifying health and wellbeing initiatives for staff, which will complement the internal policies and procedures that were released in late 2025 aimed at addressing this priority area.

Key corporate plans and frameworks

To support the delivery of these functions, the Commission works under the following corporate documents, which are available on the Commission's website at www.hrc.act.gov.au:

- Strategic plan 2025–2028
- Governance and corporate support protocol 2025–28
- Operations protocol 2025–28
- Client services charter 2026–2029
- Social inclusion plan 2023–2026
- Cultural safety charter, Ngattai yeddung: Listen good.

Strategic plan 2025–2028

As required under the HRC Act, the Commission develops a strategic plan every 3 years, setting a roadmap for the strategic direction of the Commission in delivering efficient and effective services.

Commissioners discussed implementation progress against the strategic priorities at quarterly intervals in the Commission meetings.

ACT Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Our Vision

An inclusive community that respects and realises human rights and ensures access to justice for everyone



Our Purpose

WE LISTEN...

to, engage, educate and inform you and your community

WE DELIVER...

accessible services to empower and support you

WE ADVOCATE...

for your rights to justice, dignity and wellbeing

WE HOLD GOVERNMENT...

systems and people to account to uphold your human rights

WE DRIVE...

rights-based systemic change



Our Values

INDEPENDENT

We are courageous, providing a frank and fearless independent voice in challenging inequality and injustice

RESPECTFUL

We respect and support people of all identities and experiences

COLLABORATIVE

We empower and actively engage others within and beyond the Commission

INTEGRITY

We respect privacy, and act with compassion and integrity, always aiming for the highest quality outcomes

INNOVATIVE

We continuously innovate, gathering evidence to evaluate and improve, and we are open to change



Our Capabilities

CULTURALLY SAFE

We respect the cultural rights and spiritual values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and we provide **culturally safe** services

CLIENT-CENTRED

We ensure all our work is **client-centred**, so we deliver safe, respectful and timely services

ACCESSIBLE

We provide services that are flexible and **responsive** to diverse community needs

ENGAGED

We **listen actively** and connect to ensure people know their rights, and that we understand and prioritise the most important issues

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

We are an **employer of choice** for the diverse human rights workforce as demonstrated through our recruitment processes and capability development

Build and enhance strong partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations in the ACT region to promote respect for, protection of and fulfilment of their rights

Enhance our education and outreach programmes to improve understandings of rights and promote compliance

Champion the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people including leading implementation of the ACT Child Safety Standards Scheme and advocating for increased investment in early intervention and diversionary programs/services for young people at risk, and their families/carers

Over the next 3-years we will...

Improve service delivery and protection of ACT community members through the effective response to individual concerns and complaint handling, systemic investigations, submissions to parliamentary inquiries and effective engagement with key stakeholders

Pursue a rights-based approach for victims of crime including positive duties to effectively advocate for victims' rights and support recovery from the impacts of crime

Advocate for additional rights in the Human Rights Act with a focus on socio-economic rights, and pursue other improvements in key pieces of legislation within our mandates

ACT Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Governance and corporate support protocol 2025–28

As required under the HRC Act, in consultation with the Director-General (JACSD) and other Commissioners, the President prepares a governance and corporate support protocol (the protocol) every 3 years to clarify the relationship between JACSD and the Commission.

The protocol provides transparency and accountability on the relationship between JACSD and the Commission, while maintaining the independence of the Commission.

During 2026 the protocol was updated (annual reporting requirements and budget sections) and is now available on the Commission's website.

Operations protocol 2025–28

The HRC Act requires the Commission to prepare an operations protocol every 3 years that guides the Commissioners in fulfilling their statutory roles and providing quality services to the community.

During 2026 the protocol was updated, highlighting the reopening of the reception service, and is available on the Commission's website.

Client services charter 2026–2029

As required under the HRC Act, every 3 years, the Commission consults with the public to prepare a statement about how the Commission will treat its clients. This statement—the client services charter—also explains what clients can do to help the Commission treat them well and how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with a Commission decision or services.

The new charter, in Easy English, is available on the Commission's website.

Social inclusion plan 2023–2026

The Commission's social inclusion plan promotes the inclusion of groups that experience discrimination or disadvantage. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; children and young people; LGBTIQ+ people; people from multicultural backgrounds; older people; people with disability; people experiencing vulnerability due to social circumstances; and victims of crime.

Cultural safety charter, Ngattai yeddung: Listen good

The cultural safety charter is designed to help the Commission provide clients, staff and colleagues with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respected. The cultural and spiritual values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported by the Commission's values, processes and policies.



Dr Penelope Mathew
President and Human Rights Commissioner

ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



From the President and Human Rights Commissioner

Human rights are fundamental to a dignified life for all human beings. The independent ACT Human Rights Commission (HRC) plays the vital role of upholding these rights for the residents of the ACT and is a strong advocate for every human right to be protected through the ACT's *Human Rights Act 2004* (the HR Act).

The Commission has an unusually large remit that brings together the Human Rights Commissioner (and President of the Commission), the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner (DHSDCSC), the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner (PA/CYPC) and the Victims of Crime Commissioner (VOCC). Our 4 Commissioners carry out many human rights functions including complaints handling with respect to human rights, discrimination and in numerous other areas; intervention, with the leave of the court or tribunal in cases that involve the application of the HR Act; advocacy at an individual and systemic level; education; and support, including financial support for victims of crime.

Key statistics demonstrating the depth and breadth of the Commission's work include the following:

- the Commission held 138 community engagement events
- the DHSDCSC received 2,068 complaints and responded to 2,122 enquiries
- the Human Rights Commissioner and team provided a total of 65 written legal advices, comments and submissions, and intervened in 10 cases, including 5 new cases
- the VOCC and Victim Support ACT (VSACT) provided VSACT case coordination for 2,594 clients and received 890 applications to the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS)
- there were 551 referrals to the ACT Intermediary Program

- the CYPC engaged with over 1,425 children and young people, and the PA acted on 6,141 occasions to raise concerns in respect of 887 people.

The addition to the HR Act of the right to adequate housing, entering into force on 1 January 2027, is a significant first for Australia. It will add to the existing protection for privacy of the home contained in section 12 of the HR Act. This has proved to be a significant lever for ensuring that the most vulnerable Canberrans' rights with respect to their homes are not arbitrarily interfered with and that they are afforded a respectful and meaningful hearing regarding their interests.

In a decision handed down in 2026 by the ACT Supreme Court, 3 women who are social housing tenants succeeded in their human rights claims against the territory regarding decisions of the Commissioner for Social Housing to relocate them under the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program. The Commission intervened in the proceedings, presenting detailed arguments regarding the content and application of the HR Act. The court found that the Commissioner for Social Housing had failed to properly consider human rights, including the right to privacy of the home and, in the case of one of the tenants who is an Aboriginal woman, the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in section 27(2) of the HR Act.

The right to adequate housing is about more than the right to enjoy the privacy of an existing home. It requires governments to progressively achieve adequate housing for all members of society. The Commission, which has pushed for inclusion of the right to housing in the HR Act over many years, applauds all members of the Legislative Assembly for the unanimous vote in favour of the new right, and notes the measures announced by the government in the 2026–2027 Budget to enable the construction of more housing.

The Commission encourages the government to protect other important rights through further amendments to the HR Act. All rights support each other, and the absence of legal protection for any of our fundamental human rights undermines the rights already enshrined in the HR Act. For example, the right to health is essential to the enjoyment of many rights, including the right to life, which is already protected by the HR Act. Yet, the right to the highest attainable standard of health ('the right to health' as it is usually known in its abbreviated form) is not yet included in the HR Act.

The right to health should be included in the HR Act and it should engender a strong focus on primary health and prevention, ensuring healthy lives for all and potentially lessening expenditure on expensive tertiary health care. Inclusion of the right to health in the HR Act would contribute to the development and implementation of health policy and bring the machinery of the HR Act to bear on this important right:

- all new legislation would be scrutinised for compatibility with the right
- all legislation would be interpreted in a way that is compatible with the right, insofar as this is possible given the purpose of the legislation being interpreted
- public authorities (ministers and public servants, and health practitioners working in the public health system, for example) would have to act consistently with the right and properly consider it when making decisions
- complaints concerning potential breaches of the right could be brought to the HRC and cases brought to court.

This would not be an entirely new development for the ACT. The Commission has for many years handled complaints about provision of health services in the ACT and access to and integrity of health records in the ACT (see page 31). It is time to extend the existing legal protections regarding health care and enact the right to health.

Protecting and resourcing rights such as housing and health is critical to the full participation in society of all ACT residents. Working to secure a fairer and more egalitarian society will also work to protect everybody's rights, including by tackling the social determinants of crime. Research has shown that the road to crime and imprisonment is associated with factors such as poor education, lack of adequate mental health care, homelessness and poverty.

Among the most pressing human rights issues for Australia is its relationship with the First Peoples of this country. Despite the reservoir of goodwill in the ACT, the only jurisdiction to vote yes in the Voice referendum, the statistics on overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody are among the worst in the country.

The government-commissioned report by the Jumbunna Institute has highlighted that for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, systemic racism, placement in out-of-home care (OOHC), early interaction with police and youth detention can become a pathway to prison. Tackling systemic disadvantage, including ensuring the rights to equality, health, housing, education and the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, will help to change life trajectories.

Self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be realised, and the lived experience of those whose rights have been violated must be heard and valued. As part of its commitment to working in partnership with and alongside the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the Commission is organising a series of annual planning days in the coming financial year which invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to provide input as to the most valuable ways in which the Commission can use its powers to support their rights. In addition, the Commission will hold regular informal meetings with the community at Boomanulla Oval, building on the recent success of the meet and greet for the new VOCC, Juliette Ford. Juliette is a leading lawyer whose experience spans private practice, government, academia and work with community legal centres, including the Aboriginal Legal Service in Western Australia.

It is also critical that the Commission is adequately resourced. Over time, the Commission has accumulated new functions, including our role in the National Preventive Mechanism against torture and related ill-treatment, without the necessary resourcing.

The Human Rights Law and Policy Team within the Commission has the main carriage of human rights-related matters (other than human rights complaints, which go to the DHSDCSC, who provides a one-stop shop for all complaints handled by the Commission). Three staff are responsible for legislative scrutiny, court interventions, human rights reviews or audits, and education.

The staffing profile has not shifted over the decades despite the increase in Canberra's population and the complexity of matters handled by the Commission.

The Commission should be a human rights resource for both the public service and the community, but the demand for information and support cannot be met given the current levels of staffing for the human rights team. The impact of not adequately resourcing the independent human rights watchdog is felt by the most vulnerable Canberrans. Litigation highlighting failures in this regard, such as the decision by the Supreme Court concerning social housing tenants could be avoided if decision-makers were better versed in human rights. We can do more to ensure decision-makers are better informed if the shortfall in resourcing for our office is remedied.



Karen Toohey

Discrimination, Health Services, Disability
and Community Services Commissioner
and Information Privacy Commissioner

ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



From the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner and Information Privacy Commissioner

As the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner (DHSDCSC) and Information Privacy Commissioner (IPC), my team and I handle all of the Commission's complaint jurisdictions, providing a single point of contact for Canberrans to have concerns dealt with across a wide range of issues. This provides the ACT community with a comprehensive, free, accessible means of resolving concerns. It also means we can identify systemic issues and try and address these through the individual complaint mechanism, through our own-motion investigations, known as Commission-initiated considerations (CICs), and by working collaboratively with our colleagues within the Commission, in government and in the community.

People often use the complaint process when their own efforts to resolve a concern or deal with an issue informally have been unsuccessful. Where possible, we facilitate early resolution of complaints by contacting people or organisations to deal with matters informally and quickly. Much of the work we do is to assist Canberrans to resolve real problems affecting their daily lives including access to health services, issues with employment or housing, concerns about services that ACT children and young people are accessing, and the safety and wellbeing of older people and people with disability in our community.

The number of complaints we receive has increased over the last 3 years from 1,357 in 2023–24 to 2,068 in 2025–26, which represents a 53 per cent increase. While this reflects an expansion of our complaint jurisdictions, it also reflects the work we have undertaken to provide an accessible, timely and fair process for the community.

Each complaint is a concern or problem a Canberra community member has encountered. This includes reasonable adjustments for students in school, barriers accessing suitable accommodation and housing, people dismissed from a job because of age or disability, people seeking an explanation or action to be taken about the way health services like surgery or mental health treatment have been provided, and frontline workers collaborating with us to address issues of abuse or mistreatment of older people and people with disability in our community.

I am grateful to have an exceptionally skilled and professional team working with the ACT community to resolve their concerns on a wide range of matters.

Some notable achievements this year included:

- we received 2,068 complaints, up 21 per cent from 2024–25, and finalised 1,840 complaints
- we received 154 vulnerable people complaints, raising concerns about abuse, neglect or exploitation of older people or people with disability, a 33 per cent increase from 2024–25
- we responded to 2,122 enquiries from the ACT community where we provided information about the process and suggested alternatives if we were unable to deal with a concern
- we considered 201 complaints from or on behalf of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, which represents a 50 per cent increase since last reporting period or 10 per cent of our total complaints
- we ran many community information sessions about the Discrimination Act positive duty and our complaint handling jurisdictions more broadly, participated in panels on AI and privacy, workshops on experiences of racism in the ACT, visited retirement villages and continued to convene the ACT Elder Abuse Prevention Network
- we undertook a number of preventive visits as a member of the ACT NPM under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

I look forward to continuing this work to ensure Canberra is a safe, inclusive and diverse community.



Juliette Ford

Victims of Crime Commissioner

ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



From the Victims of Crime Commissioner

On 23 February 2026, I was appointed the ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner (VOCC). It is a privilege to hold this role in the Human Rights Commission and to lead the extraordinary multidisciplinary team dedicated to supporting and advocating for victims of crime. The work of the HRC, as this report shows, is remarkable in both its breadth of service delivery and the systemic advocacy undertaken.

Section 11 of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* (the VoC Act) sets out my responsibilities in connection with the administration of justice. The objects of the VoC Act include to promote recovery from the impacts of crime, to contribute to upholding the safety, privacy and dignity of victims of crime, to promote and uphold the rights and interests of victims in the administration of justice and to acknowledge the central role that victims hold in the justice system. All work undertaken by Victim Support ACT (VSACT) contributes to the achievement of these objects and supports our ongoing advocacy to ensure the intent of the legislation is upheld.

The VoC Act establishes the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime (the Charter) which encompasses a clear set of participatory and other rights for victims with mechanisms to raise concerns or complaints if justice agencies do not comply with their obligations. Government is to be acknowledged and congratulated for listening to the advocacy of my predecessors in leading this reform.

However, while the Charter is among the most comprehensive sets of legislated victims' rights in Australia, there is no specific enforcement mechanism or remedy. Victims often ask what the point is of raising a concern or complaint about a breach of their rights if the matter cannot be resolved and there is no effective compliance or enforcement?

The question is well asked, but the answer is not straightforward when considering the objects of the VoC Act and the nature of rights themselves. This issue is compounded by the fact that currently the Charter is not considered when a proposed law is scrutinised to determine if it is human rights compatible. We have advocated in relation to these issues and look forward to completion of the Government's Review of the Charter and its recommendations.

This further highlights the imperative of specific inclusion of victims' rights in the *Human Rights Act 2004* (the HR Act). Victims' rights are, after all, human rights, and it is important to avoid the false dichotomy of viewing them as being in opposition to human rights more generally. The ACT is the first jurisdiction to pass human rights legislation and continues to be at the forefront of human rights protections. Specific inclusion of victims' rights in the HR Act will ensure the appropriate consideration of balancing rights, and thereby lead to better and more trauma-informed outcomes for all members of the community.

A core part of VSACT's work is to deliver the Victim Services Scheme, which continues to grow in complexity with little change in our staffing profile. The scheme is dynamic, responsive and victim-centred. Notably, the provision of counselling and therapeutic hours has increased by 10 per cent this year due to a larger pool of providers. The investment required of this service is modest when compared with the significant impact it has on victims' lives.

Critically, VSACT also provides specialist outreach programs to ensure members of the community who face additional barriers to accessing justice receive the support they need. In the current year, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Program has supported and advocated for the rights of 113 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime, many of whom are impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence and require intensive, ongoing and holistic

support. I had the pleasure of congratulating the program's Senior Advocate on winning the Strong Spirit, Strong Culture Award for 2025–26. I am also proud to acknowledge the extensive work of our Disability Advocate Lead and Multicultural Liaison Officer, who lead their work fearlessly in advocating for access to justice and supports for their clients.

The administration of the ACT's victims' registers continued to expand this year. The registers ensure victims and affected persons are able to exercise their rights to receive information and participate in decisions that affect them during sentence management and when matters are referred to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

At the end of 2025–26, the Adult Offenders Victims Register had 532 registrations, a 35 per cent increase from the previous year. The growth in registrations is largely due to the team fulfilling their obligation under section 15H of the VoC Act to notify and inform all eligible victims about the register. The register has also seen a 123 per cent increase from the previous year in the number of victim submissions provided to the Sentencing Administration Board (SAB). The majority of registrations relate to domestic, family and sexual violence, and other forms of personal violence, and feedback from victims includes feeling heard and being able to participate in SAB decisions, improving their capacity to make informed decisions about safety.

The Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) continues to recognise the harm caused by offences and to support the recovery and safety of victims, with almost half of all applications received relating to immediate needs payments. This year, total payments made under the scheme fell to just under \$5 million, which is partly attributable to changes to the legislative framework.

VSACT continues to expand the Wraparound Multiagency Response to provide coordinated interagency supports for sexual violence victim-survivors, and to implement recommendations of the nation-leading Sexual Assault (Police) Review (2024). In June 2026, 3 VSACT specialist sexual assault advocates commenced colocation within ACT Policing. The advocates will provide a multidisciplinary lens to reporting and investigative processes, empowering victim-survivors to engage effectively with officers and supporting ACT Policing to strengthen trauma-informed practices.

We have further continued to work in partnership with the Operation Foster ACT Policing team to ensure that all victims identified as requiring possible further action have the opportunity to further re-engage with police. This work is significant and has led to multiple prosecutions and the provision of increased supports. We are also working with ACT Policing to establish the Standing Sexual Assault Review Mechanism, and convened the Action Committee to oversee the implementation of these recommendations.

The importance of the Family Violence Safety Action Program's work to support domestic and family violence victim-survivors and prevent lethality, with a focus on perpetrator accountability and visibility across the system, cannot be overstated. The program is a unique example of coordinated, integrated service delivery by multiple agencies working together with one shared purpose—to expedite the critical sharing of risk information to support safer outcomes for victim-survivors. The program's success is evidenced by its ongoing commitment to building strong, high-trust relationships with partners and its effective management of risk.

I am further pleased to confirm that the Intermediary Program, which operates 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, received confirmation of ongoing funding in the 2025/26 Budget. This is in recognition of the findings from the University of Sydney's independent evaluation of the program, which identified that it had led to significant cultural change in the way in which police, courts and lawyers approach engagements with vulnerable individuals. Notwithstanding the program's reputation and positive impact upon the administration of justice, the amount of ongoing funding allocated has required a contraction in staffing levels. This has led to a triaging process so the program can continue to meet its core demand, given demand is expected to increase over the next 12 months.

Finally, I would like to thank my predecessors Margie Rowe and Heidi Yates for their vision, and extraordinary care and wisdom in leading the dedicated VSACT team with compassion, integrity and a steadfast commitment to victims' rights. I am honoured to follow in your footsteps.



Jodie Griffiths-Cook
Public Advocate and Children
and Young People Commissioner

ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



From the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner

In my 2 roles of Public Advocate (PA) and Children and Young People Commissioner (CYPC), I see firsthand the challenges faced by many Canberrans when dealing with life circumstances that increase vulnerability.

As PA, my team and I advocate for people whose rights are not being appropriately upheld and/or whose needs are not being adequately responded to by relevant services and systems. We are also responsible for monitoring systems that make decisions and take actions that, under certain conditions, lawfully limit human rights. Part of our work is to ensure these systems do what they are supposed to do in the way they are supposed to do it, and to speak up (in courts, tribunals and other settings) if a decision or action does not seem reasonable given the information available.

The 2025–26 reporting period saw sustained demand for public advocacy. In this past year, 12,650 compliance documents were received and processed, with 3,731 (29 per cent) requiring secondary review due to concerns having been identified. We also acted on 6,141 occasions to raise concerns about the rights, safety and/or wellbeing of 887 children, young people, and adults, representing 40 per cent of the 2,235 people referred to the PA.

As CYPC, my role involves seeking to ensure that the rights of children and young people (C&YP) are considered and upheld, notably their right to have their views considered in decision-making about issues that impact their lives. We engage directly with C&YP to provide information about their rights, safety and wellbeing in ways that are accessible to them.

We then use what we hear from them to influence legislative reform, policy development and systems design/improvement. In 2025–26, we engaged with over 1,425 C&YP (with over 600 through face-to-face consultations).

Commencing in 2024, we are now also responsible for supporting organisations to implement the ACT Child Safe Standards (CSS) Scheme and in 2025–26 we engaged with approximately 1,500 individuals representing 290 organisations. We have also created 32 new organisational resources.

Although a lot of our work responds to individual concerns for children, young people, and adults, we also use what we learn from the experiences and challenges people have with systems to contribute to local and national conversations that influence and shape reform, including legislative changes. This enables us to support the continuous improvement of systems that respond to the needs, rights and interests of Canberrans.

The challenge of responding to increased demand and service delivery within a complex and dynamic environment requires flexibility, innovation and agility. To this end, I would like to acknowledge and commend my team for their commitment to delivering high-quality services that improve outcomes for Canberrans who experience vulnerability.

I feel honoured to continue delivering on my commitment to the important work of my office. I am proud of our accomplishments in 2025–26 and look forward to continuing to promote and pursue effective and sustainable outcomes that improve the lives of ACT children, young people, and adults across 2026–27, which will be my final year as the ACT PA and CYPC.

PERFORMANCE

HUMAN RIGHTS

Provided a total of **65** written legal advices, comments and submissions



17 consultations were held for the right to healthy environment review



More than **1,000 people** reached through human rights training & events

Intervened in **10** cases, including **5** new cases



COMPLAINTS

2,068 complaints up from **1,706** in 2024–25



201 complaints from **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander** people, representing **10%** of total complaints

154 vulnerable people complaints, up from **116** in 2024–25

157 human rights complaints



79% said the complaints process was fair



84% said the process was accessible

Responded to **2,122** enquiries (ie calls, emails, requests for information).

PUBLIC ADVOCATE



Received and processed compliance documents. **12,650**

2,235 children, young people and adults brought to the attention of the Public Advocate with over **6,000** acts of advocacy for **887** people.

3,731 compliance documents proceeded to secondary review.



Achieved **86%** stakeholder satisfaction (against a target of 75%).

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSIONER



1,425 children & young people engaged, including:

602 through face-to-face consultations



608 through surveys and polls



1,489 professionals from **289** organisations engaged about the **Child Safe Standards** scheme

26 new **Child Safe Standards** information resources

VICTIMS OF CRIME

2,594 victims of crime received case coordination

13,156 hours of therapeutic services provided



\$4.9 million paid under the Financial Assistance Scheme

532

registrations on the Adult Offenders Victims Register



✓ Wraparound Multiagency Response **436 referrals**

✓ Family Violence Safety Action Program **230 referrals**

✓ Intermediary Program **551 referrals**

ACT National Preventive Mechanism

The Commission, together with the ACT Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) and the ACT Ombudsman, is part of the ACT's multi-body National Preventive Mechanism (ACT NPM). The ACT NPM is established by the *Monitoring of Places of Detention (Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture) Act 2018* (MPD OPCAT Act) and prescribes the functions, powers and members of the NPM.

Full details about the ACT NPM's activities will be outlined in the Annual Report for the ACT NPM. This page records

the contribution of the Commission towards the ACT NPM function. Resourcing for the ACT NPM is extremely limited, with funding limited to a one-person coordinator function, located within the ACT Ombudsman's team. Due to this lack of funding, the members of the ACT NPM perform their additional legislated duties using existing resourcing. Despite these challenges, the Commission, acting in its capacity as ACT NPM, exercised its legislated function and had some significant achievements, in conjunction with the other members.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre

Post Visit Summary Report

In August 2025, the ACT NPM released its Post Visit Summary Report following a joint semi-announced visit to Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, the ACT's only youth detention centre. The visiting team was the Human Rights Commissioner and PA/CYPC, along with the ACT ICS and the ACT Ombudsman. The report included findings that the higher number of young people in detention was leading to staffing pressures which, combined with the centre's operational focus on physical and procedural security, was reducing young people's access to education, health and other essential services. The report found young people were spending too much time in their units with too little to do. The review made 6 recommendations including with respect to record keeping, appropriate access for statutory oversight bodies, revision of the business continuity plans, prioritisation of diversionary measures and the introduction of body-worn cameras.

Youth justice forum

In June 2026, the ACT NPM partnered with the Health and Community Services Directorate to co-facilitate a forum to inform the development of a fit-for-purpose strategic plan and model of care for Bimberi. The forum included and drew on the experience of national and international speakers. In addition to the keynote speakers, participants included decision-makers as well as those working with children and young people in government and community roles. The Human Rights Commissioner and PA/CYPC played key roles in organising and leading the forum.

Mental health facility visits

During the reporting period, the ACT NPM completed 2 semi-announced visits to Dhulwa Mental Health Unit and the Eating Disorder Residential Treatment Centre. Team members were assigned overarching areas of interest to review as follows:

- physical, sexual and psychological safety
- involvement of consumers in treatment decisions
- consumer communication with the outside world
- effective access to independent complaints mechanisms
- staffing
- restrictive practices and training scenarios
- clinical handover
- food and mealtimes.

The visiting team consisted of members from the Commission and the ACT NPM Coordinator. The visiting team proposed 9 recommendations across the 2 site visits.

DHSDCSC staff have also undertaken human rights and discrimination training with staff working in secure mental health facilities over the reporting period.

Governance meetings, guidelines and standard operating procedures

The MPD OPCAT Act requires the ACT NPM to develop guidelines about the way in which it exercises its functions. The 3 members worked together (after consultation with places of detention) to develop guidelines and standard operating procedures during the reporting period. The guidelines were notified and became effective from 5 September 2025 as the ACT National Preventive Mechanism Guidelines 2025 (No 1) and may be found on the Legislation Register.¹ The Operating Procedures are found on the ACT NPM website.²

The ACT NPM held 6 governance meetings during the reporting period, with Dr Mathew chairing those meetings from the beginning of 2026. The Commission, as a part of the ACT NPM, met with other members of the Australian NPM in August 2025 and March 2026, and joined an Australian NPM learning and development session in May 2026.

United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visit

In December 2025, HRC staff as part of the ACT NPM, met with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention as part of its official visit to Australia. The experts from that delegation were in Australia to gather information relevant to places where people are deprived of their liberty, including visits to places of detention in the ACT. The ACT NPM, along with other members of

the Australian NPM, had provided a submission ahead of the visit outlining detention-related issues of concern relevant to the visit. The Australian NPM submission will be published following the presentation of the experts' final report to the UN Human Rights Council, expected in September 2026.

Advice, submissions and appearances

The Commission provided input to the ACT NPM in various submissions and advice provided over the reporting period including:

- In August 2025, the ACT NPM made submissions to the statutory review of the operation of section 70 of the *Corrections Management Act 2007* (CMA), calling for a repeal of the section which requires strip searches on admission to the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). These were published in March 2026. The submissions also noted the use of alternative technology provided safer and more effective means of searching and detection.
- In June 2026, the ACT NPM made a submission to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs as part of its Inquiry into the Bail Amendment Bill 2026. The submission supported the passage of the Bill while proposing additional amendments that would better support human rights. Later the same month, the Human Rights Commissioner appeared alongside other NPM agency heads before the Committee and gave evidence consistent with its submission.
- On 3 July 2026, the Human Rights Commissioner, alongside other ACT NPM agency heads, appeared before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee regarding the inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system. The invitation followed a submission made by the ACT NPM to the Committee during the reporting period.

¹ <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2025-494/>

² <https://www.npm.act.gov.au/all-news/act-national-preventive-mechanism-standard-operating-procedures>

President and Human Rights Commissioner

Highlights

HUMAN RIGHTS

Provided a total of **65** written legal advices, comments and submissions



17 consultations were held for the right to healthy environment review



More than **1,000 people** reached through human rights training & events

Intervened in **10** cases, including **5** new cases



Human rights legal and policy team

The human rights legal and policy team consists of 3 legally trained staff who support the Human Rights Commissioner across her various functions: one senior director and 2 human rights legal advisers. This small team manages interventions in Supreme Court and other legal proceedings; coordinates the Commission's legal and policy submissions to inquiries; delivers human rights education to community and ACT Government agencies; provides confidential feedback on legislative and policy proposals; and may also, if requested, provide advice to members of the ACT Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Right to a healthy environment —section 41 reviews

A right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment was introduced to the HR Act and came into effect in the last reporting period. This was a nation-leading development and, to encourage a continued focus on this important right, the Human Rights Commissioner has commenced a series of reviews of the right to a healthy environment under section 41 of the HR Act. The reviews are intended to lead to improved understanding of this right among public servants and the broader community, while encouraging the effective implementation of the right across government. The first of these reviews examines how ACT laws protect outdoor air quality, with a particular focus on emissions from wood heaters, bushfire management practices, including cultural and prescribed burning, and transport-related pollution. The review will contribute to evidence-based recommendations to support the ACT Government's ongoing obligation to progressively realise and strengthen the right to a healthy environment through continuous improvements in air quality.

The Commission commenced consultation on the current phase of the review in 2025 and continues to reach out to relevant stakeholders. Consultation to date has included one-on-one conversations with MLAs, ACT Government executives, First Nations people, and business and community organisations such as the Canberra Business Chamber and ACT Farmers. The Human Rights Commissioner presented at a meeting of the Tuggeranong City Council in February 2026 which enabled discussions with members of the community that are impacted by poor air quality in winter. The Commission also hosted a roundtable in June 2026 to facilitate a discussion about key findings of the research and the draft recommendations, with a targeted selection of 13 key stakeholders and subject matter experts. The review continues past the reporting period with a focus on community consultation and input.

Right to housing passed for introduction in 2027

In October 2025, the HRC celebrated the passing of the *Human Rights (Housing) Amendment Act 2025*, a development for which the Commission had been advocating to better protect human rights of Canberrans during an ongoing housing and homelessness crisis across Australia. In preparation for the commencement of the right in 2027, the Commission has met with

community organisations about the right's implementation, developed a fact sheet on the newly protected right and has also updated other fact sheets to ensure better access to information about all protected human rights for the broader community.

Court interventions

One of the many functions of the Human Rights Commissioner is to intervene in court and tribunal cases that raise human rights. The Supreme Court must not allow a proceeding involving the application of the HR Act to continue until the Commissioner has received notification of the proceeding. In addition, the Commissioner can seek leave to intervene in lower courts and tribunals if she becomes aware that human rights have been raised. In the reporting period, the Commission received notification of 12 matters. On receipt of a notification, the Commissioner and her team assess whether to seek leave to intervene using the Commission's Intervention Guidelines. In the reporting period, the Commissioner was granted leave to intervene in 5 matters.

In a new development in the reporting year, the Commissioner now manages her own small budget line to enable her to brief counsel for the purpose of her intervention function. Prior to this arrangement, the Commissioner required approval from the Government Solicitor before she could brief external counsel to appear in the Supreme Court. The new arrangement enables the Commissioner to brief external counsel for the purpose of her intervention function without first seeking approval, and this better aligns with the statutory independence of her office.

Strip searches and use of force in the Alexander Maconochie Centre

Williams v Director-General of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate [2025] ACTSC 396

In September 2025, the Supreme Court delivered a decision in which the former Human Rights Commissioner had intervened during the 2022–23 reporting period. The proceedings involved distressing use of force and an involuntary strip search against Ms Julianne Williams, in circumstances where Ms Williams was grieving the death of her grandmother and had been refused leave to attend the funeral. The Commissioner made extensive written submissions and oral arguments regarding the scope and nature of relevant human rights and the way in which they are protected in the HR Act. This included their interpretation at international law; the obligations of the corrections officers to act consistently with and to give proper consideration to human rights; and the relevance of cultural rights to the decision to refuse leave to attend to sorry business. The court found that there had been breaches of human rights through the use of excessive force and an unlawful strip search, including the significant finding of a breach of section 10(1) of the HR Act. Anyone deprived of liberty must be treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity

and no one may be treated or punished in a degrading way. These are not aspirations, they are binding legal obligations. The court found human rights were breached because staff misunderstood policies and were not aware of their obligations under law. The decision was significant in exposing the lack of education and training for AMC staff and the Commissioner continues to call for the ACT Government to immediately implement a comprehensive and ongoing human rights training package for all employees in the AMC. To date this has not occurred and the Commissioner will continue to monitor this issue.

Human rights of public housing tenants breached in decision to relocate without fair process

Hubzin, Van Loo, Irwin v Commissioner for Social Housing [2026] ACTSC 11

In January 2026 the Supreme Court delivered another decision raising human rights in which the Commissioner had intervened in during the 2022–23 reporting period. This case involved 3 public housing tenants who brought proceedings in the Supreme Court claiming their human rights had been breached by decisions requiring they relocate from homes they had lived in for periods ranging between 27 and 42 years. The Commissioner made submissions regarding the relevance and scope of the human rights raised, their interpretation and the obligations to consider and act consistently with the HR Act. The court declared there had been a lack of procedural fairness, and also found Housing ACT had not given proper consideration to relevant human rights, including the right not to have one's home unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. For one Aboriginal tenant, there was also a finding that her cultural rights as protected by section 27 of the HR Act had been breached. It was found not only that there had not been proper consideration of human rights but a total failure to consider human rights at all, despite an obligation to do so. This case emphasised the lack of understanding by public authorities of their human rights obligations and again highlighted the need for properly funded and ongoing human rights education for all public servants.

Human rights in the Childrens Court

The Human Rights Commissioner intervened in 2 different matters before the Childrens Court during the reporting period. In October 2025, the Human Rights Commissioner was notified of a matter involving an application to have a young person committed to the Supreme Court for trial so proceedings could be heard alongside an adult co-accused instead of remaining in the Childrens Court.

The Commissioner was given leave to intervene and made submissions regarding the relevance of human rights to the decision, including the requirement to interpret legislation consistently with human rights so long as possible to do so with the purpose of the legislation. The Commissioner assisted the court by making submissions on the content and scope of human rights protections in place for children, including those in the HR Act and also those protected in the *Children and Young People Act 2008* (CYP Act), in particular the youth justice principles. This included a focus on the human right to a procedure that takes account of the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's rehabilitation, and the right that dictates bringing a child or young person to trial as quickly as possible. The Commissioner was pleased the court referred extensively to human rights in its decision, even though it ultimately concluded the relevant limits were reasonable and proportionate so as to justify making an order to commit the proceedings to the Supreme Court.

In June 2026, the Commissioner intervened in another Childrens Court matter concerning 4 young people seeking a permanent stay of criminal proceedings on the basis of undue delays in bringing them to trial. The Commissioner was granted leave to intervene and made a detailed written submission regarding the scope and nature of relevant human rights protected in the HR Act and the CYP Act. The Commissioner also made submissions regarding the powers available to the Childrens Court to remedy human rights breaches. After the reporting period, a permanent stay was granted on the basis of a breach of human rights.

Human rights and the Sentence Administration Board: *Carberry v Sentence Administration Board* [2026] ACTSC 180

In late May 2025, the Commission received less than 48 hours notice of a Supreme Court hearing raising serious human rights concerns within the AMC. The matter was a judicial review of a decision of the Sentence Administration Board (SAB). Human rights had been raised in the context of, and as the basis for, an application for special parole. The Commissioner applied for leave to intervene and sought to provide written submissions despite the late notice. The court refused the application on the basis that the court determined the decision of the SAB was erroneous on other grounds. The matter was sent back to the SAB to be determined according to law. After the reporting period, the Commissioner provided further submissions directly to the SAB to assist it in its consideration of the human rights questions raised.

Presumptions against bail in the Bail Act

In June 2026 the Supreme Court directed the Commission be notified that a detainee had raised his human rights in an application for bail and was also seeking a declaration of incompatibility of section 9D of the *Bail Act 1992* pursuant to section 32 of the HR Act. The Commission sought and was granted leave to intervene in the matter only on the question of the declaration of incompatibility. The question of bail was determined and has been finalised separately. The question of incompatibility remains before the court after the reporting period. The question concerns whether section 9D of the Bail Act is incompatible with human rights because it contains a presumption against bail. Section 9C of the Bail Act also contains a presumption against bail and that section was found to be incompatible with section 18(5) of the HR Act by the Supreme Court in 2010, although it remains in force.

Submissions

The HRC has a strong record of providing trusted, independent and confidential human rights advice. The Commission made various public submissions throughout the reporting period and also continued to review and comment on selected legislative proposals and draft legislation prior to consideration by cabinet as well as through the cabinet process. The Human Rights Commissioner and her legal team also engaged in numerous informal and in-confidence consultations and meetings with ACT Government agencies. Given much of this work is confidential, it cannot be reported on. Even where advice given is confidential, the Commission is highly

protective of its independence and always reserves its ability to speak out against or highlight concerns with a proposed reform or draft legislation once it becomes public.

Listed below are a selection of the public submissions made during the reporting period. In addition to those listed, and as an example of the additional work of the team, the Commissioner provided input to the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Indigenous People ahead of his upcoming visit to Australia (scheduled to take place in November 2026). The team also undertook functions relating to the NPM. See page 21.

Statutory review of the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime

The Human Rights Commissioner provided a submission to the statutory review of the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime, addressing questions raised regarding the intersection of the human rights framework protected by the HR Act and the human rights of victims of crime, including with regard to the challenges faced by victims in their interactions with the justice system. The submission noted the support of the Human Rights Commissioner for an express recognition of the rights of victims of crime in the HR Act, while outlining that the most effective and practical way to address issues faced by victims of crime in the justice system may be to adopt measures that focus directly on strengthening the Charter regime itself—including measures to improve compliance with the Charter and measures to increase its enforceability.

Family Violence Safety Notices

During the reporting period, the Human Rights Commissioner raised concerns through submissions and other feedback regarding a scheme proposing to introduce police-issued Family Violence Safety Notices. The Commissioner's concerns supported those expressed by the VOCC concerning the lack of evidence that the scheme is necessary. Given the lack of an evidence base, and the risk that the notice conditions imposed may be sweeping and onerous without adequate oversight, the Commissioner was not convinced the scheme included appropriate safeguards against the unreasonable limitation of human rights.

Review of Strip Search provisions in the Corrections Management Act 2007

The Human Rights Commissioner has had longstanding concerns about routine strip searching of all detainees twice in the process of being admitted to the AMC: once at the Court Transport Unit and then again on admission at the AMC. The Commission was very pleased that routine strip searching at the AMC has now greatly been reduced due to the introduction of body scanning technology. Nevertheless, routine strip searching continues at the Court Transport Unit.

A statutory review of the relevant legislative provision occurred during the reporting period. The HRC made its own submission and also jointly signed a submission with the NPM. The Commission's submission strongly reiterated its view expressed when section 70 of the CMA was first

introduced: namely that it is incompatible with the HR Act. Section 70 was introduced solely for the purpose of administrative efficiency and expressly bypassed the need for individualised consideration of whether a strip search for any individual is necessary or whether there might be a less restrictive approach that should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Another provision in the CMA already sufficiently authorises strip searches on admission when there is a suspicion on reasonable grounds to do so. The Commission is disappointed that this feedback and the feedback of the NPM on this issue was not taken on board. The Commission will continue to call for appropriate body scanning technology at the Court Transport Unit to reduce the blanket approach to strip searching, given its traumatic impact and the breaches of human rights involved.

Latimer House Principles review

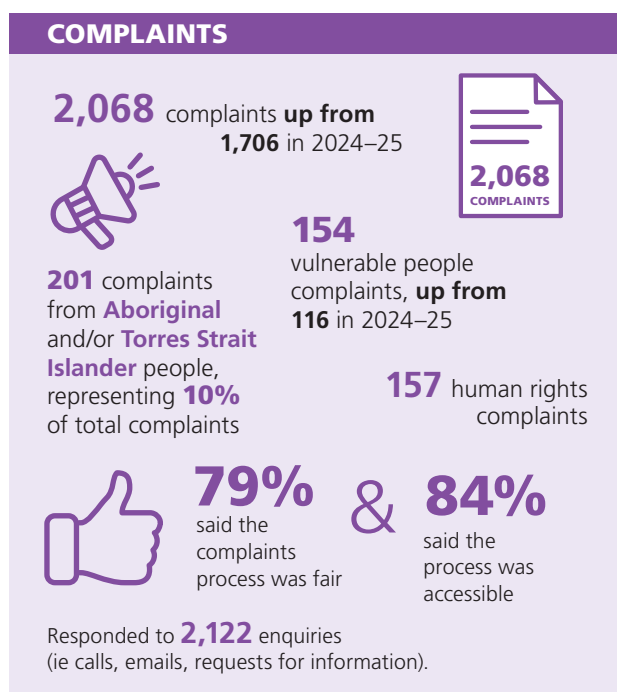
The ACT Legislative Assembly is to be commended for its leadership in its commitment to the Latimer House Principles and the independent review process that is undertaken on a regular basis. The Latimer House Principles provide a framework for implementing fundamental values promoted and shared by Commonwealth countries including the rule of law, protection of human rights and good governance. In February 2026, the Human Rights Commissioner made a detailed submission to the independent review team specifically focusing on strengthening the functional independence of the Commission and on the urgent need to implement an ongoing and permanent funding stream for human rights education.

Inquiry into legislation on proposed firearms reforms

In April 2026, the Commission made a submission to a Legislative Assembly inquiry into 2 separate bills, with the Commission focusing on human rights concerns with the Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026 (FPOs Bill). The Commission's submissions did not support the FPO scheme in the form proposed in the FPOs Bill due to concerns with the extraordinary search powers and the risk for those powers to unlawfully limit human rights. The submissions advocated for the inclusion of a 'reasonable suspicion' threshold, a fundamental safeguard for ensuring such powers are exercised solely in connection with their stated aim, are justified by reference to objective evidence and are not subject to misuse. The submissions highlighted less rights-restrictive options available.

Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner and Information Privacy Commissioner

Highlights



The Commissioner has responsibility for:

- handling all complaints received by the Commission and providing a free information service to the ACT community about the complaint handling process and complaint jurisdictions administered by the Commission
- promoting awareness of rights and obligations provided for by the HRC Act, the *Discrimination Act 1991*, the *Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997*, the *Information Privacy Act 2014*, the *Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practices Act 2020* and the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime
- improving service provision and outcomes for people protected by these laws
- using Commission-initiated consideration (CIC) powers to address systemic issues or take action when a vulnerable person is unable or unwilling to bring a complaint themselves due to capacity, fear, disability or other reasons
- contributing to legislative and policy development across the jurisdictions administered by the Commissioner.

During the reporting period, the DHSDCSC team was able to accept complaints about the following:

- discrimination, vilification and sexual harassment
- health services
- access to health records under the *Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997*
- services for people with disability and their carers
- services for older people and their carers
- retirement villages
- services for children and young people
- veterinary surgeons' services
- alleged neglect, abuse or exploitation of older people and people with disability, as vulnerable people complaints
- breaches of the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime
- occupancy disputes
- gender and sexual identity conversion practices
- codes of conduct for health workers
- human rights
- privacy complaints under the *Information Privacy Act 2014*, from 1 July 2024.

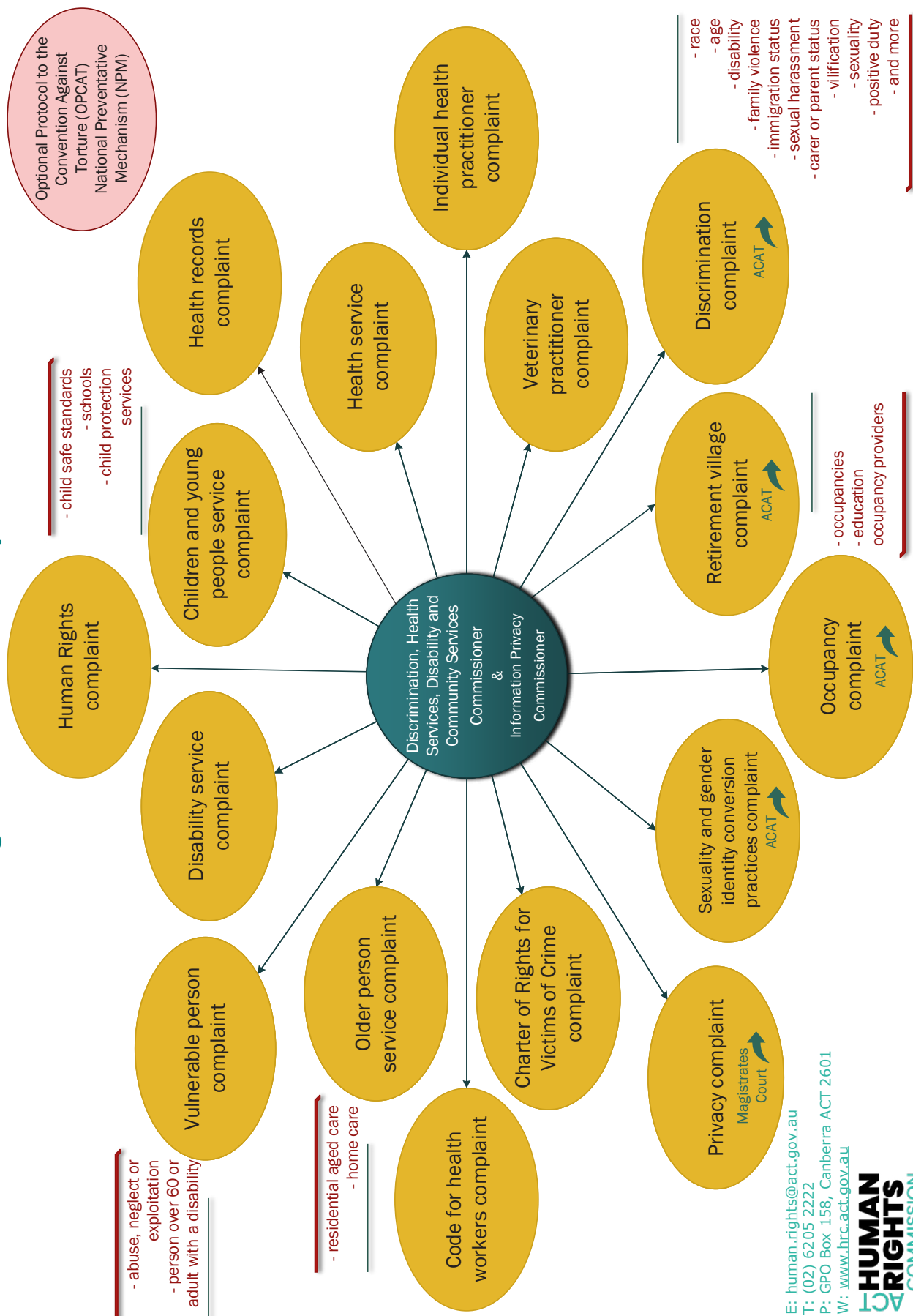
The DHSDCSC was appointed ACT Information Privacy Commissioner from 1 July 2024 and will carry out the functions under the *Information Privacy Act 2014*, including handling privacy complaints transferred from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, who had been carrying out those functions since 2014. The addition of the ACT Information Privacy Commissioner role has now been extended to 2031.

In 2025–26, the DHSDCSC received 2,122 enquiries and 2,068 complaints, and finalised 1,840 complaints.

The DHSDCSC team provides an accessible, timely and impartial complaint handling service to the ACT community. The team provides information through the enquiries function about HRC legislation, options for resolving a concern, information about the complaint handling process and conciliation, and referral options where the team is unable to assist a person with their concerns.

The DHSDCSC is also a member of the ACT NPM along with fellow HRC Commissioners, the ACT Ombudsman and the ACT Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS), supporting the implementation of OPCAT in the ACT. See page 21.

ACT Human Rights Commission Complaint Jurisdictions



Mediation accreditation

Three additional conciliators in the complaints team undertook mediation accreditation training with a nationally recognised mediation training provider.

Table 1: Enquiries* received, 4-year comparison

Jurisdiction	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Children and young people	73	80	85	81
Conversion practices	1	3	–	–
Disability	18	36	25	24
Discrimination	351	384	372	385
Health services	567	718	660	531
Human rights (commenced June 2024)	–	35	77	93
Occupancy disputes	4	12	14	10
Older people and retirement villages	11	33	43	33
Out of jurisdiction	1,235	777	874	719
Privacy	–	–	38	40
Health care workers	1	15	4	5
Victims of crime (commenced January 2021)	49	46	68	71
Vulnerable people (commenced May 2020)	52	83	100	130
Total	2,362	2,222	2,360	2,122

* Note: Enquiries are contacts with the DHSDCSC team by email, phone, in-person meeting, text and social media direct messaging, generally seeking information about the laws administered by the Commission, the complaint process and how the Commission can help with their concerns.

Table 2: Complaints received, 4-year comparison

Jurisdiction	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Children and young people	35	57	73	96
Conversion practices	–	–	2	–
Disability services	6	18	14	33
Discrimination	255	336	345	477
Health services	760	812	927	1,039
Health Services	480	478	527	611
AHPRA notifications to HRC	276	324	374	403
Health care workers	–	4	11	11
Veterinary practitioners Board	4	6	15	14
Human rights (commenced June 2024)	–	5	100	157
Occupancy disputes	5	15	22	10
Older people and retirement villages	9	46	48	30
Privacy	–	–	34	41
Victims of crime charter	34	17	25	31
Vulnerable people	43	51	116	154
Total	1,147	1,357	1,706	2,068

High satisfaction with complaint handling service

The Commission measures satisfaction with its complaint process by asking parties to complete an evaluation form when complaints are closed. In 2025–26, 79 per cent of parties who responded to the survey said the process was fair.

The Commission also asks parties how accessible the process was, including how accessible the provided information was, how the process was explained and how easy it was to communicate with the Commission.

The accessibility of the complaint handling service was 84 per cent.

Parties to complaints provided positive feedback about the benefits of the Commission's complaints process.

“ Client feedback 2025–26

Someone listened!!! Someone believed in what I wrote, to the extent that my complaints were passed on.

Issue got resolved with very little effort.

I didn't have to approach the people myself.

I choose to engage with the Commission as I am aware of their service and they have a high level of professionalism. The Commission did not take sides but acted as an engagement point with my concerns in a compassionate and understanding way when addressing my complaint and attempting to find a resolution. Their understanding of practices and ability to engage with other agencies and assist me in representing my concerns greatly helped me in progressing the concerns directly with the complaint agency.

It avoided taking of expensive legal action.

I felt supported going to an organisation with a problem that I felt had been ignored by them multiple times in the past. With the involvement of the commission all of a sudden the organisation I raised a complaint

against, replied to concerns more promptly and were more receptive to feedback and arranging an opportunity to have an open discussion.

A fair assessment and resolution of my issue was achieved.

I think the involvement of a third party such as ACT Human Rights Commission provides the necessary support from an external supervising force, which makes sure the whole process was fair, adequate attention was given and the investigation was transparent.

Very happy. Process explained well. Kept informed of each step. Staff very polite.

The intervention of a third party meant that the problem was addressed and a satisfactory result was obtained.

I was refunded for costs incurred due to the poor communication from the group I complained about.

It was an effective way to communicate with an organisation, where previous communications were going nowhere. I felt it made them clearly aware of the issues and gave both sides the opportunity to respond and both sides had input into solving the problems. I hope that the plan that was agreed to is upheld.

Having my complaint professionally pursued.

I felt like I was given opportunity to put forward my case. I felt listened to and understood. Working through the process and compiling our response demonstrated to me that we had done the best we could in difficult circumstances and made every effort to manage the situation.

The chief benefit was that the HRC actually took action and our complaint was taken to the recipient. Other benefits were that you communicated clearly and the caseworker responded quickly and professionally to all emails.

This complaint has provided us with a resolution through conciliation, and the opportunity to address issues related to data privacy.



Health service complaints 2025–26

ACT community members can make a complaint to the Health Services Commissioner about any health service provided in the ACT, including public and private health services, individual practitioners, and health services provided in settings such as aged care facilities, supported accommodation and schools. The DHSDCSC team also deals with complaints about access to health records held in the ACT. The Commission's health service complaint process can provide parties with a chance to resolve a complaint through conciliation.

The complaint handling team responded to 536 health service enquiries and received 1,039 health service complaints. This is a 12 per cent increase from the previous year. The number of health complaints received includes:

- 611 made directly to the Commissioner
- 11 complaints made about health care workers (unregistered)
- 403 new matters notified by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) to the Commissioner
- 14 new matters notified by the ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board to the Commissioner.

Table 3: Most frequent health complaint issues

Issue	Number
Treatment and diagnoses	459
Professional conduct	307
Medication	111
Communication	99
Records	84
Access	83

* Note: A single complaint can have multiple issues.

Table 4: Most frequent health complaint respondents

Provider	Number of complaints
Individual practitioner	478
Public health service	311
General practice	75
Private health clinic (not general practice)	25
Pharmacy	19

Table 5: Most frequent registered practitioner type

Practitioner type	Number of complaints
Medical practitioner	257
Nurse or midwife	86
Psychologist	51
Dentist	31
Pharmacist	25
Veterinary practitioner	17

Working with Ahpra and the national boards

The 15 registered health professions in the ACT that are part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (eg medical practitioners, dentists, midwives, pharmacists, psychologists, paramedics) are regulated by a national board specific to that profession.

Ahpra supports the national boards in their primary role of protecting the public and works with the Commissioner to deal with complaints and notifications about individual registered health practitioners.

The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009* (National Law) requires national boards and the Commissioner to jointly consider how to action complaints against registered health practitioners in the ACT.

In 2024–25 the Commissioner participated in the Dawson Review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS), which has made recommendations in its final report on options for streamlining the NRAS and notification processes. The Health Services Commissioner, as part of the Australasian Council of Health Complaint Entities (ACHCE), continues to engage with Ahpra and other key stakeholders regarding the implementation plan for the Dawson recommendations.

Finalised health complaints

In 2025–26 the Commission closed 909 health service complaints.

The number of health complaints closed includes:

- 592 which had been made directly to the Commissioner
- 12 complaints made about health care workers (unregistered)
- 292 Ahpra notifications
- 13 Veterinary Practitioners Board notifications.

Table 6: Most frequent outcomes to health service complaints

Outcome	Number of complaints
Explanation provided	299
Apology	130
Withdrawn	71
Review or change made to a policy or procedure	56
Service provided	50
Financial outcome	33

* Note: This does not include Ahpra or Veterinary Practitioner notifications.

The national boards and the Commissioner jointly decide whether to investigate a practitioner or to take regulatory action.

While the complaint process requires joint consideration of matters with the Commissioner, only national boards can take regulatory action regarding individual health practitioners, such as cautioning a practitioner, imposing

conditions, requiring a performance assessment or referring to a tribunal.

Ahpra and the boards can refer a notification to the Commissioner where the conduct complained about does not present a risk to the public and it is more appropriately dealt with through the Commission’s conciliation process. During the reporting period Ahpra referred 69 matters to the Commissioner.

Similarly, if the Commissioner receives a matter that raises serious concerns about the conduct or performance of a registered practitioner, the Commissioner can refer the matter to Ahpra. During the reporting period, the Commissioner referred 19 matters to Ahpra.

Table 7: Regulatory outcomes to complaints about individual registered practitioners

Outcome	Number of complaints
No further action	211
Conditions	15
Caution	12
Undertaking	3



DHSDCSC Karen Toohey (second from right) with other members of the ACHCE in May 2026.

Health complaints case studies 2025–26

Case studies assist the community to understand the types of issues that arise from complaints brought to the Commission and how those matters may be dealt with. Complaints are generally dealt with on the basis that there has been no admission of liability. Cases below have been de-identified to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the complaint handling process.

Sedation management during a procedure

A man raised concerns about the care he received during a medical procedure, stating that he did not feel adequately sedated at the beginning of the procedure and that the experience had a lasting emotional impact.

The Commission sought a response from the individual practitioner concerned, reviewed the relevant health records and assisted the parties to resolve the concerns. The outcome included an apology and the waiving of out-of-pocket costs associated with the procedure. The Commission also consulted with Ahpra and it was agreed that no further regulatory action was required in relation to the practitioner.

Management of a post-operative complication

A relative raised concerns on behalf of a family member about the assessment and management of a post-operative complication, which resulted in long-term physical disability.

The Commission sought a response from the healthcare provider regarding the concerns raised. In its response, the hospital identified opportunities to strengthen relevant policies and for staff education. The hospital also agreed to provide a financial outcome to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses associated with an extended hospital stay, and modifications required to support the patient's return home. The family was satisfied with this and the matter resolved.

Medication management for detainee

The Commission received a referral from the ACT Ombudsman concerning a detainee who reported difficulty sleeping after not receiving medication that had previously been prescribed in the community.

The Commission sought a response from the correctional facility, and a copy of the clinical records were obtained from the detainee's general practitioner in the community. Following a review and discussions with the parties, the detainee's usual medication was subsequently prescribed, which resolved the complaint.

Accuracy of information in a Psychiatric Treatment Order application

A person raised concerns about the accuracy of information provided by a health service as part of an application for a Psychiatric Treatment Order (PTO).

The health service maintained that the application accurately reflected the person's mental state at the time. However, the Commission's review of the relevant health records identified concerns that some information may have been based on a disputed diagnosis and a point-in-time assessment, with limited reference to other mental health assessments completed during the same period. The review also identified procedural issues in the application process.

In response, the Commission made recommendations to the respondent under section 81 of the HRC Act. The respondent noted and agreed to the recommendations and conducted a review of the relevant procedure. The respondent also acknowledged that expected standards may not have been fully met in this case and apologised to the person concerned.

Management of a complex pregnancy

A woman raised concerns about the care she received during a complex pregnancy, including the availability of appropriately trained staff and the equipment needed to support her care.

The matter was referred to the Health Services Commissioner by Ahpra. Following a review of the relevant health records, both parties agreed to participate in an early conciliation process. The concerns were discussed during conciliation, providing an opportunity for the parties to explore the issues raised and consider options for resolution. The matter was resolved through this process.

Concerns about a prescribing decision

A woman raised concerns about a prescribing decision made by her doctor, questioning whether her personal and family health history had been adequately considered.

The Commission sought a response from the doctor, who provided information about the assessment process, including the clinical guidance, resources and risk assessment tools used to inform the decision. Following this, the woman accepted that the doctor had acted in accordance with current clinical guidelines. However, she remained concerned that the guidelines themselves may benefit from further review.

As the complaint raised issues relevant to the health practitioner's registration, information about the matter was provided to Ahpra. This enabled the Commission and the relevant national board to jointly consider the concerns raised.

Health care worker code of conduct case studies 2025–26

Health care worker borrowing money from consumer

A mental health consumer raised concerns about the conduct of a health care worker who had borrowed a significant amount of money from them and had not repaid it.

The Commission accepted complaints about both the individual health care worker and the health service where they were employed at the time. Through a conciliation process, an agreement was reached for the money to be

repaid. The loan was subsequently repaid in full, and the consumer was satisfied with the outcome.

The Commission also made recommendations to the health care worker and the health service to address the serious professional boundary issues identified through the complaint and to help prevent similar concerns arising in the future.

Health care worker exerting excessive levels of control over a person with a disability

Concerns were raised about a health care worker's involvement in decisions affecting a consumer who was a person with disability. It was alleged that the worker's actions may have been influenced by a personal relationship with a family member of the consumer, creating a potential conflict of interest.

The Commission commenced a CIC, which found that the concerns related to the health care worker's interactions with the consumer but did not indicate broader concerns about their work with others.

To address the issues identified, the Commission obtained an undertaking from the health care worker that they would no longer be involved in providing services to the particular consumer. This outcome addressed the ongoing conflict of interest and reduced the risk of similar concerns arising in the future.

ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board

The Commissioner also handles complaints about veterinarian services in the ACT under a co-regulatory model with the ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board. Where appropriate, the Commissioner can assist the board by offering conciliation to the parties. This benefits complainants who have concerns about the treatment of their pets or animals and feel they have not had sufficient information about treatment, adverse outcomes for their pet, or billing queries. The conciliation process allows the DHSDCSC team to facilitate resolution of the issues in the complaint separately to the conduct issues considered by the board.

During the reporting period, 14 new veterinary matters were received and 13 matters were closed.

Information Privacy Commissioner

From 1 July 2024, the ACT Government appointed the DHSDCSC as the ACT Information Privacy Commissioner under the ACT *Information Privacy Act 2014* (IP Act). For the previous decade, the Privacy Commissioner functions had been undertaken by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

The Commission has delivered information sessions on the privacy jurisdiction to ACT Government agencies and the community and participates in events, panels and committees related to privacy administration in the ACT.

Under the IP Act, when considering complaints, the Commissioner is required to consider whether an interference with privacy has occurred and, if reasonably satisfied an interference has occurred, can issue a notice under section 45 of the IP Act, allowing the complainant to lodge the matter with a court for determination as to whether an interference with privacy has occurred. The court may award up to \$100,000 damages as a remedy.

Privacy investigations can require a complex consideration of related regulatory frameworks, including health records legislation, secrecy provisions, freedom of information (FOI) and territory records requirements, and can be resource intensive.

The IP Act was amended by the *Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2025 (No 3)* to provide that the Information Privacy Commissioner within the HRC

could conciliate privacy complaints consistent with existing provisions in the HRC Act for other complaint types.

The new power to conciliate privacy complaints draws on the Commission's expertise in conciliating complaints to resolve disputes informally, efficiently and in a timely manner.

Further amendments to align the complaint handling process for information privacy complaints with the HRC Act are being explored by the Commission to provide a seamless complaint consideration process, particularly where privacy complaints also raise considerations of the human right to privacy in section 12 of the HR Act.

The information privacy area is also characterised by rapidly evolving technological changes and increased government information holdings with the increased uptake of online cloud-based collection and storage interfaces. The Commission has received a number of voluntary data breach notifications and requests for advice since taking on the jurisdiction.

Under section 54 of the IP Act, the Commissioner must report on the number of privacy complaints made, referred and closed, and where a section 45 notice has been given. The Commissioner must also identify the respondents. In Table 8, the agencies providing services on behalf of the ACT Government who are respondents to a complaint are incorporated into their relevant directorate.

Table 8: Privacy complaint respondents

Respondents	Received	Closed
Children, Youth and Families	7	2
ACT Education Directorate	5	4*
Canberra Health Services	5	3*
Justice and Community Safety	5	6*
City and Environment Directorate	3	2
Housing and Community Services Directorate (excl. CYF)	3	4*
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD)	2	1
Australian Federal Police (incl. ACT Policing)	2	2
University of Canberra	1	1*
Legal Aid ACT	–	2
Telopea Park School	–	1*
ACT Community Language Schools Association	–	1*
Other (including private, out of jurisdiction)	8	8
Total	41	37

* Note: indicates a section 45 notice was issued. A section 45 notice was issued in 7 matters

Privacy complaint case studies 2025–26

Privacy and information sharing after a dog attack

A community member raised concerns about their personal information being shared following a dog attack. The person was concerned after being contacted at their home by the other dog owner who asked them to reimburse veterinary and related expenses.

The Commission investigated the complaint and found that the disclosure of address information was authorised under the Domestic Animals Act 2000. As a result, no privacy breach was established.

However, the Commission noted that it had received a number of complaints about the same legislative provisions. To address these broader concerns, the Commission suggested that the responsible government directorate review the system and consider whether changes could better balance individuals' privacy with the need for people affected by dog attacks to be able to seek appropriate compensation for their losses.

Disclosure of personal information

An individual raised concerns that documents containing their personal information had been disclosed to an unauthorised individual. The information included personal and contact details, as well as documents relating to a private legal matter and an employment-related transaction.

The Commission notified the respondent of the complaint and sought a response to the concerns raised. Following consideration of the available information, the Commission found that the respondent had collected unsolicited personal information for a purpose that was not connected to its primary functions. The Commission also found that reasonable steps had not been taken to protect the individual's personal information from unauthorised disclosure.

As a result, the Commission determined that the respondent had breached Territory Privacy Principle (TPP) 4, relating to the handling of unsolicited personal information, and TPP 11, relating to the security and protection of personal information.

Discrimination complaints 2025–26

The Discrimination Commissioner's role is to handle discrimination complaints, promote equality, examine systemic discrimination concerns and provide community education and information about rights under discrimination law. The Commissioner also handles sexual harassment, victimisation and vilification complaints and exemption applications under the *Discrimination Act 1991*.

The Commission received 477 discrimination complaints in 2025–26, up from 345 the previous year, and closed 416 discrimination matters.

The Discrimination Act is broad, covering many areas of public life including employment, education, access to premises, accommodation, clubs, sport, the provision of goods, services and facilities and the administration of territory laws, policies or programs. It covers a wide range of protected attributes including race, age, disability, gender identity, employment status, accommodation status, sexuality and being subjected to family violence.

During the reporting period, the Discrimination Act was amended by the *Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2025 (No 3)* to align the definition of 'irrelevant criminal record' as a protected attribute under the Discrimination Act with the meaning of 'spent and extinguished convictions' in the *Spent Convictions Act 2000*. This amendment addressed an ambiguity identified in court decisions around the operation of these 2 definitions by clarifying that it is unlawful to discriminate against a person in areas of public life based on whether the person has a spent conviction.

The Commissioner works with community members, organisations and government to build awareness of rights and obligations under discrimination law and participates in a range of community events, information sessions and committees to promote a safe, inclusive and diverse community. The Commissioner attended a range of community events related to the discrimination jurisdiction including SpringOut (November 2025), the Multicultural Festival (February 2026) and the Seniors Expo

(September 2025), participated in the Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities and participated in multiple panels, workshops and events promoting Canberra as a safe and inclusive community.

The Commissioner broadcasts ads on community radio in community languages to raise awareness of complaint options for people experiencing racism, discrimination, elder abuse or other issues that might affect their health, wellbeing and safety.

The Commissioner provided support for a number of research projects being undertaken in relation to safe and inclusive sport, and supports the Play by the Rules national safe sport initiative.

Implementation work on positive duty reforms under the Discrimination Act

Through 2025–26, the Commission continued implementation work and training on the new positive duties under the Discrimination Act.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of a person because of their protected attributes in section 74 of the Discrimination Act commenced in

April 2024 for all duty holders across the public and private sectors.

The positive duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and vilification in section 75 commenced for ACT Government agencies from April 2025. This duty reflects similar duties applying under the federal *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* on duty holders to identify risks and put in place reasonable and proportionate measures to mitigate risks. This duty applies to all protected attributes in the Discrimination Act.

The Commission has been working with a consultant to develop detailed guidelines for the consideration and making of reasonable adjustments and the positive duty to eliminate discrimination, including the development of sector- and attribute-specific adjustments and action examples, in addition to resources already published on the HRC website.

The Commission has been conducting targeted outreach information and training sessions for policy and human resources teams across ACT Government Directorates, as well as co-convening an ACT Government Human Rights Community of Practice to support ACT Government agencies in the implementation of the positive duties.

Table 9: Most frequent grounds in discrimination complaints*

Ground of complaint	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Disability	143	198	215	284
Accommodation status	23	42	62	75
Race	42	45	63	72
Vilification	6	21	22	51
Failure to make reasonable adjustments	–	–	–	37
Age	16	38	21	35
Sex	15	40	18	26
Subjection to domestic or family violence	16	14	8	19

* Note: One complaint may have multiple grounds.

Table 10: Most frequent areas of public life in discrimination complaints

Area of public life	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Provision of goods, services or facilities	132	149	325	469
Employment	58	61	79	149
Education	24	28	48	55
Accommodation	31	51	37	60
Administration of territory laws	–	–	–	12
Clubs	1	29	6	7

Discrimination case studies 2025–26

The Commission is not able to determine claims of alleged discrimination made under the Discrimination Act. The Commission generally tries to assist parties to resolve complaints through a conciliation process. Where parties are unable to resolve their concerns through the Commission's process, the complainant can request that the matter be referred to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) for hearing and determination. Given this, the summaries below relate to allegations of discrimination and are generally resolved without admission of liability.

Access to disability supports at school

A parent raised a disability discrimination complaint on behalf of their child, who had multiple and complex disabilities. The parent was concerned that their child was unable to attend school because the supports they needed to enable safe participation had not been agreed with the school.

Before making the complaint, the parent had provided the education provider with information and recommendations from a range of health professionals involved in the child's care. Despite these efforts, the parties had been unable to reach agreement about the supports required.

The Commission facilitated a conciliation conference and made arrangements for members of the child's specialist care team to participate. This allowed the care team to discuss their recommendations directly with representatives of the education provider.

Through the conciliation process, the parties reached written agreement about the supports to be provided which enabled the child to return to school after an extended period of absence.

Accessibility of shared spaces in a retirement village

A resident raised concerns about the accessibility of shared areas within their retirement village. The resident reported that uneven footpaths and pathways made it difficult, particularly for people with mobility limitations, to safely access some parts of the village. The concerns were raised as both a discrimination and retirement village complaint.

In response to the concerns, the village operator conducted a survey of pathways throughout the village and carried out repairs to address uneven surfaces and improve accessibility. The matter was resolved following these improvements.

Responding to concerns about discrimination in a shop

A person raised concerns about their experience at a retail business. They alleged that they were asked to leave the store because staff had difficulty understanding their accent, and that staff had been disrespectful by making comments about their name.

The complaint was resolved through the Commission's conciliation process. As part of the outcome, the business agreed to provide the person with a number of free products from the store and committed to ongoing staff training about discrimination and respectful customer service. This resolution addressed the persons' concerns and supported improvements in the business' practices.

Supporting a student with disability at school

A parent lodged a complaint on behalf of their child. They were concerned that the school was not providing appropriate supports to accommodate the student's disability and was instead treating their difficulties participating in class as behavioural issues. The complaint also raised concerns about an alleged racially discriminatory remark made by a teacher towards the student.

The Commission facilitated a conciliation between the parent and the school. The parties discussed the student's support needs in detail and explored options to better support their engagement and learning at school.

The matter was resolved through a written agreement negotiated at conciliation. As part of the outcome, the school agreed to arrange an assessment to identify the adjustments and supports required to assist the student's learning and participation at school.

Access to volunteering opportunities in sport

A person who uses a wheelchair raised concerns that they had been declined volunteering opportunities with a sporting organisation because of their disability. The person reported being told that they presented too great a safety risk.

In response to the complaint, the sporting organisation acknowledged the importance of participation in sport and community activities. It outlined the steps it had taken to accommodate the person's disability and the efforts made over time to identify suitable volunteering roles. The organisation advised that some limitations arose because of safety considerations and the person's medical needs and maintained that it had not discriminated on the basis of disability.

The organisation offered to continue working with the person to identify suitable volunteering opportunities. The person advised the Commission that they were satisfied with this response, and the matter was resolved.

Concerns about racial discrimination at school

A parent lodged a complaint on behalf of her child, raising concerns that she and her child had experienced racial discrimination by a teacher. The complaint alleged that students and parents from a particular ethnic background were treated less favourably than other families at the school. The parent was also concerned about the school's response when these issues were raised.

The parties agreed to participate in an early conciliation process. During conciliation, the school provided information about its complaint handling processes and worked with the parent to address the concerns raised.

The parties reached final agreement at conciliation that included arrangements to ensure the child would not be placed in the teacher's class in the future, a communication plan between the parent and the school, and measures to support the child's sense of safety at school.

Access to rehabilitation programs in custody

A detainee raised concerns about eligibility criteria for offence-related rehabilitation programs in custody. The detainee was on remand and had entered a guilty plea to the relevant charges but was not eligible to participate in certain programs as he had not yet been formally found guilty or sentenced by the court.

The Commission facilitated a response from correctional facility, which provided further information about the design of the programs and the reasons for the eligibility criteria. While the detainee continued to question the restriction of some programs to only people who had been convicted, they reported appreciating the opportunity to receive a more detailed explanation of the decision and the reasons for the policy. The matter was resolved following the provision of this information.

Accessibility of specialist disability accommodation

A resident raised concerns about the accessibility of specialist disability accommodation, stating that some design features limited her ability to independently access all areas of the property. The concerns included the location of an automatic door control and equipment provided to support access to shared facilities.

The Commission engaged with the housing provider, owner's corporation and strata manager, and facilitated a conciliation conference to discuss the issues raised. Through conciliation, the parties reached agreement on steps to be taken to modify the property and address the accessibility concerns.

Equal access to housing for families

A tenant raised concerns about being pressured to leave a rental property after the birth of their child. The tenant was told that having a baby in the home breached the tenancy arrangement because the lease referred only to 2 adult occupants.

The Commission contacted the real estate agency managing the property to provide information about the application of discrimination law and to discuss the concerns raised by the tenant. Following the Commission's involvement, the property owner apologised to the tenant and offered them a further lease.

Responding to complex housing and support concerns

A public housing tenant raised concerns that their home was no longer suitable for their health and mobility needs. The person was living with multiple health conditions and had limited formal and informal supports available.

The tenant reported concerns about the condition of the property, including maintenance issues and difficulties using parts of the home due to mobility limitations. They were also uncertain about the status of a previous request to transfer to more suitable accommodation.

The Commission made enquiries and confirmed that a transfer application had been lodged but had not progressed. With the tenant's consent, the Commission also facilitated a referral for additional support services to assist with housing stability, care needs and improved access to available supports.

Following the Commission's involvement, immediate maintenance issues were addressed, a transfer to a more suitable property was approved, and ongoing case management supports were put in place.

Accessible communication for a person with vision impairment

A person raised concerns that correspondence from a health service had not been provided in a format accessible to them as a person with vision impairment. The person advised that they were seeking a copy of the correspondence, and future communications, in a format that met their accessibility needs.

The matter was resolved when the health service agreed to provide the correspondence in an accessible format. The service also confirmed that information about the person's communication requirements remained recorded on their file to ensure future communications are provided in an appropriate format and advised that it would continue to consider improvements to help prevent similar issues occurring in the future.

Accessible customer service for a person with disability

A person raised concerns about their experience when booking a taxi by telephone. The person reported that they required additional time to communicate because of their disability and felt that the call was not handled appropriately.

The person sought an apology, disability awareness training for staff and reassurance that customers with communication needs due to their disability would be accommodated in the future.

The Commission notified the taxi service of the complaint and the outcomes sought. In response, the service acknowledged that the call had not been managed in line with its expected customer service standards and provided a written apology.

The service also outlined the disability awareness training provided to call centre staff and advised that the staff member involved would receive additional training. In addition, the service confirmed its commitment to accommodating customers who may require additional time to communicate their needs and advised that operators are expected to provide flexible and respectful assistance in these situations.

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal referrals

If a discrimination, retirement village, sexuality and gender identity conversion practices, or occupancy complaint is not resolved through the Commission's complaints process, the complainant can ask the Commission to refer the matter to ACAT for a determination.

The Commission was asked to refer a total of 35 discrimination complaints to ACAT in 2025–26 of the 416 discrimination complaints finalised. ACAT determined 6 discrimination matters in 2025–26. Any published decisions are available on ACAT's website.³

Disability and community service complaints

The Commission accepts a range of complaints under this jurisdiction, including complaints about:

- services for children and young people such as schools and early learning centres, sport, youth justice services, child protection services and health services for young people
- disability services such as accommodation, support coordination and in-home personal care services, programs and transport, holiday programs or employment services for people with disability
- occupancy disputes such as shared accommodation arrangements
- vulnerable people (abuse, neglect or exploitation of people aged 60 and above, and adults with disability) including financial abuse or exploitation by guardians or family members, abuse or neglect by in-home service providers for older people or people with disability, neglect or exploitation by accommodation providers, health services or others
- rights under the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime, where justice agencies such as courts or police may not have complied with the charter
- sexuality and gender identity conversion practices

- services for older people and retirement village complaints, including concerns regarding retirement village operators, residential aged care facilities, health services for older people or services for the carers of older people
- complaints about human rights breaches by ACT Government agencies.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission commenced operation in the ACT on 1 July 2019. The HRC can still accept complaints regarding disability services in the ACT, and vulnerable person complaints about abuse, neglect or exploitation of persons over 60 or adults with a disability in the ACT. The HRC also handles complaints about disability services and disability discrimination under its Discrimination Act provisions and under the Code of Conduct for Health Care workers.

In some matters, the HRC will work with other regulators, such as the NDIS Quality and Safety Commission, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, the ACT Office of the Senior Practitioner or the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme, where there may be some overlap in jurisdiction. The HRC assesses its involvement based on risk and responsiveness and can communicate outcomes in these matters to those other agencies where appropriate.

Table 11: Disability and community service enquiries and complaints received*

Jurisdiction	Enquiries received	Complaints received
Children and young people	81	96
Conversion practices	–	–
Disability	24	33
Human rights (commenced June 2024)	93	157
Occupancy disputes	10	10
Older people and retirement villages	33	30
Victims of crime charter	71	31
Vulnerable people	130	154
Total	442	511

* Note: Enquiries are contacts with the DHSDCSC team by email, phone, in-person meeting, text and social media direct messaging, generally seeking information about the laws administered by the Commission, the complaint process and how the Commission can help with their concerns.

³ <https://www.acat.act.gov.au/decisions2>

DISABILITY

Responding to concerns about conduct of a support worker

The Commission received information raising concerns about the conduct of a support worker in a Supported Independent Living setting. A CIC was opened. Initial enquiries confirmed that the service provider had removed the worker from the residence, notified the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and commenced an investigation.

The Commission met with residents and found that concerns related to the worker being perceived as 'pushy' when asking residents to assist with household tasks, rather than allegations of physical pushing. After considering the available information and the actions already taken by the service provider, the Commission was satisfied and closed the matter.

Alleged physical abuse of vulnerable person by carer

The Commission received a notification after a woman reported that a disability support worker had physically assaulted her.

A CIC was opened to assess the concerns and any immediate risks. The Commission engaged with the woman's appointed guardian and disability service provider and confirmed that safeguarding measures had been put in place while the matter was investigated.

The support worker was removed from the woman's care team in line with her wishes and as a precaution while enquiries were undertaken. After considering the available information and the actions taken by the service provider, the Commission was satisfied that appropriate safeguards were in place.

Supporting a person with complex disability support needs

The Commission received information raising concerns about the supports being provided to a young man with significant disability and complex support needs. Concerns were raised about whether the provider had the capacity to meet his needs, the management of his NDIS funding and decision-making regarding his supports.

The Commission commenced a CIC and gathered information from the young man, his guardian and other services involved in his care. The Commission's enquiries found that the guardian had made informed decisions about the services being provided and the supports involved in the young man's care. An NDIS plan review was also initiated to ensure adequate funding and supports were available.

Following an increase in NDIS funding, stakeholders reported improvements in the consistency and effectiveness of supports, with risks being more effectively managed. As a result, the Commission was satisfied that appropriate arrangements and oversight were in place and closed the matter.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSON SERVICE

Safeguarding young referees in community sport

A person raised concerns with a sporting organisation about the treatment of junior referees, including allegations of bullying and verbal abuse during sporting events. The complainant was concerned that their previous attempts to raise these issues directly with the organisation had not resulted in adequate action.

The Commission facilitated a conciliation, which resulted in the organisation agreeing to strengthen its policies, training and safeguarding practices within defined timeframes. This included developing a post-incident response process, clarifying when games should be cancelled and progressing measures to better manage interactions with young referees.

The organisation also agreed to enhance training for junior referees by including content on recognising and responding to bullying and harassment, with training to be completed before referees commence officiating.

Supporting the safety of a young person

A young woman raised concerns about the support being provided to her teenage sister by a child and family service. The complaint stated that the young person did not feel safe living at home, had moved to stay with another family member, and that the service had closed its involvement despite ongoing safety concerns.

The Commission contacted the service and facilitated discussions about the concerns raised. During these discussions, the service acknowledged that it had closed the case before it had been able to obtain the young person's views about her home situation. The agency agreed to re-engage with the young person and her family to better understand her circumstances and continue working together to support her and ensure her ongoing safety.

School suspension processes

A parent raised concerns about the suspension of their child from school. The parent believed the suspension process had not been followed correctly and expressed broader concerns about how suspension policies were being applied.

The Commission sought a response from the school and engaged with the young person directly through the complaints process. The school advised that the suspension had been overturned due to procedural errors but maintained that there were grounds for action in relation to the incident. While the parent remained dissatisfied with the outcome, they reported that the Commission's engagement had helped restore the young person's confidence in complaint processes and in raising concerns through appropriate channels.

OCCUPANCY

Bond dispute following the end of an occupancy agreement

A person raised a complaint after the end of an occupancy agreement, alleging that their bond had not been returned.

The Commission contacted the accommodation provider and outlined information about the legal obligations that apply to occupancy agreements, including requirements relating to the handling of bonds. Following discussions facilitated by the Commission, the parties reached agreement. As part of the resolution, a portion of the bond was returned to the complainant, with a remaining amount retained by the accommodation provider for repairs and maintenance arising from the occupant's stay.

Early termination of an occupancy agreement

A person raised concerns that were considered as both a discrimination and occupancy dispute complaints after seeking to end an occupancy agreement because the accommodation did not meet their disability-related needs.

The occupant was advised that a substantial early termination fee would apply if they ended the agreement, prompting them to contact the Commission. Through the Commission's process, the parties reached an agreement to end the occupancy early and waive the early termination fee, and the full bond was returned to the occupant.

The Commission also raised concerns with the accommodation provider about its obligations regarding the handling of bonds and discrimination law in the ACT and encouraged it to seek legal advice about its responsibilities.

Understanding fees for in-home support services

An older person raised concerns that their in-home support provider was charging fees for services they believed had not been delivered. They also expressed confusion about the level of government-funded support available to them, as they understood they had been approved for a higher level of funding that was not yet reflected in their package.

The Commission arranged a conciliation in the person's local area. During the conciliation, a representative of the service provider explained changes to the fee structure associated with the transition to the new Support at Home program and answered questions about the charges.

The parties also discussed the person's funding level. The person was advised that they had been approved for additional funding, but that there can be a delay between approval and the release of funds. The matter resolved at conciliation as the person had a clearer understanding after receiving further information about the fees and funding arrangements.

Fees charged during hospitalisation

A person raised concerns about fees charged by their mother's home care provider. The concerns included cancellation fees for services that were not delivered while her mother was in hospital, as well as questions about fees remaining payable after changing providers.

The Commission contacted the provider to obtain further information and discuss the concerns raised. The provider explained that some of the outstanding charges related to daily contribution fees that had only been partially paid. To resolve the matter, the provider agreed to waive a portion of the outstanding fees and reimburse charges that had been applied while the person's mother was in hospital. The matter was resolved following these actions.



Commissioner Karen Toohey presenting the Commission-sponsored seniors achievement award for social justice and advocacy to Sukhmani Pabla, at the Council on the Ageing ACT (COTA ACT) positive ageing awards ceremony in 2025. Photo courtesy COTA ACT.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Managing noise concerns in a retirement village

A resident raised concerns about noise from a neighbouring unit, which they said was affecting their sleep and wellbeing.

The Commission facilitated discussions with the village operator about the concerns. To help resolve the matter, the operator agreed to speak with the neighbouring residents about minimising noise and provided the complainant with headphones to assist in reducing disturbance while sleeping. The matter was resolved through these practical outcomes.

Pest and maintenance concerns

A resident raised concerns about a pest infestation in their retirement village unit, which they said was affecting their use and enjoyment of the property. The resident had incurred out-of-pocket costs in attempting to manage the issue.

The village operator agreed to engage pest control specialists and implement a range of pest management measures. These included treatment of the affected area and broader actions across the village to reduce conditions that were contributing to the problem.

The measures resulted in a significant reduction in pest activity. While the issue was not completely resolved, the resident's concerns were substantially addressed through the actions taken.

Fees and charges in a retirement village

A resident raised concerns about fees and charges in a retirement village. The resident lived in an older section of the village and believed they were being charged for utilities and services that were not available to residents in that part of the village but were available in a newly built section of the village.

The Commission facilitated discussions between the resident and the village operator. During these discussions, the operator acknowledged that residents in the older section of the village were not receiving the same services and amenities as residents in newer areas. To resolve the matter, the village operator agreed to reduce the relevant levy for residents in the older section of the village and refunded amounts that had been overpaid.

VICTIMS OF CRIME CHARTER

Victim engagement in the justice process

A person who had obtained a Personal Protection Order (PPO) raised concerns that he had not been consulted about his safety concerns before a bail decision was made in criminal proceedings involving the alleged perpetrator subject to the PPO.

The Commission sought a response from the justice agency and shared the response with the complainant. The justice agency explained the considerations and processes involved in bail decisions, including how the existence of the PPO was considered. The justice agency also apologised for the complainant's experience and provided information about available support services. The matter was resolved on the basis of the explanation and apology provided by the justice agency.

Recognition payment

A person raised concerns about the processing of their application for a recognition payment through VSACT. They were concerned about delays in receiving a decision and felt that the amount awarded did not adequately reflect the impact of the offence on them.

The Commission sought a response from VSACT which was provided to the complainant. In the response, VSACT explained the assessment process and advised that the complainant had received the maximum recognition payment available under the scheme. The matter was resolved as the complainant was satisfied with the explanation.

Human rights complaints pathway: 2 years in

Since June 2024, Canberrans have been able to bring complaints to the Commission about alleged human rights breaches by ACT Government agencies, or agencies providing services on behalf of the ACT Government. A person is able to bring a complaint alleging that public authorities have acted inconsistently with particular rights, or have not given proper consideration to human rights, when making a decision.

Human rights complaints can be made alongside complaints under other jurisdictions such as complaints about discrimination, health services, privacy and services for children and young people.

During the reporting period, the Commission received 157 human rights complaints. This is a 57 per cent increase from the 100 received in 2024–25 financial year, which was the first year of operation.

The Commission has expanded existing human rights training engagement with agencies, and the DHSDCSC also continued to co-facilitate the Human Rights Community of Practice with Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACSD).

The Human Rights Community of Practice connects practitioners across government involved in complaints

handling, policy development and service delivery, in a regular informal forum for sharing best-practice approaches, case studies and resources relevant to human rights obligations. It has also expanded into discussion of other related legislative functions and reforms, including the privacy jurisdiction and the ongoing work to implement positive duties under the Discrimination Act.

Table 12: Most frequent rights raised in human rights complaints*

Right	2025–26
Humane treatment when deprived of liberty	47
Right to healthy environment	31
Protection of family and children	18
Cultural rights	18
Recognition & equality before the law	12
Privacy and reputation	10
Right to education	7
Right to life	7

* Note: One complaint may raise multiple rights.

Human rights case studies 2025–26

Right to family and access to assisted reproductive technology

A person raised concerns about the impact of changes to assisted reproductive treatment legislation, arguing that uncertainty in the legislation had affected their ability to access health care and amounted to a breach of their right to protection of the family and children at section 11 of the HR Act.

The Commission sought a response from the relevant government policy area and facilitated a conciliation between the parties. During the process, the policy area acknowledged the significant impact that legislative ambiguity can have on individuals seeking to access services. It also identified lessons to support improved consultation with affected communities and service providers when developing future legislative reforms.

Right to healthy environment and suitable housing

The Commissioner commenced a CIC after receiving a notification of a vulnerable adult living in public housing after sewerage flooding affected their property. The conditions in the home were having an impact on the person’s health and wellbeing and preventing allied health and disability support services from attending the premises.

As part of its consideration, the Commission engaged with relevant health, housing and community sector organisations to better understand the circumstances and facilitate information sharing between stakeholders. Following these discussions, the person’s application for a priority housing transfer progressed and they moved to alternative accommodation better suited to their circumstances.

Right to family and maintaining family connections

The Commission investigated a complaint from the parent of a detainee who had been transferred interstate. The parent raised concerns that the transfer was affecting their ability to maintain regular contact with their family member due to increased travel requirements and more restrictive visiting arrangements.

The complaint was resolved through conciliation. As part of the outcome, the agency agreed to consider any future application for transfer back to ACT custody in accordance with relevant policy and any new or updated information provided.

Right to health environment and community participation

The Commission received a representative complaint from members of a community environmental group concerning aspects of a development proposal near a nature reserve. The complaint raised concerns about the right to a healthy environment and the consideration of environmental impacts during planning and review processes.

The Commission obtained responses from the relevant government agencies and facilitated a conciliation conference between the parties. During conciliation, members of the community group highlighted the importance of effective engagement with community stakeholders and called for improved communication and stronger working relationships between government agencies and community advocacy groups. The matter was resolved through discussions at conciliation.

Vulnerable person complaints 2025–26

In May 2020, the role of the Commissioner was expanded to include a complaints function for abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable people—that is, an adult with disability or a person aged 60 years or above who experiences barriers to participation in the community because of a disability or social isolation. This is a broad jurisdiction to provide better protections for vulnerable people, people with disability and older people in the ACT community. It responds to recommendations in the Australian Law Reform Commission report on elder abuse to improve adult safeguarding frameworks in each jurisdiction.

Vulnerable person complaints provide an avenue for family, friends, neighbours, service providers, health workers or community members to bring concerns to the Commission. The Commission triages and assesses each concern based on the nature of the issues raised. The Commission may provide information and support, engage other professionals and/or conduct CICs into a matter.

The ACT is only the second jurisdiction, together with NSW, to have a broad civil complaints process to respond to claims of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable people. The jurisdiction covers domestic and family settings, service providers, accommodation, guardianship arrangements, disability providers and in-home care.

The continued increase in vulnerable person complaints received, from 116 in 2024–25 to 154 for 2025–26, confirms community need for the function.

The DHSDCSC team appreciates the community members, service providers, neighbours and guardians who have been in contact with concerns about a vulnerable older person or person with disability, wanting to protect those people from abuse, neglect, exploitation or mistreatment.

The Commissioner and DHSDCSC team have participated in a range of panel discussions, presentations, roundtables and events to promote awareness of the jurisdiction. The team chairs the ACT's Elder Abuse Prevention Network, which brings together service providers and key stakeholders working on these issues. The Commission has also contributed to numerous consultations in relation to the national response to the abuse of older people and made submissions on a range of topics including the impacts of social isolation and financial abuse of older persons living in the community.

These are complex matters, often involving the Commission working with family members, guardians, those holding enduring powers of attorney, a range of service providers and other stakeholders. In vulnerable person matters, the vulnerable person often wants the relationship with the other party retained or restored rather than a criminal justice response (eg where family violence or abuse of some type is involved).

The examples below are a sample of the broad range of issues received in this reporting period.

Considering the wishes and preferences of a young adult with disability

A concern was raised about the wellbeing of a young adult who was living with a disability that impacted their ability to communicate. The young person's parents were experiencing conflict about key aspects of the young person's care; including their needs, abilities and care arrangements. It was reported that the young person's views and preferences were at risk of being overlooked.

The Commission arranged to speak directly with the young person in order to understand how the situation was impacting them, and what their wishes and preferences were. With the young person's consent, the Commission was able to share this information with the young person's parents.

The Commission facilitated a conciliation, which resulted in agreement about living arrangements and processes for planning visits and managing changes to arrangements. The outcome reflected the young person's needs and preferences and reduced the impact of ongoing parental conflict.

Safeguarding a young adult experiencing control and family violence

Concerns were raised about the wellbeing of a young adult with disability who was living in a situation involving alleged family violence and had limited control over their financial affairs. It was also reported that the person faced barriers to independent decision-making and accessing supports.

The Commission met with the young adult to understand their wishes and circumstances. The person expressed a desire for greater independence while also raising concerns about their safety. The Commission made enquiries to ensure appropriate safeguarding measures were in place and facilitated referrals to relevant support services. This included assistance to access social work support, housing assistance and consideration of additional funding to support independent living arrangements. The matter was resolved with a safety plan in place and services engaged to support the person's ongoing wellbeing and decision-making.

Clarifying guardianship responsibilities

A concern was raised about decisions being made by a guardian on behalf of an adult with impaired decision-making capacity. It was alleged that some of these decisions were having a negative impact on the person's wellbeing.

The Commission met with the protected person to better understand her views and preferences. She indicated that she valued her relationship with her guardian but wanted to be more involved in decisions affecting her life.

The Commission provided information to the guardian about their responsibilities, including the importance of supported decision-making and taking the protected person's wishes into account. Following these discussions, the guardian agreed to involve the protected person more closely in future decision-making and reviewed arrangements relating to her care and treatment to better reflect her wishes.

Clarifying guardianship responsibilities for an older person with dementia

The Commission received a notification regarding an older person with advanced dementia who was living at home under the care of a family member who was also their guardian. Concerns were raised about the person's safety and wellbeing, including whether appropriate arrangements were in place to meet their daily care needs and to respond in the event of an emergency.

The Commission arranged an interpreter to assist in understanding the older person's wishes and preferences. The Commission made enquiries to better understand the circumstances and the risks identified. The Commission discussed the concerns with the guardian and provided information about guardianship responsibilities and available support services. The Commission also identified that the guardian was experiencing significant stress and that cultural factors were influencing decisions about care arrangements.

Following the Commission's involvement, a care plan was developed with relevant service providers to address identified risks and support the older person's ongoing wellbeing.

Concerning behaviour by an older person's family members

The Commission received a complaint regarding the wellbeing of an older person and their spouse. Concerns were raised about alleged intimidation and threatening behaviour by family members, which was causing distress and affecting the older person's sense of safety.

As part of its enquiries, the Commission met separately with the older person and their spouse to better understand the circumstances and ensure both were able to express their views independently.

With their consent, the Commission contacted the family members to communicate the concerns raised and request that future contact occur only with permission. When this did not resolve the matter, the Commission provided the older person with information about available supports, advocacy and legal options. With the older person's consent, the Commission also facilitated contact with ACT Policing to discuss options for reporting the concerns and seeking further assistance.

Complex care and safety concerns

The Commissioner commenced a CIC after receiving information raising concerns about the safety and wellbeing of an older person who had presented to hospital, and their informal carer. The information suggested that the carer was experiencing significant mental health challenges which may be a risk to both the older person and the carer.

The Commission engaged with police, health services and the older person to establish the risks and complexities of the situation, as well as gain an understanding of the needs and wishes of those involved.

Following these enquiries, the Commission liaised with the carer and provided information and education about the available support options. Arrangements were made for the older person to remain in hospital while alternative accommodation with greater support services was secured. The Commission also worked with stakeholders to assist with the appointment of a guardian to ensure long-term care and support.

Informed decision-making in supported accommodation

An older person raised concerns about their living arrangements in supported accommodation. They told the Commission they felt restricted in their ability to leave the residence and were dissatisfied with aspects of daily life, including meals and activities. They also expressed a wish to live more independently.

The Commission made enquiries to better understand the person's concerns and circumstances. The Commission met with the older person, their support coordinator and the service provider to discuss the issues raised and the options available.

The Commission helped the parties write an agreement that addressed the older person's concerns. Part of this agreement involved further assessments to better understand their support needs and capacity for more independent living arrangements.

Responding to concerns about financial exploitation

The Commission received information about suspected financial exploitation of 3 adults living with disability. It was alleged that a paid support worker had stolen personal belongings from each of their homes over an extended period.

The Commission met with the individuals involved to understand their concerns and preferred outcomes. They advised that they wanted the support worker removed from their care arrangements and wished to discuss the matter directly with the service provider.

The Commission facilitated discussions with the individuals and the service provider, which resulted in the removal of the support worker, financial compensation for the higher value items that were taken and the implementation of a safeguarding plan for each of the adults living with disability. The Commission also opened a disability service complaint to consider the broader issues this complaint highlighted.

Concerns about neglect of older person

Concerns were raised that an older person was being neglected by their family and were not receiving sufficient care. It was reported that the older person's increasing care needs were not being adequately met and that they were being left alone for extended periods of time.

The Commission met with the older person multiple times to understand their concerns and preferences for their care. The older person advised that they wished to move into residential aged care but were concerned about how their family members might react to this decision.

With the older person's consent, the Commission was able to facilitate referrals to advocacy and aged care services. The Commission then convened a stakeholder meeting which enabled all parties to discuss the older person's wishes and future care needs. An action plan was devised and agreed to, which provided support for the older persons as they transitioned into residential aged care accommodation in line with their wishes. This decision was supported by the older person's family.

Commission-initiated considerations

A Commission-Initiated Consideration (CIC) allows the Commissioner to investigate a matter on her own initiative. A CIC can be conducted:

- where several complaints or notifications about a particular practice or organisation are received
- a complaint is made anonymously raising concerns within the Commission's jurisdiction
- someone with a grievance does not have personal standing, capacity, involvement or authority to make a complaint
- the community raises an issue in the media or through community organisation representations.

In these matters, the Commissioner becomes the complainant and concerns are investigated as a complaint. In a CIC, the Commissioner will work with organisations to resolve any issues identified during the investigation.

This may include recommending an organisation update its policies or practices, or undertake staff training or education, and making recommendations to improve service delivery or compliance with relevant standards.

The Commissioner can make formal recommendations, and in those cases will seek evidence of compliance or will revisit the issues with the organisation after an agreed review period. The Commissioner can also take discrimination CICs to ACAT for determination.

In 2025–26, the Commissioner began 168 new CICs and closed 167, noting not all matters opened were closed in the reporting period. This is an 18 per cent increase in the number of CICs opened in the previous reporting period. The majority of CICs are opened in the vulnerable person jurisdiction.

Victims of Crime Commissioner

Highlights

VICTIMS OF CRIME

2,594 victims of crime received case coordination

13,156 hours of therapeutic services provided



\$4.9 million paid under the Financial Assistance Scheme



532 registrations on the Adult Offenders Victims Register

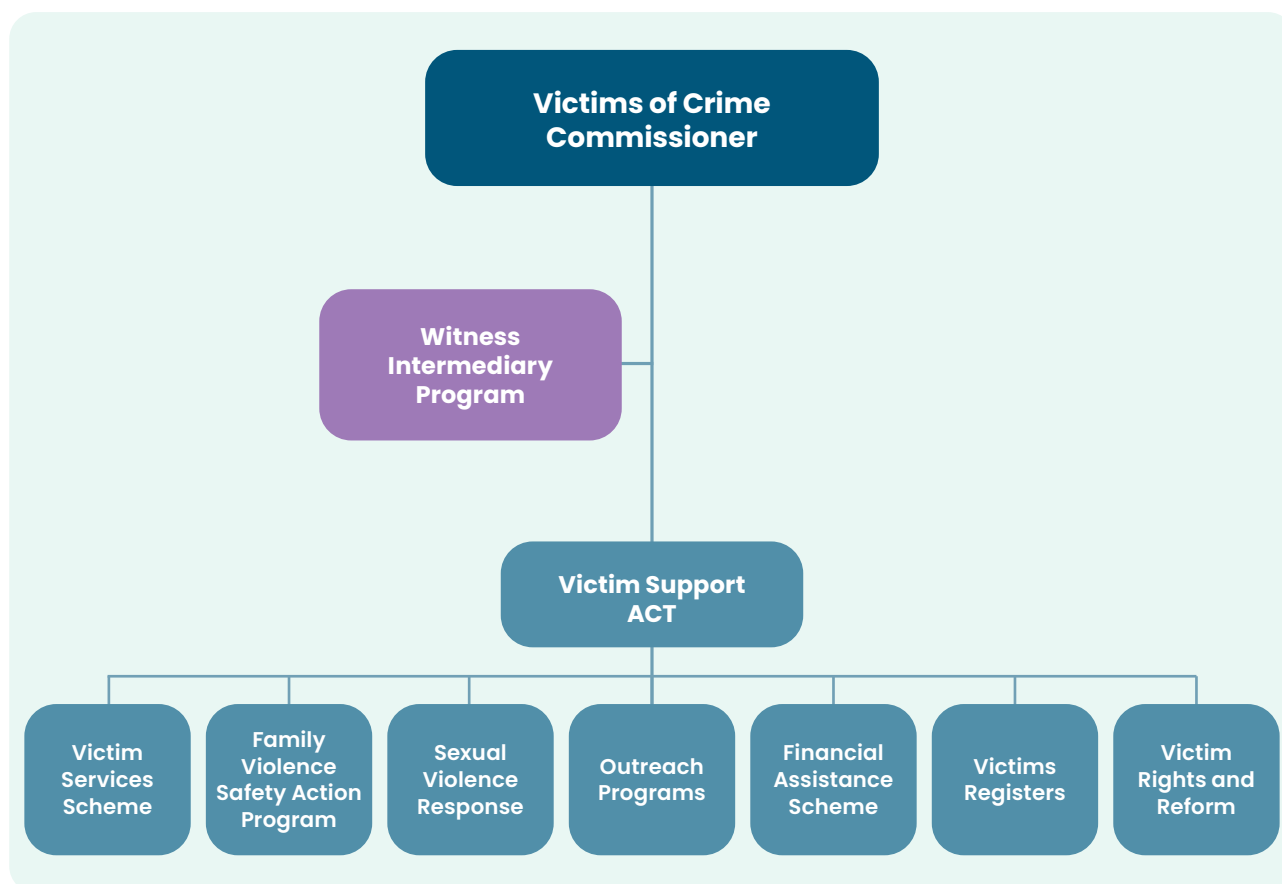


✓ Wraparound Multiagency Response
436 referrals

✓ Family Violence Safety Action Program
230 referrals

✓ Intermediary Program
551 referrals

Victim Support ACT



Victim Services Scheme

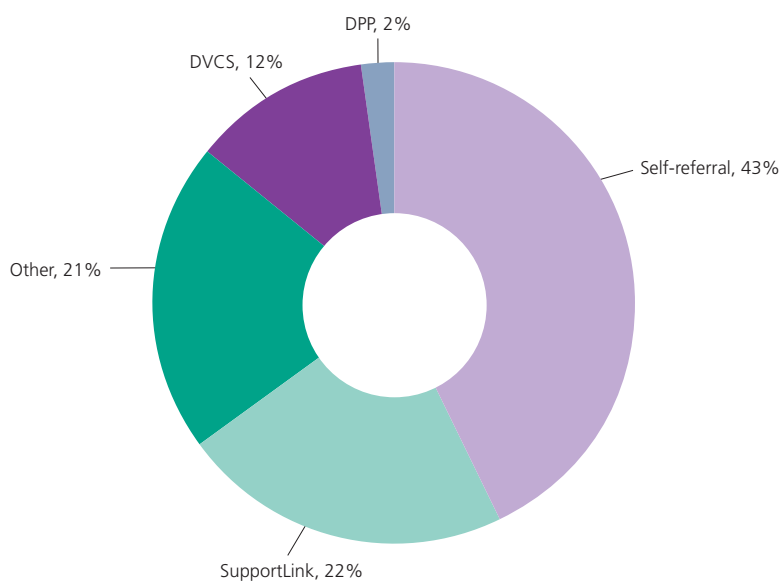
VSACT is responsible for delivering the Victim Services Scheme (the Scheme) under the VoC Act and the Victims of Crime Regulation 2000. The Scheme offers a broad range of services designed to assist victims of crime and their families recover from the impacts of criminal offences.

The Scheme is available to victims of offences committed in the ACT irrespective of when the offence occurred or whether it was reported to police. Support is provided by case coordinators who apply trauma-informed and strengths-based skills to understand each person's unique circumstances and provide tailored, person-centred assistance. Supports may include:

- safety planning
- facilitating free counselling and therapeutic supports
- providing guidance on justice processes and promoting and supporting victim rights under the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime
- court support
- assistance with FAS applications
- referrals to specialist services, including for safety planning, mental health support, legal advice and housing or accommodation assistance.

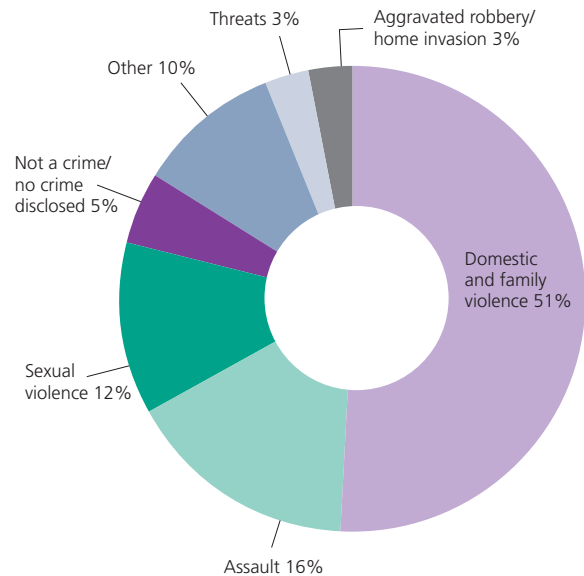
In 2025–26, a total of 2,617 referrals were made to VSACT. Of these referrals, 43 per cent were self-referrals made directly by clients, while the remaining referrals were received through SupportLink, Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) and other services.

Figure 1: Source of referrals to VSACT



In 2025–26, domestic and family violence matters comprised 51 per cent of all case coordination.

Figure 2: Breakdown of case coordination by offence type



The Scheme has sustained increases in demand from previous reporting periods. In 2025–26, VSACT supported a total of 3,806 clients through a variety of service responses, including case coordination, information and referral services, and enquiry management. Over this period, VSACT provided case coordination to 2,594 clients.

As a core part of service delivery, demand for case coordination has increased by 35 per cent when compared to 1,920 clients provided with case coordination in 2021–22.

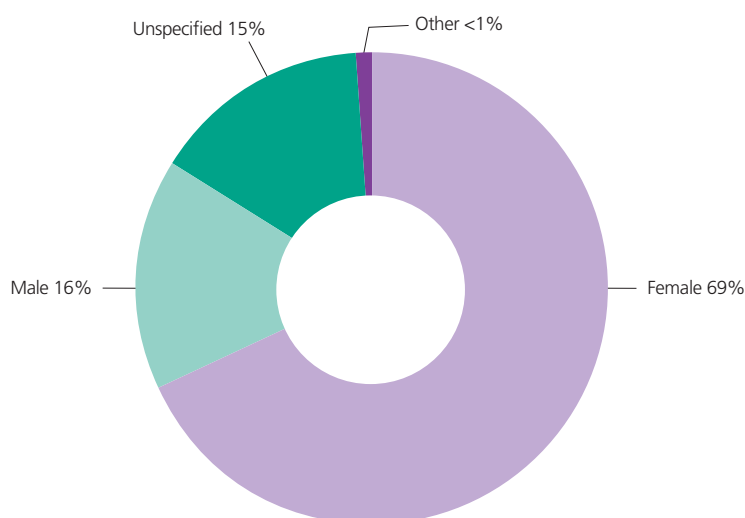
The work of case coordination has continued to grow in complexity, with case coordinators reporting that individual clients require more intensive and sustained engagement, coordination and support than in previous years. This is likely due to the increasingly complex and intersecting needs presented by clients, including issues affecting their emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Table 13: Clients provided with case coordination or other services

	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Clients provided with case coordination					
New clients registered for case coordination	677	875	1,092	1,054	926
Existing clients with new experiences of violence/offences	194	244	127	236	280
Existing registered clients receiving ongoing service	1,049	1,063	1,350	1,387	1,388
Subtotal	1,920	2,182	2,569	2,677	2,594
Clients provided with information, referred to other services or unable to be contacted					
Advice, information or referral	681	502	554	712	789
Referral received and client declined service	82	58	73	40	29
Out of scope/inappropriate referral	39	120	106	113	84
Clients unable to be contacted after 3 attempts	354	323	248	272	310
Subtotal	1,156	1,003	981	1,137	1,212
Total	3,076	3,185	3,550	3,814	3,806

Figure 3: Gender of clients provided with case coordination

In 2025–26, the majority of clients provided with case coordination were female.



Therapeutic services

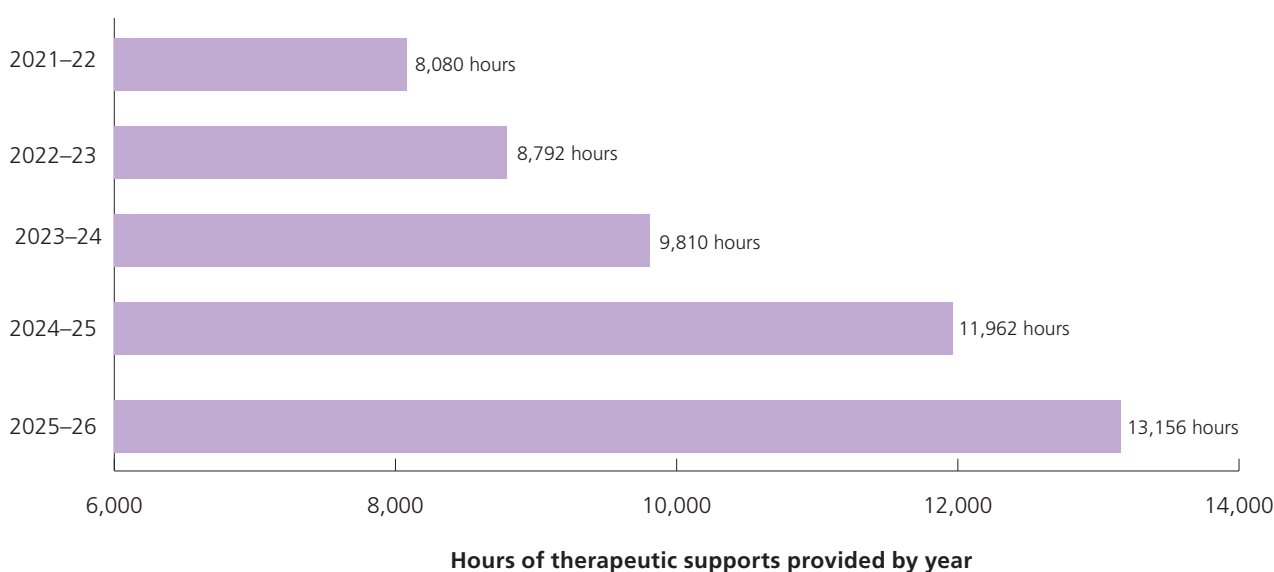
Through the Scheme eligible victims of crime can access funded counselling and therapeutic services in accordance with the Victims of Crime Regulation 2000. These services are available through both in-person and telehealth appointments and are delivered by a panel of qualified practitioners, including counsellors, clinical psychologists, accredited mental health social workers and massage therapists.

All approved providers hold appropriate professional qualifications and have significant experience working with people affected by trauma. VSACT continues to strengthen and diversify its provider network to minimise waiting

periods and offer clients greater flexibility and choice in selecting a suitable practitioner. In 2025–26, VSACT engaged 233 approved therapeutic service providers, reflecting a 12 per cent increase compared to 2024–25, where VSACT engaged 208 providers.

The expanded provider network has contributed to the growth of the number of hours of therapeutic support provided, with clients receiving a total of 13,156 hours of funded therapeutic support in 2025–26. This represents a 10 per cent increase from 2024–25, where clients received 11,962 hours, and a 63 per cent increase on 2021–22, where clients received 8,080 hours.

Figure 4: Hours of therapeutic supports provided by year



Case study

Kareema contacted VSACT seeking advocacy and support in relation to a report of sexual assault to ACT Policing. Kareema requested advocacy regarding several victims' rights under the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime, including respectful engagement with police, return of property and investigation updates. With Kareema's consent, the case coordinator liaised with ACT Policing on her behalf resulting in the timely return of her phone. The case coordinator established a clear communication plan with ACT Policing to support Kareema's wellbeing, including regular investigation updates in line with the Charter. Through trauma-informed advocacy, Kareema regained confidence in her engagement with ACT Policing and was further linked in to counselling and financial assistance supports.

“ Client feedback

'Thank you again for everything you helped my son and I with. You really did make the process easy and made us feel at ease, we very much appreciate your support.'

'Thank you for being so kind to me, I really appreciate it.'

Victims Justice Volunteer Program

The Victims of Crime Regulation 2000 requires VSACT to develop and maintain a volunteer program to support victims and witnesses of crime. The Victims Justice Volunteer Program (the Program) is delivered by highly skilled and trained volunteers who provide practical and emotional support to victims of offences committed in the ACT.

The Program is overseen by a coordinator who recruits and trains new volunteers, provides ongoing support, supervision and debriefing to existing volunteers and engages with other justice agencies to coordinate volunteer support. The Program currently has 9 volunteers to support victims of crime in a trauma-informed manner.

In collaboration with other justice agencies, including the DPP Witness Assistance Team, the Program provides support to assist victims of crime to:

- apply for payments under FAS
- make an initial statement to ACT Policing
- attend a pre-trial preparation session with the DPP
- attend familiarisation tours of the courts and remote witness rooms
- provide evidence at a criminal hearing or trial

- write a victim impact statement
- provide support at court for Family Violence Order or PPO applications, conferences and hearings.

Additionally, in 2025–26 the Program trialled attendance at the court's 'block listing day' for domestic and family violence matters. The coordinator and a volunteer provided support to 7 victim-survivors on the day by addressing gaps in assistance not covered by other court support services, such as the DPP's Witness Assistance Team.

In 2025–26, the Program received 203 referrals for volunteer assistance, compared to 262 referrals received in 2024–25. This included referrals for court support and other forms of assistance, such as support with FAS applications, reporting matters to ACT Policing, preparing victim impact statements and attending meetings with justice agencies.

The decline in referrals to the Program is likely a result of additional resources provided to the DPP's Witness Assistance Service, enhancing its capacity to provide court support to victims and witnesses. In the new financial year, the Program intends to utilise any additional capacity of volunteers and build on the success of the 'block listing day' through the development of a regular program of volunteer duty service at the courts.

Table 14: Victims Justice Volunteer Program referrals and supports

Support provided by volunteers	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Total referrals	163	187	239	262	203
Hours of court support	166	233	327	231	103
Hours of other supports, including assistance to draft FAS applications, draft victim impact statements, make a police report or attend meetings with justice agencies	48	69	75	99	77
Total hours of support provided	214	302	402	330	180

In 2025–26, the Program also piloted a new FAS administrative support model providing clients with regular times for administrative support to replace the previous appointment-based structure. While still in the early stages, it is anticipated this structure will enable

volunteers to support more clients with completing and submitting application forms. The pilot has also improved volunteer satisfaction and received positive feedback from stakeholders.

Case study

Nikos contacted VSACT and was promptly connected with the Victims' Justice Volunteer Program to support him to apply for a PPO arising from concerns about his safety and wellbeing. A volunteer assisted Nikos by facilitating a referral to Legal Aid ACT's Protection Unit, enabling him to obtain legal advice before the matter was heard by the court. Following the successful granting of the interim PPO, the volunteer continued to provide Nikos with court support until a final PPO was granted. Nikos reported the volunteer's support and presence significantly reduced his anxiety and helped him feel more confident participating in the court process.

“ Client feedback

'I wanted to extend my heartfelt thanks to VSACT for sending a volunteer to support me on my court days. They were amazing, calm, compassionate, and incredibly supportive. Their presence made a huge difference the day.'

'I cannot thank VSACT enough for the support over the last two days. I honestly don't know if I would have made it through without it. You get five stars for professionalism and empathy. Thank you.'

Supporting families bereaved by motor vehicle offences in the ACT

VSACT provides specialised support to individuals and families bereaved by motor vehicle offences in the ACT. The service assists clients to navigate the practical, emotional and legal impacts that can arise following an offence and support is tailored to the needs of each individual. Services may include coordination of therapeutic services, advocacy in relation to victims' rights and engagement with other justice and government agencies on behalf of bereaved individuals. The service also facilitates referrals to other specialist health and legal services to support recovery.

VSACT continues to lead an interagency community of practice to strengthen outcomes for bereaved individuals. The community of practice includes representatives from the Motor Accident Injuries Commission, Defined Benefits Information Service, SupportLink and other key stakeholders. This collaborative forum promotes information sharing where appropriate, service coordination and the delivery of timely, trauma-informed support across agencies.

Victims registers

VSACT manages the ACT's 3 victims registers: the Adult Offenders Victims Register, the Youth Justice Victims Register and the Affected Persons Register. These registers operate under the VoC Act, the *Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act 2005* and the *Mental Health Act 2015*.

The registers ensure that victims and affected persons can exercise their rights to receive information and access support during sentence management, as well as when matters are referred to the ACAT. They facilitate victim participation in decision-making processes relating to offenders and forensic patients, including decisions made by the SAB, ACT Corrective Services (including the AMC) and ACAT.

In November 2022, the Adult Offenders Victims Register was transferred from ACT Corrective Services to VSACT. At the end of 2025–26, there was a total of 532 registrations. This represents an increase of 257 per cent from the 149 registered victims at the time of the register's transfer. The majority of registrations on the Adult Offenders Victims Register relate to offences involving domestic, family and sexual violence, as well as other forms of personal violence.

Table 15: Adult Offenders Victims Register

	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Total registrations at end of financial year	324	393	532

The Adult Offenders Victims Register supports registered victims to prepare submissions to the SAB in relation to parole applications, parole breach hearings and proposed changes to parole conditions. In 2025–26, the register supported 150 submissions to the SAB, representing a 123 per cent increase compared with the 67 submissions supported in 2024–25. Of the 150 submissions supported in 2025–26, 30 were requested by registered victims to be delivered in person to the SAB, compared with 7 such requests in 2024–25.

In-person submissions provide registered victims with an opportunity to meet directly with the SAB members responsible for determining parole outcomes. This enables victims to articulate their concerns, provide relevant risk information and ask questions directly to the SAB. It allows the SAB to gain valuable insight into the impact and context of the offences. Victims who have participated in the SAB's proceedings frequently reflect that they felt heard by the justice system, often for the first time. Victims report that the SAB provides them with the time and space to express their views, and that they were treated with dignity and respect throughout the process.

In May 2022, the Youth Justice Victims Register was transferred from the (then) Community Services Directorate to VSACT. The Youth Justice Victims Register provides support and information to registered victims of offenders who were under the age of 18 years at the time of the offence.

At the end of 2025–26, there was a total of 16 registered victims on the Youth Justice Victims Register.

Table 16: Youth Justice Victims Register

	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Total registrations at end of financial year	9	10	16

In December 2024, the Affected Persons Register was transferred from ACAT to VSACT. A person becomes eligible for the Affected Persons Register when the court requires the defendant or offender to submit to the jurisdiction of ACAT, or for the matter to be reviewed by ACAT. This may occur if the defendant or offender is found not to have the mental competence or ability to commit the offence or to stand trial.

The Affected Persons Register provides affected persons with information about ACAT hearings that affect them. Staff attend hearings on behalf of affected persons to ensure their views and concerns are represented and considered in ACAT’s decisions.

At the end of 2025–26, there was a total of 17 registered affected persons, compared to a total of 7 registered affected persons at the end of 2024–25.

Case study

The Adult Offenders Victims Register contacted Lucia, a registered victim, regarding an offender’s parole application. Lucia wished to provide an in-person submission to the SAB. The register supported Lucia to make her submission as she had found previous experiences of the justice system re-traumatising. Lucia raised her concerns to the SAB about her safety and wellbeing and asked questions about the parole process. Afterwards, Lucia described the experience as a turning point in her engagement with the justice system and expressed gratitude that her concerns had been genuinely heard and considered.

National Redress Scheme counselling and direct personal response

VSACT administers the National Redress Scheme (NRS) counselling supports in the ACT and assists eligible victim-survivors who have accepted an offer of redress to access specialised therapeutic services. VSACT works collaboratively with victim-survivors to identify an appropriate provider from its panel of experienced NRS practitioners and ensure support is tailored to individual needs and preferences. To promote continuity of care, VSACT can also facilitate funding arrangements for a victim-survivor’s existing treating practitioner where they become approved members of the NRS provider panel. This approach provides flexible access to trauma-informed counselling and therapeutic supports, while recognising the value of choice and established therapeutic relationships.

The VSACT Redress Program Coordinator engages with relevant stakeholders to support effective service delivery and contributes to national discussions around the NRS Eighth Anniversary Review. In 2025–26, VSACT and Relationships Australia Canberra & Region (RACR) established a memorandum of understanding to facilitate access to post-redress counselling delivered by RACR and administered by VSACT. This arrangement supports continuity of care for victim-survivors who engaged with RACR for support applying for redress to continue counselling with RACR post-redress.

Since the commencement of the NRS in July 2018, a total of 225 victim-survivors have accepted counselling with VSACT as part of their NRS packages and 50 victim-survivors have chosen to access counselling since accepting their NRS package.

In 2025–26:

- 33 victim-survivors have accepted a NRS package inclusive of counselling
- 3 victim-survivors commenced counselling through VSACT
- 22 victim-survivors continued to access counselling from previous years
- 3 victim-survivors accessed a direct personal response.

“ Client feedback

‘Thank you so much for the email and continued support. I appreciate the information updates, and I was pleased to see my requested parole conditions were included.’

‘Since talking to you the other day, I feel like I have my voice back.’

Outreach programs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Program

The VSACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Program (the Program) provides flexible, person-centred and culturally responsive support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families who have experienced crime in the ACT. In addition to working directly with clients, the Program also maintains strong collaborative relationships across VSACT and the broader HRC to support holistic, culturally safe service delivery for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

The Program recognises the ongoing impacts of intergenerational trauma arising from colonisation, forced child removals, incarceration, racism and discrimination, while acknowledging and building on the strength, resilience and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. The Program is led by an Aboriginal staff member with strong connections to the ACT community and deep cultural knowledge. The team is supported by a highly skilled and experienced outreach social worker.

In 2025–26, the Senior Advocate won the Strong Spirit, Strong Culture Award for her strong leadership, commitment to the provision of culturally responsive service provision and dedication to improving outcomes for individuals through the Program.

In 2025–26 the Program supported 113 clients, many of whom were impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence and require intensive, long-term support. The Program promotes safer outcomes and focuses on improving access to FAS and therapeutic counselling services, as well as assisting with safety planning, navigating the justice system and advocating for victims' rights.

Staff assist clients to access support in ways that feel safe, respectful and culturally appropriate and outreach remains a core component of the Program. Staff meet clients in places where they feel comfortable, including at home, in community spaces and at health settings. The team also provides regular opportunities for community members to connect and access information about VSACT, and regularly engage with services including Yeddung Mura, Yerrabi Yurwang, Gudan Gulwan, Sisters in Spirit, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health, the Bush Healing Farm, the Nannies Group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network meetings, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Aboriginal Women's Group, Yurwang Bullarn Strong Women's Group, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), Legal Aid ACT and Beryl Women's Refuge.

In May 2026, the team hosted a well-attended event at Boomanulla Oval to provide an opportunity for the community to meet the incoming VOCC Juliette Ford, and yarn with the other Commissioners of the HRC. Feedback on the event was so positive that the team agreed to facilitate a similar event on a quarterly basis to build and support strong collaborative relationships across the community and the Commission, and to provide the community with the opportunity to engage directly with Commissioners to raise matters of importance with them.



The team's First Nations Senior Advocate is congratulated for winning the Strong Spirit, Strong Culture Award for 2025–26.

Case study

Kylie engaged with VSACT after experiencing extensive domestic and family violence perpetrated by her partner. The team regularly met Kylie in community spaces to provide support and information about her options. The team supported Kylie to report to ACT Policing, which led to the offender's incarceration. The team supported Kylie to apply for a Housing ACT transfer and to access FAS to install CCTV, security doors and upgraded locks. Kylie was also provided with counselling services and connected with Canberra Community Law, Consumer Law and Winnunga Aboriginal Medical Service to support her ongoing recovery.

“ Client feedback

‘Thank you so much for giving me the time and help in the way that I need.’

Multicultural Liaison Officer

VSACT’s Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) works to strengthen culturally responsive support for victims from migrant, refugee and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. These clients often face additional barriers in accessing services for reasons including language barriers, displacement, visa insecurity, social isolation and pressure from family and community networks.

In 2025–26, VSACT provided case coordination to 318 clients with migrant or refugee backgrounds, representing 12 per cent of all 2,594 clients accessing case coordination. VSACT services were provided in a range of languages, with Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Bengali, Hindi Persian/Dari and Urdu being the most common.

The MLO supports clients directly and provides guidance across VSACT and the broader HRC to improve access, engagement and safety for clients with migrant or refugee backgrounds. In 2025–26, the MLO held multiple workshops with VSACT staff to provide guidance on how culture, displacement, family systems and mistrust of authorities may affect clients seeking help and participating in the justice system.

The MLO also continues to strengthen working relationships with ACT Government partners, including ACT Policing Multicultural Liaison Officers and the Restorative Justice Unit. These relationships improve coordination, referral pathways and system navigation for clients, and support more holistic and accessible supports for victims from migrant or refugee backgrounds.

Case study

A multicultural family was referred to VSACT after concerns were raised about the children’s safety due to the father perpetrating domestic and family violence. The MLO worked with the mother, Jing, and took the time to establish trust and rapport with her. The MLO provided Jing with information in plain English and with Jing’s consent liaised on her behalf with multiple stakeholders, including ACT Policing, child protection services, domestic and family violence services, legal services and other community supports. The MLO assisted Jing with safety planning, connected her with appropriate services and supports, and assisted her to voice her needs and goals. Jing reflected feeling empowered to trust agencies after receiving the MLO’s support.

‘You are the first one to meet me in person and look me in the eyes to hear my story. I can finally see a light at the end of the tunnel.’

‘Thank you for your support, I feel lighter each time I speak with you.’

Disability Advocacy Lead

The Disability Advocacy Lead (DAL) is funded through the ACT Disability Justice Strategy and provides both individual advocacy and systemic leadership to improve access to justice for victims with disability. The DAL established and chairs VSACT’s Disability Leadership Forum, which coordinates development of VSACT’s first Disability Action and Inclusion Plan and drives disability inclusion initiatives across the service.

The DAL provides direct client support to victims with disability to participate safely and meaningfully in justice processes through advocacy, communication adjustments, intermediary support, disability-informed safety planning, and facilitation of coordinated responses across ACT Policing, courts, health services, legal services and community organisations. The DAL has strong partnerships across the ACT Disability Justice Strategy community of practice and has become a recognised point of contact for complex disability-related matters, receiving referrals from community organisations, NSW Health and Commonwealth-funded providers.

In 2025–26, the DAL partnered with the Plain English Foundation to undertake an accessibility audit of VSACT’s public-facing information to identify opportunities to improve the accessibility, readability and inclusiveness of information provided to victims. This work will continue into the next financial year.

The DAL also delivers internal capability-building activities for staff, including training on neurodiversity, sensory processing, disability-inclusive communication and working with clients presenting with dysregulation. In 2025–26, VSACT delivered case coordination to 779 clients with disability, representing 30 per cent of all 2,594 clients accessing case coordination.

Case study

Maya sought support from VSACT after experiencing significant difficulties navigating the justice system. Maya disclosed she has autism. The DAL met Maya multiple times to discuss communication preferences and seek Maya's views on appropriate reasonable adjustments to facilitate engagement with the justice system. Maya believed her victims' rights had not been upheld and the DAL informed Maya of options to raise her concerns. The DAL liaised with ACT Policing on Maya's behalf and facilitated a meeting where Maya was able to share her concerns with ACT Policing. Afterwards Maya expressed that she felt heard and validated. The work of the DAL strengthened interagency collaboration and improved Maya's access to justice.

“ Client feedback

'I am so incredibly grateful to you for everything you have done, and continue to do, to help and support me through this.'

'Thank you so much, you make me feel like a human being, after all our struggles, I really appreciate people who take their job seriously.'

Family Violence Safety Action Program

The Family Violence Safety Action Program (FVSAP) comprises well-regarded and experienced family violence practitioners from a variety of disciplines, and includes colleagues from DVCS who bring not only deep skills and knowledge, but also the ability to connect FVSAP clients to other parts of their service.

FVSAP practitioners bring a specialist lens to their work and promote a victim-led, integrated response to high-risk domestic and family violence. Practitioners providing a victim-survivor-focused response engage directly with victim-survivors to understand their experiences, undertake risk assessment, identify goals for multiagency engagement and complete perpetrator mapping. They also collaborate with other agencies to break down barriers to engagement, support safety planning, undertake advocacy and make referrals as required. These practitioners bring an intersectional lens to their work. They represent the voice of clients in multiagency meetings and during internal collaboration with FVSAP's perpetrator response program.

FVSAP's perpetrator response program does not work directly with people using domestic and family violence but rather engages with agencies who do, to support the coordinated sharing of risk information across justice agencies, statutory bodies and men's behaviour change programs. The program aims to increase visibility and 'eyes on' the person using violence to promote a response where agencies work together to hold perpetrators accountable for their choice to use violence. The purpose of this work is to increase safety for victim-survivors and children and young people.

Beyond involvement in individual matters the perpetrator response program identifies and addresses broader systemic gaps and challenges, driving and supporting change at this higher level.

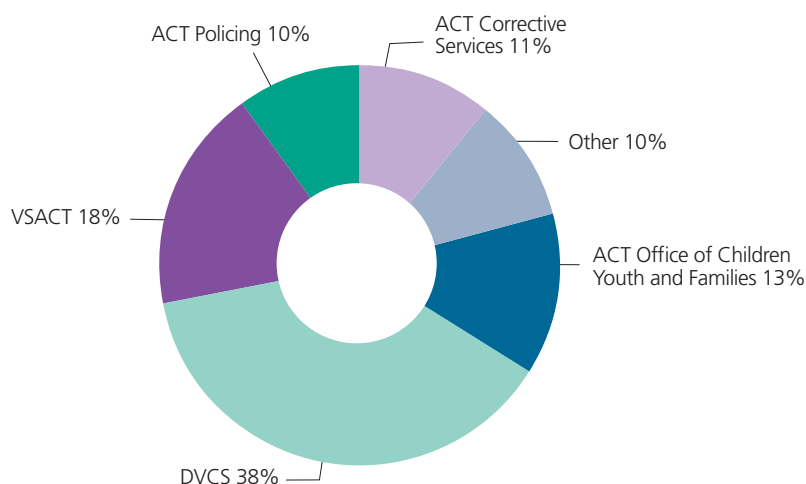
FVSAP receives referrals from government agencies and community organisations across the ACT, all of which are subject to a multiagency triage process, with the triage team identifying matters where there is a risk of serious harm, coerced suicide or lethality, and prioritising those where the current systems' response is not adequately addressing this risk. In 2025–26, referrals to FVSAP reduced slightly to 230, compared to 258 referrals in 2024–25.

Figure 5: Referral to FVSAP



Over half of all referrals are received from DVCS and VSACT, while other referrals are received from ACT Office of Children Youth and Families, ACT Corrective Services and ACT Policing.

Figure 6: FVSAP referral sources



All referrals meeting the high-risk threshold receive a response from FVSAP, varying from providing advice to support the referrer to address the risk, to a comprehensive, highly supported multiagency response.

An outcome of triage may be to take the matter to a fortnightly multiagency meeting to build a more fulsome picture of risk that includes the perpetrator's pattern of behaviour, along with the impact of their choice to use violence. During discussions, agencies collectively generate and agree to coordinate actions they can take to mitigate risk and increase safety, with a focus on identifying actions which hold the perpetrator in view of the system. Meetings are regularly attended by ACT Corrective Services, ACT Policing, CYF, DVCS, Everyman, Housing ACT, Legal Aid ACT and Toora Women Inc.

Outside of fortnightly meetings, FVSAP coordinates smaller, one-off meetings to respond to matters in a timely and targeted way.

The focus of FVSAP's work is to drive a coordinated, integrated response to address and reduce the risk of serious harm. This may be achieved via multiagency discussion; however, more often, it requires additional work from the team outside of multiagency meetings. The circumstances may require that FVSAP practitioners be allocated to the matter in relation to a victim-survivor response, perpetrator response or both. Although not always possible, it is hoped that risk will be reduced within a 3 to 6-month period, at which time the systems' response will have improved. Matters can be re-referred to FVSAP if risk escalates again.

To respond effectively, FVSAP relies upon strong, productive relationships with ACT Policing, government agencies and community sector partners. To that end, a focus for FVSAP in 2025–26 has been to continue building and strengthening connections across the sector. There is an art to coordinating agencies who otherwise operate in silos, navigating their respective policies and procedures which, at times, present bureaucratic barriers to addressing risk. FVSAP seeks out opportunities to partner and collaborate with other agencies to maximise collective effectiveness to address risk, respectfully working through these issues. Examples of success in this space include FVSAP's relationship with the CYF Family Violence Pilot, ACT Policing's Domestic & Family Violence Investigations Unit, and ACT Corrective Services' Community Corrections team. Partner agencies consistently provide feedback affirming that FVSAP's involvement has expedited the critical sharing of risk information to support safer outcomes for people experiencing family violence.

'FVSAP continues to play a vital role in supporting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the ACT who are impacted by family and domestic violence. FVSAP demonstrates leading practice in creating safety for victim-survivors and their children, while strengthening accountability for persons using violence across the ACT. Through its ongoing coordination of agencies involved in high risk and complex family and domestic violence matters, FVSAP works proactively to break down silos and foster close collaboration between agencies. Over the past 12 months, FVSAP has also played a key role in supporting the establishment of

the Family and Domestic Violence Team within CYF. The strong collaboration between the two teams has significantly contributed to improved safety outcomes for children and young people.' – Team Leader, Office of Children, Youth and Families

The FVSAP team endeavours to model collaborative and integrated practice internally: to strengthen its ability to do this, in 2025–26 FVSAP trialled a new position of Family Violence Practitioner (Integrated Responses). This role works across the team, VSACT and the sector more broadly to identify high-risk matters sitting within a siloed or disjointed service response.

In addition to core business, in 2025–26 FVSAP staff contributed their expertise in various ways, including co-chairing the Legislation of Coercive Control Steering Committee and contributing to the Family Violence Death Review, Information Sharing Scheme Working Group, Family Violence Safety Notices Working Group, Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee and the federal Attorney-General's Fixated Grievance Perpetrator expert group. FVSAP also works closely with the Victim Rights and Reform team at VSACT to inform the VOCC's legislative reform agenda.

In next financial year, FVSAP will navigate the introduction of new information-sharing legislation in the ACT, and looks forward to the opportunity this brings to expand FVSAP's network to include other critical services responding to domestic and family violence, such as health and education.

Case study

Melinda was referred to FVSAP after her ex-partner, Richard, was charged with serious family violence offences. During triage it was reported that Richard had threatened to kill Melinda and their young children should she ever report his violence to police or services. The referral indicated that Melinda and Richard had recently separated, and that throughout their relationship Melinda was subjected to extensive coercive control and violence. Her parenting was undermined and criticised constantly, and she was subject to frequent put-downs and threats. Richard monitored her weight, told her what to wear and kept tabs on her whereabouts via a tracking app which Melinda was expected to keep on at all times. Richard isolated her from family and friends, prevented her from accessing their bank accounts, and sabotaged all efforts Melinda made to establish independence. Melinda reported that Richard was intimidating and at times, pushed her and pulled her hair. She alluded to sexual coercion and assault.

It was decided that the matter would benefit from interagency discussion given the history as well as the current escalation at separation, and it was established that the family had had several touch points with the system. ACT Policing had been called to the home for various issues, including reports made by neighbours and calls from Richard expressing concern for Melinda's mental health. CYF had received notifications from the school in relation to disclosures made by the children at school. ACT Corrective Services were aware of Richard from a previous period of supervision and noted that he previously spoke negatively about Melinda, presenting a strong victim-narrative. DVCS had provided a crisis response, including emergency accommodation when Melinda had decided to separate, at which time they referred her to Toora for outreach and support. Agencies shared their understanding of the situation and collectively identified a pathway forward to include the focus on Richard.

It was agreed that FVSAP practitioners from both victim-survivor and perpetrator responses be allocated to the matter to lead collaboration and support agencies with agreed actions including: the Domestic & Family Violence Investigations Unit to conduct a holistic investigation and consider supporting Melinda with a police-initiated Family Violence Order (FVO); ACT Corrective Services to closely monitor Richard's bail supervision; DVCS to provide court outcomes via case tracking and provide updates to agencies should a bail variation be sought and discuss a safe phone with Melinda at next contact; and all agencies to provide documentation to Housing ACT, to support their work with Toora to expedite Melinda's housing application and allocate a Tenancy Support and Community Connections Officer for additional supports. Agencies to provide updates via interagency email chain in relation to changes in risk, completion of action items and other relevant updates.

Sexual violence response

Sexual Violence Legal Service

The Sexual Violence Legal Service (SVLS) is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to provide free, independent legal advice, advocacy, representation and support for women, trans and gender-diverse people, and children of all genders who have been subjected to sexual violence in the ACT. The SVLS is delivered by the Women's Legal Centre ACT in partnership with VSACT using an integrated service model.

VSACT employs 2 victim advocates who work alongside WLC lawyers to provide support and advocacy to victim-survivors. In 2025–26, the victim advocates supported 81 victim-survivors. Supports included safety planning, justice advocacy, court support, referrals for counselling and therapeutic services, assistance with applications to FAS and referrals to other specialist services. Support is provided throughout all stages of the justice system, from pre-reporting through to investigation, court proceedings and post-sentence. All legal and support services are guided by the justice goals identified by clients.

The SVLS has a formal outreach partnership with the AMC and provides assistance to detainees at the AMC Women's Unit who have been subjected to sexual violence. The SVLS visits the AMC on a fortnightly basis, typically assisting between 2 and 4 clients during each visit. Many clients at the AMC have reported that speaking with the SVLS was the first time they have disclosed sexual violence to a service provider.

In 2025–26, the SVLS was successful in securing extension funding from the Commonwealth. This funding is expected to extend and expand the service to recruit a third solicitor in the new financial year.

Case study

Jordan was subjected to sexual violence in the context of their employment. Jordan identified as trans (they/ them) and lived with multiple disabilities. The DPP referred Jordan to the SVLS for representation in a protected confidence application where defence sought access to Jordan's mental health records.

The SVLS solicitor assisted Jordan by appearing and making submissions to the court opposing access to parts of Jordan's records that were sensitive and not materially relevant to the proceedings. The victim advocate assisted Jordan to draft a confidential harm statement for the judge, which outlined the harms they would experience if their records were produced. The SVLS solicitor assisted Jordan to apply for a protection order against the accused, as there were no bail conditions in place because the accused was charged by way of summons.

The victim advocate provided information to the DPP to support an application for a witness intermediary for Jordan. The advocate supported Jordan during the intermediary assessment to help them articulate their communication needs. The intermediary made recommendations in their report about the use of Jordan's pronouns throughout the court proceedings, which supported Jordan's access to safe and respectful treatment.

The victim advocate provided court support to Jordan while they gave their evidence, as well as post-trial support when the jury returned a not guilty verdict. Jordan reported that even though the verdict was difficult to process, the SVLS helped them feel heard and supported throughout the justice process: 'before I was referred, I was in a very bad state of mental health. Everyone tells you who you can reach out to for help, but then when you do, no one actually helps. But then I was referred to SVLS. This service has been so great at making me feel included and involved throughout the entire process. I know how confused and traumatised I would have been if I didn't have this.'

Wraparound Multiagency Response

VSACT coordinates the Wraparound Multiagency Response (Wraparound). Wraparound brings together representatives from justice agencies and support services in the ACT to ensure sexual violence victim-survivors receive targeted, coordinated and timely responses to their support and safety needs. Wraparound agencies include ACT Policing, the DPP, VSACT, the Canberra Rape Crisis Service, DVCS, CYF, Enhanced Child Health Service, and Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care.

The Wraparound Coordinator facilitates interagency Wraparound meetings to share information and coordinate best-practice responses to victim-survivors to ensure their support, safety and justice goals are met. In 2025–26, Wraparound received 436 referrals. The majority of referrals were made by ACT Policing with the victim-survivor's consent.

An internal review of Wraparound was undertaken in consultation with wraparound agencies during the reporting period to identify opportunities to strengthen Wraparound processes and improve outcomes for victim-survivors. The evaluation identified options for practice improvement which are in the process of being implemented.

A schedule of meetings and proposed work plan has been set for the new financial year.

Sexual Assault (Police) Review

VSACT continues to advance the important work arising from the Sexual Assault (Police) Review (SAPR) which sought to understand why so few sexual violence reports to ACT Policing progressed to charge. The SAPR report presented to government in April 2024 made several recommendations to improve the justice system response to sexual violence victim-survivors and ensure perpetrators are held to account. Government delivered its response in September 2025 agreeing to nearly all recommendations and identifying 5 priority recommendations.

With the agreement of the Action Committee, VSACT and ACT Policing have responsibility for overseeing implementation of the priority recommendations. VSACT meets with ACT Policing fortnightly to progress this work and, where required, convenes targeted working group meetings with other agencies to support specific implementation activities.

Future Action Committee engagement will facilitate reporting processes to government on the priority recommendations and provide direction and guidance to working group members to support the ongoing implementation of the recommendations.

Co-Located Sexual Assault Advocate Pilot

The SAPR report recommended a multidisciplinary response to reduce the attrition of sexual violence reports made to ACT Policing. In response to Recommendation 2, VSACT has partnered with ACT Policing to establish and implement the Co-Located Sexual Assault Advocate Pilot (the Pilot).

The Pilot commenced in June 2026 and has 3 VSACT sexual assault advocates embedded in ACT Policing's Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team (SACAT) at the Winchester Police Centre. The advocates' role is to empower victim-survivors to engage meaningfully with ACT Policing and to provide a multidisciplinary lens to the reporting and investigation processes. Supports and advocacy provided by the advocates will be guided by the needs of the victim-survivor and may include:

- providing information to victim-survivors in relation to ACT Policing processes, and assisting victim-survivors to understand their role, rights and responsibilities in these processes
- supporting victim-survivors in their interactions with ACT Policing through the meet and greet process, provision of formal statements and any subsequent interactions throughout the investigation
- advocating to ensure victim-survivors' rights in the Charter of Rights of Victims of Crime are upheld
- facilitating updates and communication between victim-survivors and ACT Policing in a way which meets the preferences and needs of the victim-survivor
- working with victim-survivors to understand what, if any, aids or adjustments would assist them to engage meaningfully with the justice system and assisting ACT Policing to implement these aids or adjustments
- supporting victim-survivors in case closure conferences with ACT Policing when a decision has been made by ACT Policing not to proceed to charge to strengthen information flow and aid transparency
- working with victim-survivors to understand their support needs and provide tailored information and referrals to appropriate services, including counselling, legal advice and financial assistance.

The advocates will also provide support to SACAT officers to adopt trauma-informed and victim-centred approaches to uphold victims' rights, reduce re-traumatisation and support better justice outcomes. For example, the advocates worked with SACAT leadership to co-design a revised meet and greet process in response to Recommendation 15 of the SAPR report, which will be trialled in the new financial year.

The Pilot will undergo external evaluation in 2028.

Operation Foster

The SAPR report identified 684 reports of sexual offending to ACT Policing that did not proceed to charge in the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021. Of these, 182 reports were identified as requiring possible further action and 30 were identified as requiring re-investigation.⁴

VSACT, in partnership with ACT Policing's Operation Foster taskforce, has made significant progress working towards re-engagement with victim-survivors in all matters requiring possible further action, in line with Recommendation 1 of the SAPR report. VSACT is the initial point of contact with victim-survivors and staff support victim-survivors to understand their re-engagement options with ACT Policing, and provide support and advocacy to ensure their victim rights are upheld throughout any re-engagement.

Regardless of whether a victim-survivor decides to re-engage with ACT Policing, VSACT offers all victim-survivors supports, including the provision of counselling and therapeutic supports and access to FAS. VSACT also connects victim-survivors with other specialist services as required, including Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, DVCS, the DPP's Witness Assistance Service team, Legal Aid and health services.

Victim-survivors often report that this is the first time they have been offered all of the support services available to them.

Standing Sexual Assault Review Mechanism

VSACT has continued to collaborate with ACT Policing to progress implementation of Recommendation 11 to develop the Standing Sexual Assault Review Mechanism (SSARM).

In 2025–26, VSACT and ACT Policing co-designed phase one of the SSARM to introduce external engagement in the existing ACT Policing review mechanism, the Criminal Investigation Management Committee (CIMC). Governance for phase one was agreed in principle between the VOCC and the Chief Police Officer and is expected to be formally endorsed prior to implementation early in the new financial year. Phase one focuses on the VOCC delegate observing existing ACT Policing practices, including identification of procedural changes and implementation of reforms arising from the SAPR report.

The learnings from phase one will be used to inform future phases of the SSARM, with the next phase expected to involve the VOCC delegate participating in the CIMC. This will allow the delegate to critically engage in discussion with the decision-makers to understand reasons why reports have not proceeded to charge.

Financial Assistance Scheme

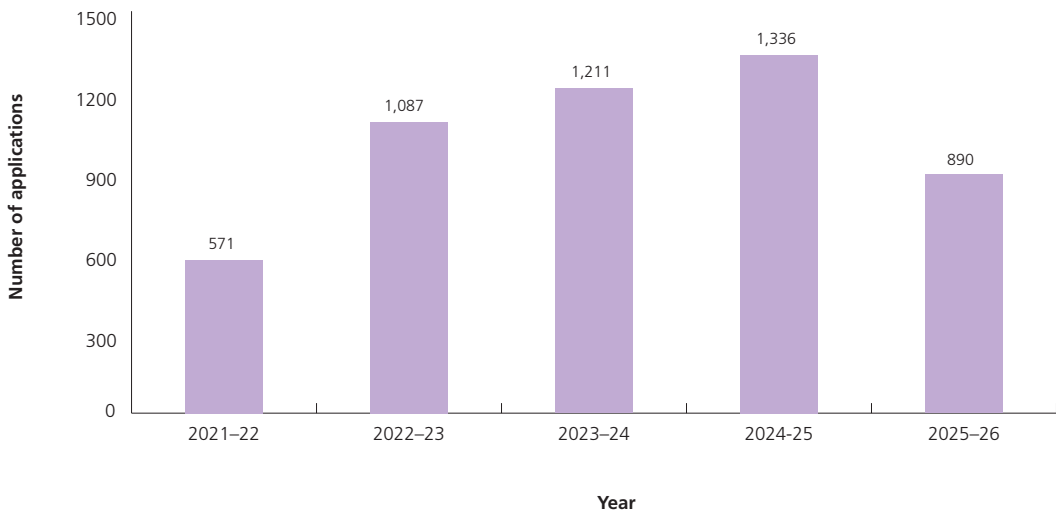
FAS is administered under the *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act 2016* and the Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Regulation 2016.

In 2025–26, FAS received 890 applications for financial assistance, compared to 1,336 applications received in 2024–25. This reduction is largely attributable to a significant increase in applications received during May and June 2025, prior to the commencement of legislative amendments on 1 July 2025 that affected certain entitlements under FAS.

These changes prompted a statistically significant number of applicants to lodge claims earlier than they otherwise may have, effectively bringing forward demand that would likely have been received in 2025–26.

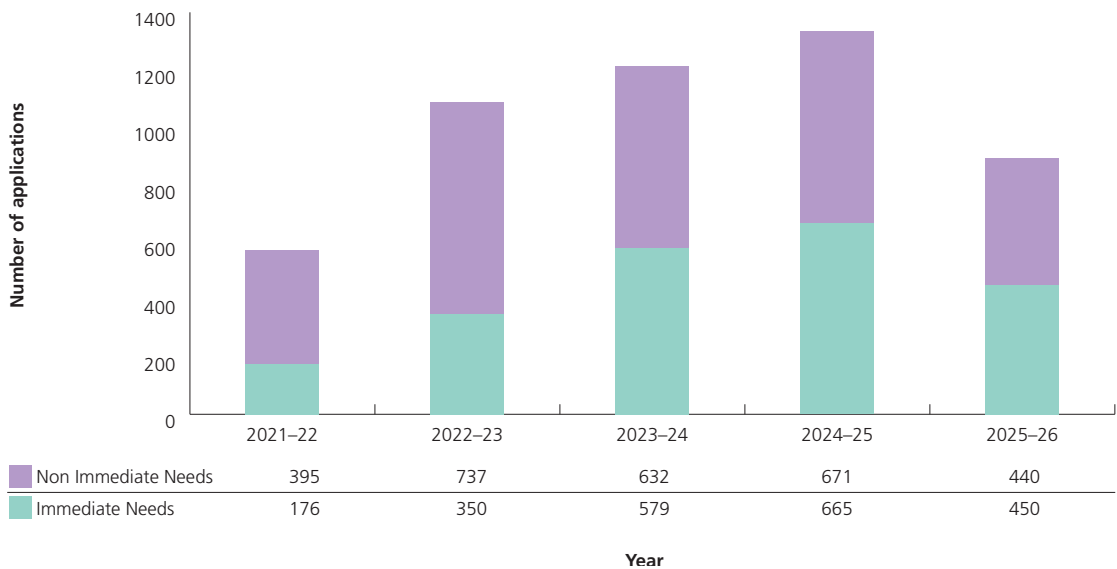
⁴ These figures may vary slightly over time due to changes in circumstances (for example, the death of an alleged offender or victim-survivor) or further review of matters (for example, the identification of duplicate files).

Figure 7: Total FAS applications received



In 2025–26, 450 applications were made for immediate needs financial assistance, representing approximately 51 per cent of all 890 applications received during the year. In addition, applications seeking a variation of previously awarded financial assistance have emerged as a distinct area of work following the legislative amendments, with 78 variation applications received in 2025–26. FAS has implemented improvements for reporting standards regarding applications to vary.

Figure 8: Proportion of immediate needs applications



Applicants who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence continue to be a key driver of FAS applications, making up 61 per cent of all applications.

Figure 9: FAS applications by offence type



In 2025–26, the total FAS expenditure was \$4.91 million, compared to \$8.67 million in 2024–25. During the year, 1,073 individual payments were made under the scheme, including 280 immediate needs payments.

There are several factors which explain the reduced expenditure of FAS. The reduction in expenditure was in part driven by legislative reforms such as:

- Since 1 July 2025, section 203 applications no longer award up to \$50,000, resulting in lower individual payments.
- Since 1 July 2025, aggravating circumstances no longer apply to payments.

In 2025–26, the total expenditure for FAS was \$4,914,666, including:

- \$509,784 for immediate needs payments to help victims with urgent expenses, including personal security, relocation, emergency medical costs and related services, and cleaning the scene of a homicide.

- \$526,950 for economic loss payments to cover losses sustained because of an act of violence, including loss of earnings, therapeutic supports, medical expenses, damage to personal items and travel expenses.
- \$2,561,932 for recognition payments, which are lump sum payments prescribed by the regulation to acknowledge harm suffered by a victim of crime.
- \$16,000 for funeral expenses for the primary victim who has died from homicide.
- \$1,300,000 for historic offences under section 203 of the *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act 2016*, which preserves payments available under the repealed 1983 Act for certain victims. Under section 203 up until 1 July 2025, victims of certain sexual offences were entitled to a recognition payment of \$50,000, and victims of non-sexual offences who sustained certain severe injuries were entitled to a recognition payment of \$30,000. This amount includes those applications made prior to the commencement of the new payment provisions.

Case study

Nina received assistance from FAS in early 2023 for an offence perpetrated by an intimate partner. She re-engaged with FAS in late 2025 seeking further support regarding the same offender, who had since been charged with additional offences against Nina and her daughter, including threats of harm. Due to the change in circumstances and increased, imminent risk of harm, Nina applied to vary the amount of financial assistance received, requesting an immediate need payment for relocation. FAS assisted Nina and her daughter to relocate to an address unknown to the offender.

“ Client feedback

‘Being granted this help means more than words can fully express. After everything we have been through, it has given us a sense of relief, stability, and the chance to begin healing and moving forward with our lives.’

‘Thank you so much for your kind explanation. I truly appreciate all the kindness and support you have shown to me and my family.’



‘We are deeply grateful not only for the outcome, but for the care, effort, and understanding that went into making this possible. It has made a meaningful difference to our family, and we truly appreciate it.’

Victim rights and reform

The VOCC has a statutory role under section 11 of the VoC Act to promote reform to advance the interests of victims, including to advocate for improved victim engagement with the justice system.

Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime

The Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime (the Charter), set out in the VoC Act, establishes rights for victims of crime in the ACT when engaging with the justice system. The Charter contains specific victims’ rights relating to:

- respect, privacy and safety of victims
- victim access to support services and other forms of assistance
- provision of information to victims about justice processes
- updates to victims in relation to individual investigations, proceedings and decisions made by the justice system
- victim participation and the right for victims to be consulted or heard at specific stages in proceedings.

For many victims, engagement with the justice system is an act of public service, with victims often reporting that they participate in the justice system to help keep others safe and prevent further harm. Without victims reporting offences, often at significant personal and practical cost, there would be no justice system. The Charter recognises both the central role that victims play in the administration of justice as well as the potential for the justice system to itself cause further harm or trauma to victims.

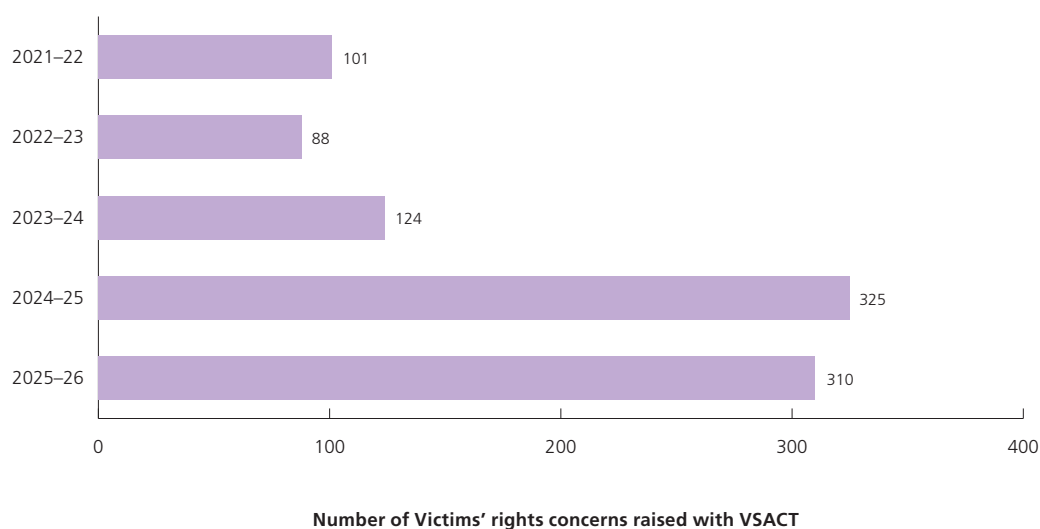
The Charter seeks to ensure that victims have a voice in decisions that affect them, including decisions relating to bail, sentencing and parole, and also promote practices to minimise the harm that may result from participation in the justice system.

Victims who believe their rights under the Charter may have been breached may raise a concern or complaint through a number of pathways, including:

- raising a concern with the VOCC or VSACT, who will work to understand the issues involved and, where appropriate, can liaise with the relevant justice agency and take steps to resolve the concern
- making a complaint to the DHSDCSC who can initiate a formal conciliation process between the victim and the relevant justice agency
- making a complaint directly to the relevant justice agency, who will take steps to resolve the complaint.

In 2025–26, the number of victims’ rights concerns raised with VSACT remained relatively stable, with 310 concerns raised, compared to 325 concerns raised in 2024–25.

Figure 10: Victims' rights concerns raised with VSACT

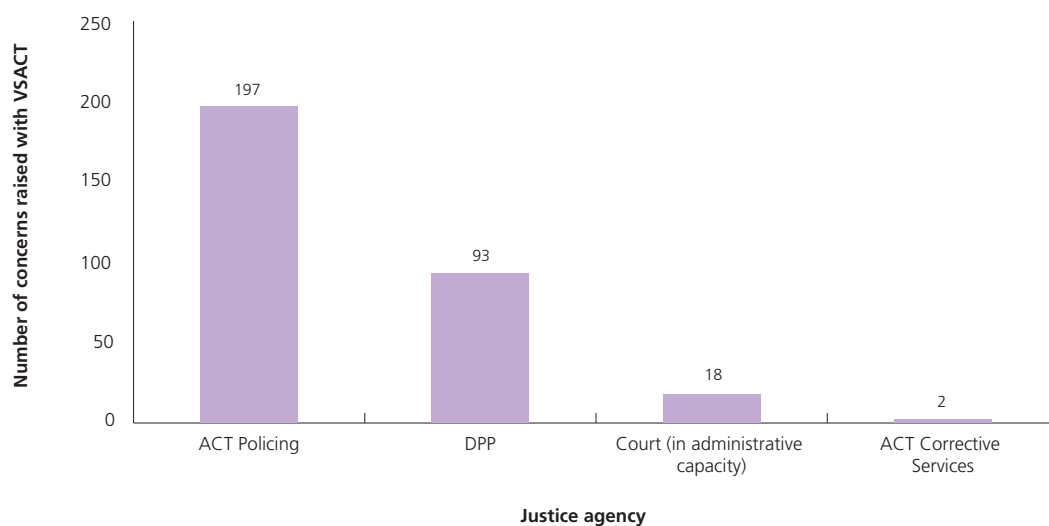


Of the 310 victims' rights concerns raised with VSACT in 2025-26, 167 concerns were resolved and 143 concerns remained ongoing. VSACT records a concern as resolved where the victim is satisfied with the outcome, no longer wishes to proceed with the concern, or the matter is referred to another agency or otherwise finalised. In 2025-26, VSACT referred 2 victims' rights concerns to different agencies, including the Australian Federal Police's Workplace

Complaints and Resolution Team and the Professional Standards team.

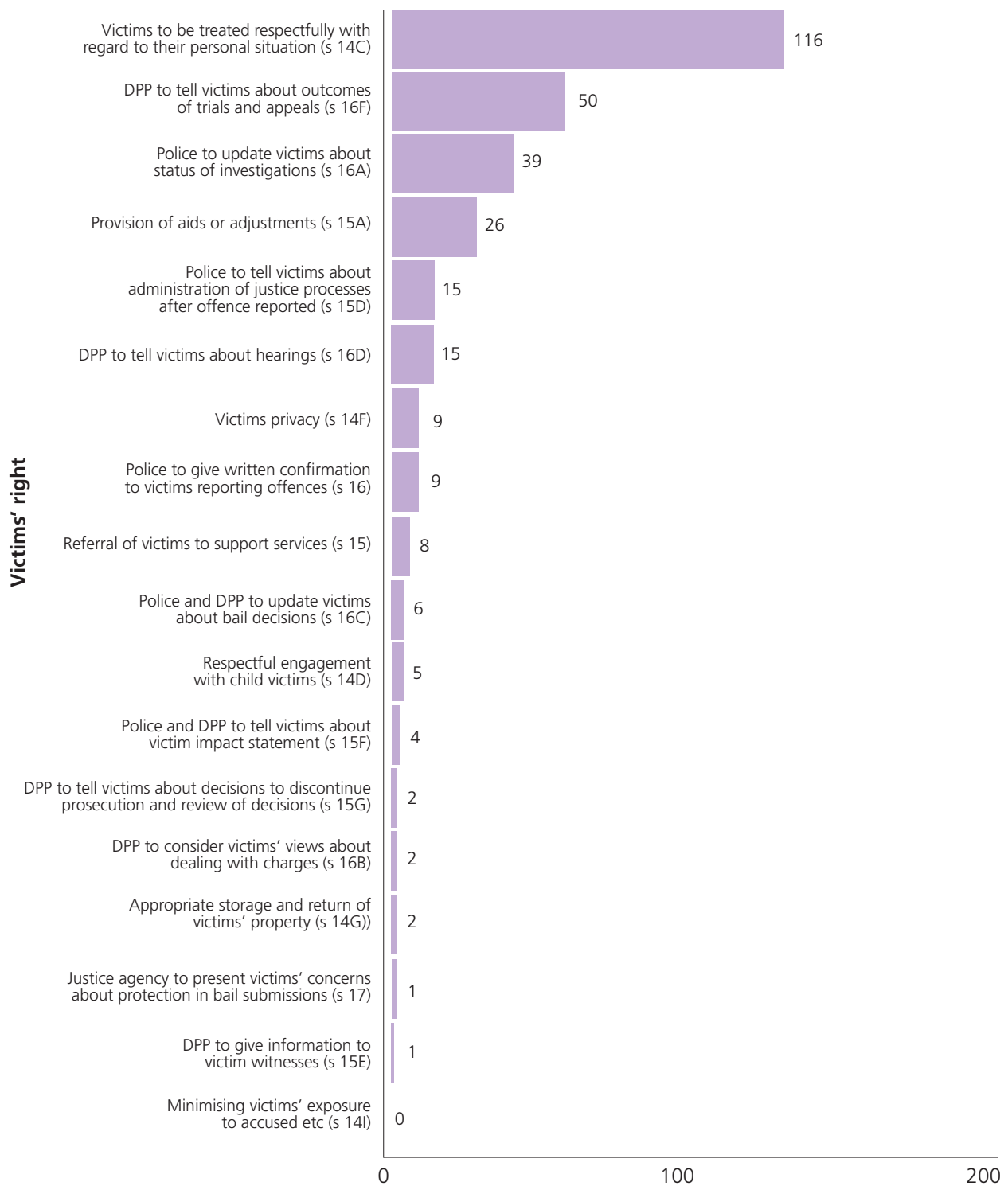
The largest number of victims' rights concerns raised with VSACT related to ACT Policing. This is likely to be largely attributable to the high level of engagement victims have with police, particularly given that many matters do not proceed to charge.

Figure 11: Victims' rights concerns raised in relation to each agency



Victims' rights concerns raised with VSACT most commonly relate to the right to be treated respectfully and with appropriate regard to individual needs.

Figure 12: Victims' rights concerns raised in relation to each victims right



*Note: Victims may raise more than one victims' right concern.

While VSACT does not monitor or report on the extent to which justice agencies positively uphold and protect victims' rights, we regularly receive positive feedback from victims that reflect the commitment of justice agencies to upholding victims' rights.

In 2025–26, a total of 16 victims' rights complaints were received about VSACT. Fifteen of the complaints related to the victims' right to be engaged with respectfully and with appropriate regard to their personal situation, needs, concerns, rights and dignity (section 14C), and one related to the victims' right to privacy. Eight of these complaints have been resolved and VSACT is currently working to resolve the remaining 8 complaints.

Law and policy reform

The views and experiences of victims of crime play a critical role in informing the VOCC's advocacy and advice provided to government and other agencies under section 11 of the VoC Act.

In 2025–26, the VOCC contributed to ACT Government consultations and provided written submissions on a range of policy and legislative reform initiatives to promote the interests of victims and strengthen victim-centred justice responses. For example, the VOCC:

- participated in consultations and prepared submissions supporting the proposed introduction of a coercive control offence under the *Crimes Act 1900*
- contributed to the Charter review, including advocating for victims' rights to be explicitly included in the HR Act, for victims to have the option to refer victims' rights complaints and concerns which have not been resolved by the HRC to ACAT, and other recommendations regarding the practical operation of particular victims' rights
- participated in consultations and prepared submissions in response to the Bail Amendment Bill 2026, including successfully safeguarding victims' participatory rights in the Charter
- advocated for and made a submission to ACT Corrective Services for the rapid amendment of the Transitional Release Policy to remove eligibility for detainees subject to life sentences without a release date
- made a submission on proposed reforms options for the *Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Act 2005*, advocating for evidenced-based measures to protect children and young people in the workplace from sexual violence
- participated in consultations and prepared submissions highlighting the need for evidence-based reform in response to proposed amendments to the *Family*

Violence Act 2016 creating a police-issued family violence safety notice scheme

- made a joint submission with the CYPC on the Civil Law (Wrongs) (Organisational Child Abuse Liability) Amendment Bill 2025, advocating for access to civil justice for victim-survivors of abuse to help create accountable and safe environments for children and young people in the ACT and recognises the devastating lifelong impact of child abuse
- participated in consultations and prepared submissions in response to the proposed introduction of an indicative sentencing regime in the ACT Magistrates Court, including advocating for the preservation of the victims' participatory rights
- contributed to interagency working group meetings to represent the rights and interests of victims in the development and implementation of information-sharing legislation for domestic and family violence matters
- contributed to the development of the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy 2026–2036
- made a submission in support of proposed reforms to peremptory challenges in the *Juries Act 1967*
- made a submission in support of proposed reforms to the treatment of good character evidence in sentencing for child sexual abuse matters in the *Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005*
- contributed to the Commission's submission to the Hate Crime and Vilification Review
- participated in consultations regarding the Justice Data Linkage Data Asset Pilot.

Boards and committees

The VOCC engages with a broad range of stakeholders, including government, justice agencies and community members, on a variety of boards and committees to ensure victims' rights and interests are upheld. This includes:

- Victims Advisory Board
- National Victims of Crime Working Group
- Sexual Assault (Police) Review Oversight Committee
- Family Violence Intervention Program
- Liquor Advisory Board.

ACT Intermediary Program

In early 2026, the ACT Intermediary Program (the Program) received confirmation of ongoing funding to continue its 24 hours a day, 7 days a week operation to provide intermediaries at ACT Policing interviews, at legal engagements and in court matters. This funding decision was supported by findings from the University of Sydney Law School's recent independent evaluation of the Program, which found very strong and consistent evidence that the Program was operating smoothly with positive impacts for witnesses and other key stakeholders in the jurisdiction. This included views expressed by the Chief Justice of the ACT Supreme Court who called the Program 'indispensable'.

The Program remains at the forefront of intermediary practice in Australia, including its involvement with vulnerable accused and the development of a framework for supervision and practice guidance for intermediaries as an emerging profession. The Program is working towards a nationally recognised qualification for the training and accreditation it delivers when recruiting new intermediaries. The Program was identified as exemplary in the recent report released by the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence which recommended South Australia implement a scheme modelled on the ACT Program to support the participation and communication of vulnerable witnesses.

Intermediaries are impartial officers of the court who are specially trained to facilitate the participation of vulnerable witnesses who have communication issues, including very young people and people with language delays, learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, trauma and many other communication issues. All intermediaries in the ACT have undertaken rigorous training to become accredited and come from a diverse range of allied health and other professional backgrounds, including speech pathology, social work, psychology and occupational therapy.

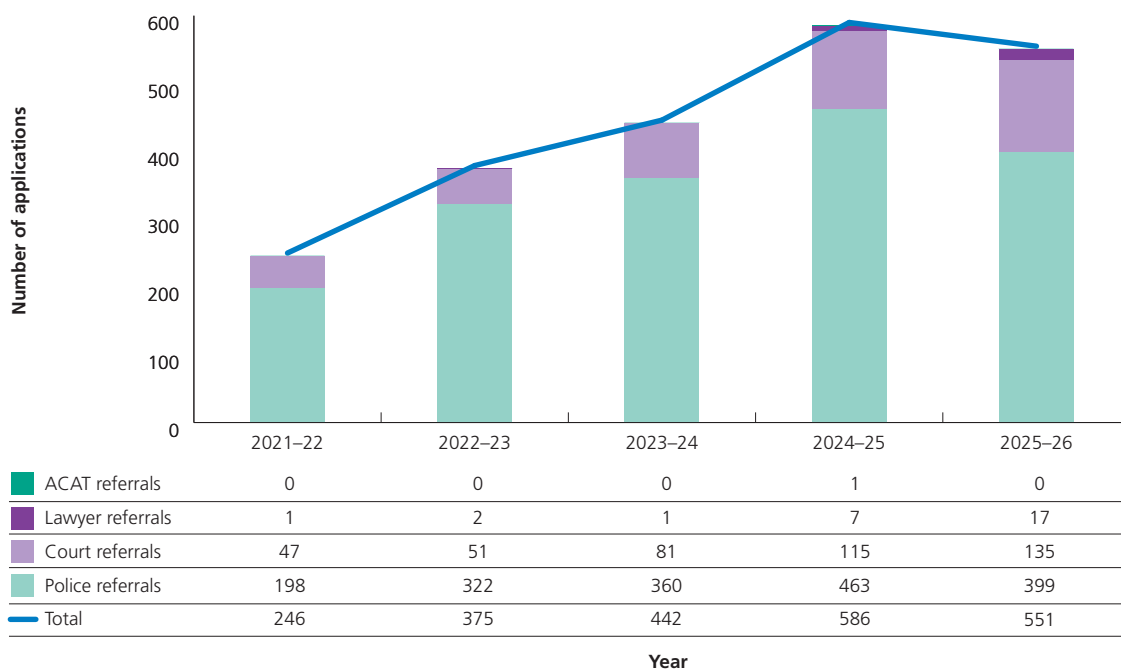
In late 2025, the ACT Childrens Court contacted the Program to pilot involvement at weekly bail list hearings to assist the communication of vulnerable young accused. This resulted in significant positive impacts, including improved communication between lawyers and the young people they represent. In February 2026, Communication Assistants from the New Zealand 'Talking Trouble Aotearoa' organisation visited the Program and spent 2 days with ACT intermediaries to share learnings on work with vulnerable accused and to reflect on the work that had been undertaken in the Childrens Court.

On 18 June 2026, the Program led the successful planning and delivery of the Australasian Intermediary Conference. Almost 200 participants (online and in hub locations) attended a full-day program, including a judicial panel discussion and a panel discussion comprising legal practitioners and police officers from all across Australia and New Zealand.

The Program continues to maintain and achieve this groundbreaking work with 4 team members and 10 in-house intermediaries. The Program also has an external panel of intermediaries who primarily attend referrals received outside of business hours. The nature of this panel means the Program must regularly recruit and train new intermediaries to maintain capacity to support out of hours work. Intermediaries from the Program attended the 2026 ACT Allied Health Symposium to increase the profile of the role and support the most recent recruitment for the intermediary panel.

In 2025–26, the Program received a total of 551 referrals, sustaining the increases in demand from previous reporting periods. Notably, the proportion of referrals from the courts and legal practitioners has increased in recent years. These referrals require a higher level of support and resources: for example, there is a need to facilitate a communication assessment, for the program to attend as a responsible third party, and to review recommendation reports, along with undertaking additional administrative and record-keeping tasks to ensure the program is available and responsive to changing court dates. The increase in referrals from the courts and legal practitioners has also led to an 18 per cent increase in total reports submitted to the court; outlining intermediary recommendations and tailored advice for adjustments to questioning during proceedings.

Figure 13: ACT Intermediary Program referrals



Case study

Susan was a 19-year-old whose communication needs included a learning disability, ADHD, autism, language delay/disorder and a hearing impairment. During the communication assessment, the intermediary noted that Susan's communication at court would be best facilitated by being clearly advised about:

- the names, roles and proper form of address for people at court
- where each person is required to sit during proceedings
- upcoming court processes (what will happen next)
- expectations relating to Susan's conduct and engagement at court.

Other recommendations made by the intermediary included:

- limiting background noise and consideration to the set-up of the courtroom to ensure that Susan could hear proceedings
- the use of literal and unambiguous language
- Susan having a short break each hour to assist her continued focus.

The intermediary provided Susan with a writing and drawing kit for use during the trial, which Susan used to make notes and, at times, to draw as a way to maintain her emotion regulation. Susan was also permitted to access focus items provided by the intermediary to assist her engagement throughout proceedings. The intermediary developed a visual aid of the courtroom for Susan which outlined each person's name and role and where each person would be located during proceedings.

During the 2-week trial, the intermediary facilitated Susan's participation and communication by assisting lawyers to explain court processes to Susan and developing and implementing strategies for how Susan and lawyers could convey information to one another in real time without disturbing the flow of court proceedings. This included the intermediary sitting next to Susan at times during the trial to note information Susan wanted to discuss with her lawyers at a later stage. The intermediary intervened during proceedings to request breaks for Susan and to request that Susan be given a copy of documents referred to.

Susan was able to participate in the totality of proceedings, communicate with lawyers and regulate her emotional state effectively throughout. Susan advised that the intermediary's direct involvement with implementing strategies for her to note their questions for lawyers in real time assisted her to maintain focus on the immediate proceedings rather than ruminating on the things she needed to ask later.

Case study

Carla was a 23-year-old complainant in a family violence–related matter. The referral identified Carla had several communication issues, including an intellectual disability, mental health issues and trauma. Carla also identified as Aboriginal.

During the communication assessment, Carla further disclosed ADHD, panic attacks and complex post-traumatic stress disorder could also impact her communication.

Due to the nature of many Magistrates Court matters, the Program did not receive much notice between the order being made for the intermediary, and the court date. The communication assessment took place on a Friday morning, with the intermediary's report authored and finalised for submission on the same day so that it could be received by all parties and the judicial officer prior to the scheduled commencement the following Monday.

Participation in proceedings

Carla gave evidence from a remote witness room at the ACT Courts, which was set up in a way that supported Carla's ability to refocus during breaks. In the recommendation report, the intermediary's suggestions for adjustments to questioning were all accepted by the court. They included:

- parties using a neutral tone of voice and a steady pace/ rate of speech
- a clear explanation of court processes, including signposting any topic changes or changes to question forms (for example, the introduction of propositional questioning)
- avoiding the need for Carla to read any written material.

Participation in questioning

Carla effectively participated in questioning and was assisted by the intermediary's use of topic cards. These served a dual purpose: as a visual reminder of the topic of questioning, and to redirect Carla's focus as required. The intermediary intervened during questioning as necessary, particularly when it was clear Carla required the use of simplified language, or if she needed a question to be asked in another way which adhered to the intermediary's recommendations. The intermediary also intervened to suggest parties check Carla's understanding of the question or instruction being provided.

As a result, Carla was able to participate in questioning and provide her best evidence to the court.



Intermediary Program staff at the 2026 ACT Allied Health Symposium.

ACT Intermediary Program data for 2025–26

In 2025–26, the ACT Intermediary Program received a total of 399 recorded police referrals, 89 Supreme Court referrals, 44 Magistrates Court referrals, 2 Childrens Court referrals and 17 lawyer referrals.

Police referrals

397 police referrals related to complainants and witnesses and **2** related to a suspect.

26% of police referrals were received from General Duties, **74%** were received from SACAT.

Referrals for this annual reporting period are down **13%** from last year.

89% of referrals were evidence-in-chief or record of interviews.

11% of referrals were meet and greets.

22% of referrals were conducted out of hours—that includes referrals either received or conducted:

- after 5pm on weekdays
- any time on weekends
- on public holidays

51% of referrals related to sexual assault.

49% of referrals related to physical assault, violent offences, homicide or other offence types.

100% of referrals were matched (intermediary was allocated).

59% of all referrals were matched with an intermediary with less than 24 hours' notice. **28%** of all police referrals were matched within a 2-hour period.

Demographics (police)

74% of referrals were police interviews involving children aged **15 years and younger**.

The youngest child interviewed was aged 4.

10% of referrals involved a person who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

16% of referrals involved a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

68% of referrals identified as female, **31%** of referrals identified as male and **1%** identified as 'X'/Other.

60% of police referrals identified a communication issue other than age as the reason for requesting an intermediary.

Court and lawyer referrals

89 Supreme Court matter requests, **44** Magistrates Court matter requests, **2** Childrens Court requests and **17** Lawyer referrals were received by the Program.

137 requests were made relating to complainants and witnesses, while **15** referrals related to accused.

85 referrals related to sexual assault and **67** to family violence, homicide or other offences.

63 ground rules hearings were completed and **86** hearings involving intermediaries were completed.

The Supreme, Magistrates and Childrens Courts were furnished with **109** Intermediary Communication Recommendation Reports.

The Program completed **110** communication assessments in this period.

Police referrals

Demographics (court)

70% of referrals identified as female and **29%** identified as male and **<1%** identified as 'X'/Other.

10% of referrals involved a person who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

12% of referrals involved a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

82% of referrals identified a communication issue other than age as the reason for the intermediary request.

Communication issues (all referrals)

65% of referrals were referrals involving a vulnerable person with a communication issue other than age.

2024–25 v 2025–26 reporting periods

6% decrease in total referrals received due to decrease in police referrals for the reporting period.

27% increase in Supreme Court referrals and **5%** increase in Magistrates Court referrals, which are the most resource-intensive of referrals received by the Program. This has seen an **18%** increase in total reports submitted to the court.

143% increase in lawyer referrals received, which reflects the increase in work the Program is doing with vulnerable accused.

28% increase in total assessments completed.

There has been an increase of **135%** of referrals received for vulnerable individuals from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

* Note: Some percentages are based on small sample sizes.

Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner

The Public Advocate (PA) and the Children and Young People Commissioner (CYPC) are 2 separate statutory roles held by a single officeholder. The PA/CYPC has a range of functions including, but not limited to:

- advocating for the rights and interests of people in the ACT whose condition or situation makes them potentially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation
- ensuring these rights are considered and upheld in legislation, policy and practice
- monitoring and fostering the provision of services for persons experiencing vulnerability
- overseeing systems that support and respond to the needs of persons experiencing vulnerability
- engaging with and listening to children and young people (C&YP) to ensure their views are heard on issues that affect them

- improving services for C&YP, including by supporting organisations to implement the ACT Child Safe Standards (CSS) Scheme.

The primary legislation giving authority to both the PA and CYPC functions is the HRC Act; however, there are also numerous other laws that bestow powers and/or responsibilities on the PA.

The PA/CYPC undertakes advocacy with a forward focus to promote and ideally facilitate responses that uphold people's rights, promote the development and implementation of appropriate protections and safeguards, and take the views of the person into account in decision-making.

Key performance indicators

In 2025–26, the PA/CYPC achieved a stakeholder satisfaction rating of 86 per cent (against a target of 75 per cent). Sixty-six responses were received with data aggregated from 2 questions relating to respondents'

experience of the support/services provided and the way staff interacted with them. The PA/CYPC consistently exceeds the target for this performance indicator.

“Feedback from clients, carers and community

Staff were friendly and curious of my understanding and interaction with service; this makes me more open to asking questions and being more involved.

The information in my meeting I had today was amazing. Very informative and helpful. I look forward to working with PACYPC in the future

Representative at the webinar was knowledgeable and delivered a very professional presentation.

I am grateful for the help I was given by Jodie Griffiths-Cook. Before meeting with her I was so stressed in relation to my daughters legal issues and now I feel heard and I understand what my current and future steps are to be and the relief this gives me is life changing for the better.

Amazing work and resources thank you

I want to express my heartfelt thanks [...] for taking the time to educate our team on Child Safe Standards. The scenarios you shared felt incredibly relevant to our service, and every team member found the session worthwhile and engaging.

The Child Safe Standards team [...] were well prepared, engaging and knowledgeable.

Since 2024–25, the PA has also measured performance through 2 key performance indicators, which were selected to better represent responsiveness to issues requiring follow-up. Initial targets were estimated to provide a baseline measure and have been retained for the current reporting period.

All 12,650 compliance documents provided to the PA in 2025–26 received an initial review during data entry. Where an issue was identified as requiring secondary review, the PA aimed to action this within 5 business days, with a target of 80 per cent.

The PA reviewed 91 per cent of documents within target timeframes (from a total of 3,731 documents requiring secondary review).

Where referral information or compliance documents highlighted a need for intervention, the PA similarly aimed to undertake the first action within 5 business days, with a target of 90 per cent. It is noted that some referral issues lead to lengthy and extensive PA involvement, with multiple advocacy activities. The PA engaged within target timeframes for 94 per cent of matters arising from 653 referral issues.

National and local reform initiatives

In 2025–26, the PA/CYPC continued to contribute to national and local forums that promote the rights and interests of persons experiencing vulnerability and shape conversations about reform.

Systemic advocacy

The PA/CYPC emphasised her views about systemic issues through several key forums in 2025–26. Some of these included:

- Shifting the Paradigm webinar
- Child Protection and Care Summit
- Secure Care in Australia Panel
- Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group Panel
- Accountable Together: National Child Rights Symposium
- Countering Violent Extremism in the ACT forum
- Keeping Kids Safe in Dance in the ACT forum.

Notable achievements from the PA/CYPC's advocacy include securing the necessary legislative changes that resulted in the ACT being the first jurisdiction to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years of age, and legislation to allow for external merits review of child protection decision-making, both of which commenced on 1 July 2025.

The PA/CYPC's involvement in key national campaigns, such as the multi-partisan Parliamentary Group for Future Generations, the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing, and the Ending Physical Punishment of Australian Children campaign are driving action to elevate the rights and interests of C&YP now and into the future.

The PA/CYPC continued to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander C&YP, their families/carers, other community members and organisations to promote and protect children's rights, safety and wellbeing, notably through the PA's advocacy and oversight functions relevant to care and protection, youth justice, mental health and other systems that impact the lives of First Nations peoples. The PA/CYPC is firmly committed to self-determination and actively seeks the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families/carers and community members to guide priorities, strengthen advocacy and contribute to a safer, fairer and more inclusive ACT.

Statement of expectations and statement of commitments

During the reporting period, the PA formalised a new approach to engagement with all stakeholders through the release of a [Statement of Commitments](#)⁵ and a complementary [Statement of Expectations](#).⁶

These documents articulate how the PA engages with agencies and stakeholders in carrying out statutory oversight functions, including a commitment to transparent communication, proportionate intervention and collaborative problem-solving. They also set out clear expectations for organisations, including the provision of timely, accurate and complete information, and engaging in good faith to support the PA to discharge its functions.

5 Public Advocate, ACT Human Rights Commission (2026). Statement of commitments. <https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/?external-uuid=643a0055-7e39-446f-9dbc-c83322b5050b>

6 Public Advocate, ACT Human Rights Commission (2026). Statement of expectations. <https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/?external-uuid=a327c302-829b-4e5e-8b94-4eaaf1e942f0>

Public advocacy for children and young people

The PA advocates for the rights, safety and wellbeing of C&YP across multiple different service systems. In 2025–26, 882 C&YP were brought to the attention of the PA, with the PA having intervened on behalf of 377 C&YP to address concerns about a range of matters relevant to the PA's functions. Where relevant, the PA partners with the Office of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner to enable the most effective advocacy for First Nations C&YP, and their families.

Issues for C&YP are brought to the attention of the PA in various ways, often through receipt of compliance documents. Most compliance documents received by the PA for C&YP relate to involuntary mental health, care and protection, and youth justice services. The PA also holds oversight functions for registered Positive Behaviour Support Plans, applications under the *Variations in Sex Characteristics Act 2023*, and referrals from the ACT Magistrates Court in accordance with the *Family Violence Act 2016* and *Personal Violence Act 2016*.

Parents/carers, service providers and C&YP themselves can contact the PA directly. The PA also receives referrals from the courts and may identify concerns during site visits to mental health facilities and Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (Bimberi). Given the breadth of oversight functions held by the PA, the situations prompting a need for intervention vary. Applying this intersectional lens enables the PA to identify and respond to tensions between systems and to assist agencies to navigate this in responding to the needs of C&YP.

The PA is also frequently invited to provide feedback on the development of operational documents for systems relevant to C&YP. Of the various policy and procedural documents reviewed in 2025–26, the PA provided formal comments on 2 and contributed to broader HRC submissions on many others.

Closing the Gap

Concerns were shared with the PA about the trajectory of Aboriginal siblings on care orders. The PA collaborated with the Office of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner and advocated to address support gaps for these children. After extended advocacy, CYF increased culturally appropriate supports to the children's placement and agreed to shared care responsibilities with the mother and to pursue the goal of restoring the children to her care.

Care and protection

The PA provides oversight of statutory care and protection activities by reviewing compliance documents received in accordance with the CYP Act, engaging with stakeholders, attending Care Team Meetings (CTMs) and meeting directly with C&YP in OOHHC.

During the 2025–26 reporting period, the PA received 2,483 compliance documents in accordance with the CYP Act. Of these, 891 proceeded to secondary review, with 81 requiring advocacy actions. Amendments to the CYP Act during this reporting period were introduced to increase transparency of decision-making by CYF. These amendments included new notification requirements to the PA. Collectively known as 'IRNs', the PA received 459 Internal Review Notices and 7 Reviewable Decision Notices. The PA prioritised secondary review of IRNs, with 18 IRNs requiring further advocacy action, including the PA attending 4 ACAT hearings in respect of these matters.

Early analysis of IRNs identified a risk to C&YP's rights in respect of decisions that reduced contact with family members. Using section 879 of the CYP Act, the PA established a standing request for additional information to better understand the basis for decisions that reduced family contact.

The advice received in respect of these matters was scrutinised and further follow-up pursued in respect of identified concerns.

Section 879 of the CYP Act enables the PA to request information and services in respect of individual C&YP or more systemically to improve outcomes for groups of C&YP in OOHHC. Key focus areas during the reporting period included enquiries about the status of transition planning for C&YP in care, and advice regarding bespoke or unauthorised accommodation arrangements. These requests enabled the PA to identify patterns of risk factors and indicators of increased vulnerability, which improved understanding and helped focus individual advocacy efforts.

The PA continued to prioritise effective information-sharing and engagement with CYF, including through regular meetings with staff to support clear communication and ensure responses to information requests address relevant issues with clarity and detail. In addition, the PA delivered 4 information sessions to care and protection staff about the role of the PA, aimed at strengthening mutual understanding, building trust and supporting effective working relationships. The PA also maintained established relationships with service providers and engaged with new agencies delivering services on behalf of CYF.

Observations about increasing reliance on bespoke residential care placements

Most C&YP in OOHC are in kinship and foster care placements. A smaller number of C&YP in OOHC reside in residential care placements contracted by CYF. Through the monitoring of residential care, the PA identified an increasing reliance on what are referred to as 'bespoke placements' with alternate providers (ie not those contracted as 'preferred providers'). This trend appears to be occurring in the context of capacity constraints for preferred providers and increased complexity of need for C&YP in OOHC.

Information provided to the PA early in the reporting period indicated that, at that time, the preferred provider of residential care services was providing placements for 28 C&YP, while 38 C&YP were accommodated in placements through other providers. At the end of the reporting period, the PA was advised there were 27 C&YP with the preferred provider and 51 C&YP in placements with other providers.

The growth in the number of C&YP in residential care generally is of concern to the PA, and particularly the growth in number of those not placed with the preferred provider. Notably, the PA has raised concerns about individual situations, including where an alternate provider has been engaged to support C&YP subject to Intensive Therapy Orders, given the complexity of these placements and the level of oversight required.

C&YP in residential care are the most vulnerable cohort in OOHC, particularly those residing with providers not designated as 'preferred' through a procurement process. While CYF may deem these placements as being necessary to meet immediate needs, the circumstances of this cohort of C&YP are not as transparent as those in foster and kinship placements, or residential placements with preferred providers, and the providers may not have an appropriate model of care. The PA considers their increasing use warrants closer examination, including the factors driving this need and the safeguards needed to ensure quality and accountability.

The PA is actively engaging with stakeholders to raise this concern and remains committed to centring the needs of C&YP across all decision-making. The PA intends to increase oversight of placements with other providers, including through targeted visits to residential placements, and continued engagement with Official Visitors and CYF. This work will focus on strengthening transparency, understanding service capacity pressures and ensuring that placement decisions are supported by appropriate governance, safeguards and a clear focus on the rights and needs of C&YP.

Participation rights of children and young people

The PA continues to promote the rights of C&YP to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them, including in CTMs, where the absence of their views remains a concern and is a focus for PA advocacy. The PA maintains involvement in the Participation Reference Group, which aims to strengthen opportunities for C&YP in OOHC to actively participate in decision-making.

Advocating for participation rights

Alex lives in residential care and has experienced significant instability in living arrangements and case management, resulting in them feeling significant distrust about their day-to-day care and future planning. The PA joined Alex's care team to advocate for improvements to communication, including support to understand the rationale for decisions. Alex has now attended 2 CTMs, and professionals have adapted their communication approach to be more inclusive. The PA remains involved and will continue to advocate for clear planning and adequate participation.

During the reporting period, the PA also joined the 'Listen to Me' Reference Group, established to progress the implementation of recommendations from the *Listen to Me report*.⁷ Through this forum, the PA is working with CYF and other stakeholders to ensure the report's findings are translated into practice, including a focus on developing approaches that enable measurable improvements in how C&YP's views are sought, recorded and reflected in decision-making.

Least restrictive orders

The PA intervened at court for Jamie, a young Aboriginal person, alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner. The PA's submission noted Jamie's views and wishes and advocated for care without a disproportionately restrictive order, in accordance with human rights principles. The Magistrate noted the PA's powerful submission and did not make the restrictive order.

⁷ Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission (2024). 'Listen to me!' A plea from children and young people with an Out-of-Home Care experience to the adults who work with them. https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2551317/3d6a5f1832049667385cc688e8f31325ff65833a.pdf

Transition planning

The PA continues to hold concerns about transition planning,⁸ the implementation of supports for young people (YP) in OOHC aged 15 to 17 years old, and access to aftercare support after YP turn 18. While the CYP Act requires transition plans to address key life domains, the PA continues to observe variability in the presence, quality, consistency and timeliness of planning, including in matters raised through CTMs.

During the reporting period, the PA published findings from the 2025 consultations with care-experienced YP on transition planning and aftercare support. The report, *Navigating the lead-up to 18 and beyond*,⁹ identified key areas for improvement, including strengthening YP participation in planning, introducing clearer timelines and practical planning tools, and ensuring referrals and supports are coordinated and reliable. These findings continue to inform the PA's individual advocacy and broader systemic engagement.

To promote proactive planning, the PA sought updated information from CYF and relevant service providers regarding the status of transition planning for all YP in care aged 15 to 17 years old. This has supported greater visibility of planning progress and enabled the PA to identify gaps and emerging risks. The PA also advocated for the development of accessible resources to support workers, C&YP and their families to better understand legislated entitlements, particularly in relation to aftercare support.

The PA participates in a transition panel established by one service provider, which aims to improve transparency in planning activities and provide a forum to address systemic barriers impacting individual YP. Through this forum, the PA raises concerns about transition planning for individual YP and is progressing work to develop a mechanism for more structured analysis of transition planning data to strengthen systemic oversight and targeted advocacy.

Despite pending developments as part of the 'Next Steps for Our Kids' strategy, the PA remains concerned that there are limited overarching mechanisms to ensure transition plans are consistently developed, implemented and monitored to an appropriate standard. Continued focus is required to support timely, coordinated and participatory planning that reflects the views, needs and circumstances of YP preparing for adulthood.

Health and aftercare support

Remy entered OOHC following an extended hospital admission due to a lack of safe discharge options after their carer declined to resume care. The PA advocated for CYF involvement, resulting in supported accommodation being arranged. The PA continued to advocate for aftercare support despite policy barriers, resulting in Remy securing ongoing accommodation.

Breaking down communication barriers

Ray is a young person who recently turned 18. Concerns were raised with the PA about their wellbeing and a lack of faith in supports offered to them. The PA met with Ray to better understand their needs and goals and received Ray's consent to raise these with service providers. A CTM was held and the case manager agreed to engage more proactively with Ray, including to develop better understanding of Ray's needs and the barriers impacting their trust of the adults.

Child sexual exploitation

The PA continues to be aware of several highly vulnerable YP impacted by child sexual exploitation (CSE) in the ACT. Throughout 2025–26, advocacy has continued through engagement with key stakeholders to further identify systemic barriers and develop solutions to enable proactive and preventive interventions to reduce the prevalence of CSE in the ACT.

The PA is pleased to note funding has been provided to develop a working group and wider stakeholder forums to build knowledge and skills across government and non-government services to more effectively respond to CSE. The PA supports actions that address risks for YP while also ensuring accountability sits with perpetrators of harm.

⁸ While the term 'transition planning' is not preferred by many C&YP, it is the term used in legislation.

⁹ Public Advocate, ACT Human Rights Commission (2025). *Navigating the lead-up to 18 and beyond*. https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2920863/Project-Report-Navigating-the-lead-up-to-18-and-beyond.pdf

Youth justice

The PA attends Bimberi frequently to meet with YP and staff and to actively observe operations across the centre. The PA routinely provides information to YP about their rights, encourages their involvement in identifying solutions and supports YP to raise complaints internally and externally.

The PA acknowledges the concerns raised by the ICS and the ACT NPM regarding a lack of clarity of strategic purpose for Bimberi. The PA is fully supportive of the actions underway to explore a model of care for Bimberi and the development of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan and hopes there will be tangible and measurable action to improve outcomes for YP detained in Bimberi. The PA will continue to advocate for the establishment and maintenance of rights-informed practices for all YP at Bimberi and to support approaches that support participation in decision-making, and the provision of therapeutic and rehabilitative supports.

Fitness to plead

Morgan was remanded in Bimberi facing criminal charges that arose from systemic issues regarding their supervision in the community. Morgan has complex disability needs and low capacity to comprehend the impact of their actions. The PA attended multiple court hearings to advocate for least restrictive practices to enable Morgan's release from Bimberi, alongside enhanced disability supports. Morgan was bailed and supported to understand their bail conditions while their matter proceeded at court to determine their fitness to plead.

Since the 2026 school year commenced, the PA has observed increasing engagement by YP in the education provided by the Murrumbidgee School. The PA understands that Murrumbidgee School has secured teachers for all roles and YP have provided positive feedback about several subjects. Information obtained through the PA's regular engagement with systemic meetings, such as the weekly Client Services Meeting, indicates consistent positive engagement for many YP with education and other activities facilitated by Bimberi.

The PA has observed fluctuating numbers of young women detained at Bimberi across 2025–26. Young women have reported gender-specific needs to the PA and have been supported to raise concerns informally and formally as required. Concerns included issues regarding access to appropriate swimwear, management of feminine hygiene waste and the fit of the 'unisex' uniforms provided to all YP. The PA appreciates YP offering solutions to address their concerns and recognises the flexibility of Bimberi in responding to concerns where possible.

Data analysis of Bimberi resident numbers

In 2025–26, the PA requested data from Bimberi to enable analysis of resident numbers over a period of years. This was prompted by observations of the fluctuation of resident numbers and a wish to better understand factors which influence these changes. The PA's analysis focused on YP remanded in Bimberi, with results noting that while the individual numbers of YP have not changed substantially across 2022–23, 2023–24 and 2024–25, the number of YP spending extended time on remand has shifted.

Where 9 and 10 YP were remanded for a period greater than 90 days in 2022–23 and 2023–24 respectively, this increased to 18 YP in 2024–25. Given the limitations of data available to the PA in conjunction with other factors, including complexity of legal proceedings, there is limited evidence to enable the PA to determine if the length of time YP have spent in custody aligns with general sentencing practices.

While this data analysis has been insightful, the PA does not have sufficient information to determine contributing factors. The PA will share this learning with key stakeholders to explore factors impacting remand times, support collaborative investigation and identify opportunities for systemic advocacy.

Involuntary mental health for children and young people

The PA has maintained strong relationships with key service providers for mental health matters involving C&YP, including establishing communication pathways to support oversight where C&YP subject to the *Mental Health Act 2015* (MH Act) access inpatient care outside of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Adolescent Unit (CAU). The PA continues to attend the CAU often, meets regularly with staff and delivered an information session during the reporting period to support understanding of the PA's role and functions.

As a part of the PA's oversight functions, 400 compliance documents were received for mental health matters relating to 73 individual C&YP during this reporting period. Of these compliance documents, 113 were related to short-term involuntary hospitalisation. The PA also reviewed 20 applications for psychiatric assessment and treatment.

The PA's access to information across many areas of oversight enables a unique position for individual and systemic advocacy as the only agency that must receive information relating to involuntary involvement across mental health, care and protection, and youth justice systems. During this reporting period, the PA attended 19 ACAT hearings for C&YP. Attendance at these hearings enables the PA to provide contextual information to support decision-making and promote the best interests of C&YP who may be subject to Mental Health Orders. Where appropriate, the PA engages with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner in such matters in seeking to ensure culturally sensitive care, noting that her office does not receive documents under the MH Act.

Culturally appropriate mental health treatment and care

Lee is an Aboriginal young person with intersecting involvement across care and protection, youth justice and involuntary mental health. While the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner led advocacy in other domains, the PA's statutory oversight of mental health matters enabled a collaborative approach centred on holistic support.

The PA was notified of Lee's admission to the Adult Mental Health Unit, which included seclusion. The PA provided information to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner about the involuntary mental health system and relevant points of contact for their continued advocacy on behalf of Lee, including their attendance at ACAT mental health hearings. In this way the PA was able to leverage unique intersectional oversight functions while enabling culturally appropriate support.

The PA notes that, despite improvements to the CAU's de-escalation suite in October 2025, C&YP continue to be admitted to adult mental health inpatient units, with this observed more frequently for young men under 18 years old. The PA is concerned that these admissions may not provide for the most appropriate treatment and care and will continue to advocate for age-appropriate inpatient care.

Appropriate use of mental health legislation

Yuki was subject to short-term involuntary detention in the Adult Mental Health Unit to stabilisation their mental health. CYF sought to explore whether hospitalisation could continue as a means by which to mitigate risks to Yuki in the community involving substance misuse and connections with unsafe adults. The PA provided information to CYF about the purpose of the MH Act, noting that it cannot be used for continued hospitalisation to address risks such as these. Yuki was supported to exit hospital with ongoing safety planning to support them in the community.

The PA has also continued to engage with sector initiatives, including participation in The Alliance coordinated by the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing. The PA supports the ongoing development of services that respond to the needs of C&YP with low to moderate mental health concerns, with the aim of reducing escalation to crisis and the need for involuntary treatment.

Public advocacy for adults with disability

The PA's work in respect of adults centres on protecting human rights, minimising unnecessary restrictions on individual rights and promoting accessible, inclusive and equitable services for people with disability.

In the 2025–26 period, the PA received 9,451 mental health documents on behalf of 1,238 individuals. A further 110 adults were brought to the PA's attention for non-mental health related matters.

The PA intervened in 55 matters in courts to help individuals navigate court processes and 172 matters in tribunals where applications did not appear to meet legislative requirements, were unnecessarily restrictive or where support was needed to ensure an individual's views and wishes were heard.

During the reporting period, the PA provided advocacy for 489 people experiencing systemic barriers by providing information about their rights, assisting with navigating systems and connecting them with relevant services and supports.

As part of its oversight functions, the PA visited places of involuntary treatment and detention, including inpatient and forensic mental health facilities, to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and procedures, and ensure individuals' rights were upheld.

The PA also contributed to improving legislation, policy, service design and practice to strengthen human rights protections for people with disability in the ACT.

Advocacy

During this reporting period, the PA collaborated with teams across the HRC to contribute to significant legislative reforms, including bail laws, sex work regulation, proposed firearms legislation and the review of anti-vilification laws, to promote alignment with a human rights framework.

The PA also provided formal feedback on 5 operational policies and models of care relating to essential government services during the 2025–26 period. This included feedback on the draft operational procedure for the use of restrictive practices for individuals subject to the MH Act. Following the provision of this feedback, the PA was pleased to note that the final procedure strengthened its focus on human rights obligations, positive duties under the *Discrimination Act 1991*, ways to minimise restrictive practices in inpatient mental health units and the consideration of individual management plans to reduce or eliminate their use.

The PA has continued to advocate for better systemic and individual outcomes for individuals in matters involving protection orders, mandatory mental health treatment, and detention. The PA's key areas of focus have included advocacy to improve forensic mental health infrastructure, coordinated systems response for individuals experiencing systemic barriers, rights-based practice in inpatient mental health units, sexual safety responses in mental health service environments, and the review of the MH Act.

Safeguarding rights through proactive oversight

The PA reviewed compliance documentation for Lou, a person with multiple disabilities, who was found not guilty of criminal offences due to mental impairment but remained in custody pending an ACAT hearing.

The PA identified a risk that Lou could remain in custody longer than necessary if critical supports were not maintained during the transition to ACAT, an issue observed in previous matters. The PA proactively engaged with Lou's guardian, the custodial social work team and other support providers, to highlight the significance of the hearing and the need for appropriate preparation. The PA also recommended that legal representation and specialist disability advocacy be arranged.

At the hearing, Lou was supported by a lawyer, a disability advocate and their guardian. On hearing the evidence, ACAT ordered Lou's release and treatment in a less restrictive setting, demonstrating how proactive oversight can safeguard rights and support timely, appropriate outcomes.

Forensic mental health infrastructure and step-down pathway

In the ACT, people found not guilty by reason of mental impairment, unfit to plead and/or unfit to stand trial may be detained for extended periods in either the AMC or in the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit (Dhulwa).

It is the PA's view that it is not appropriate, clinically or otherwise, for individuals to remain in a custodial setting not specifically designed for people with mental illness and complex needs as an alternative to a forensic mental health facility, albeit while recognising the need to

balance an individual's mental health needs and human rights considerations alongside risk and community safety. This is consistent with section 180(3)(a) of the MH Act, which states that detention in custody is a measure of last resort and release should be ordered where people are not convicted of an offence, except in exceptional circumstances.

A related concern is the lack of a step-down option for people who no longer require the level of security provided by Dhulwa but are not yet ready for reintegration into the community. Since the closure of the Gawanggal Mental Health Unit (Gawanggal) on 31 March 2025, there is no dedicated step-down pathway or less restrictive alternative for lower-risk consumers.

As Dhulwa is subject to the *Mental Health (Secure Facilities) Act 2016*, it may place greater restrictions on an individual than their circumstance or presentation warrants. For example, the security requirements that apply to Dhulwa may continue limiting an individual's access to electronic communication devices and opportunities to develop daily living skills such as cooking, shopping, self-managing medication and managing transport, all of which assist with community reintegration.

The PA's advocacy in this area has primarily been undertaken through attendance at ACAT hearings and the provision of verbal and written submissions. The PA has also raised these concerns directly with the Chief Psychiatrist and relevant authorities, participated in the Chief Psychiatrist's legislative working group and continues to advocate for reform through the MH Act review process. In addition, feedback was provided on the Forensic Mental Health Inpatient Service Model of Care, which currently supports service delivery at Dhulwa, but does not provide pathways for those requiring more (or less) secure care.

In the absence of a facility such as Gawanggal, the PA continues to seek clarity on actions Dhulwa has taken (or intends to take) to minimise unnecessary restrictions and support consumers to transition back into community while safeguarding their rights and providing care.

Supporting access to appropriate treatment and care

The PA received a referral regarding Shay, a young adult with disability on remand with significant support needs. Concerns were raised by Shay's NDIS Support Coordinator and community treating team that Shay's needs may be better met in a specialised therapeutic environment rather than a custodial setting. However, the custodial treating team did not support Shay's transition.

To support consideration of alternative arrangements, the PA engaged with Shay's guardian to facilitate the sharing of information from Shay's legal representative. In doing so, the PA became aware that the Magistrates Court had recognised the individual's mental health needs and the importance of a different approach to treatment, care and support.

At a subsequent ACAT hearing for a Psychiatric Treatment Order, the PA provided relevant background and highlighted the issues identified by the court. It was subsequently confirmed that a specialist mental health facility would accept Shay's admission, demonstrating the value of PA intervention in promoting coordinated responses and facilitating access to treatment in appropriate settings.

Addressing unmet needs through tailored and coordinated responses

The PA, in partnership with ACT Courts and Tribunal, delivered the ACT Courts Pilot Project, which concluded in October 2025. The project helped people with disability understand and navigate court processes and connected them with relevant supports in protection matters. This included Workplace Protection Orders (WPOs), PPOs and Family Violence Orders (FVOs). Despite several attempts to secure ongoing funding, no funding has been obtained, and the significant identified need is no longer being met.

The PA continues to hold the view that WPOs are often an inappropriate primary response to alleged occupational violence where behaviour is linked to disability. Before seeking a WPO, public authorities must consider reasonable adjustments, positive duty obligations, trauma-informed approaches, alternative support measures and less restrictive options, particularly where an order may restrict access to essential services, such as health care.

The PA regularly sees individuals get caught in a cycle between service supports, justice systems and complaints systems without any meaningful resolution. People subject to WPOs may be prohibited from accessing essential services, resulting in police involvement, emergency department presentations, emergency detention, restrictive practices and extended periods on remand.

While the PA and HRC can refer individuals to legal services, advocacy, housing and other support services, need often persists when these services are unable or unwilling to engage because of a WPO. Disability gets criminalised, underlying issues remain unresolved and individuals shift between systems, placing a greater demand on resources by moving the issues to another part of the service system.

This is particularly true for individuals with personality disorders, cognitive disability, psychosocial disability and those without formal diagnoses. Individuals with a personality disorder often experience suicidal ideation, self-harm, relationship breakdown and contact with the criminal legal system, yet are frequently considered ineligible for mental health services. Some become respondents in WPO proceedings, increasing demand on police, ambulance, courts, emergency departments, the PA and the broader HRC. A coordinated, specialist response would likely improve outcomes, reduce pressure on frontline systems and better align with human rights principles.

The PA considers it essential that people facing systemic barriers retain access to appropriately qualified and skilled support services. Services should not be left responding only at crisis point because specialist mental health supports are inaccessible, whether due to WPO, service eligibility decisions or service gaps.

The PA will continue to advocate for tailored responses informed by successful models in NSW and Victoria, including Spectrum¹⁰ and Project Air.¹¹

The PA also supports revisiting proposals such as the ACT Complex Needs Panel as a helpful mechanism to address this service gap. Although funding for the court project has ceased, the PA, albeit in a much-reduced capacity, continues to support impacted individuals through advocacy and referral where appropriate. Additional funding to support this work would alleviate current gaps in the system.

Promoting rights-based practice

The PA's work includes reviewing a large volume of documents relating to involuntary mental health treatment and protection matters, including assessment reports, emergency detention applications, treatment applications, restrictive practice notices, court referrals and related orders. Through this work in 2025–26, the PA identified recurrent concerns about the language, assumptions and decision-making reflected in these documents and practice.

A key issue is the use of language that is not inclusive, respectful or trauma informed. Reports and applications may refer to descriptions of physical appearance that are irrelevant to legislative criteria and often describe consumers in ways that are deficit-based, judgemental and prejudiced. This can contribute to stigma and undermine a person's willingness to engage with services and treatment. The PA regularly raises these concerns during site visits, ACAT hearings and engagement with treating teams, advocating for documentation that promotes dignity, respect and inclusion in practice.

The PA has observed instances where consumers' statements are characterised as 'delusional' without sufficient investigation or consideration of supporting evidence. This can lead to assumptions about decision-making capacity and applications for involuntary treatment. These issues are often compounded for people with specific communication needs where reasonable adjustments have not been made, increasing the risk of misunderstanding and decisions that do not align with the person's circumstances, preferences or needs. The PA reviews these documents, engages directly with consumers and treating teams and raises concerns where applications appear to not meet legal requirements, evidence is inconsistent or where actions that are taken or proposed appear to be overly restrictive.

10 Spectrum is the Victorian Government's initiative focusing on treatment, consultation, support, training and research related to personality disorder and/or complex trauma. See more at: <https://www.spectrumbpd.com.au/treatments/personality-disorder-initiative-pdi>

11 The Project Air strategy is the NSW Government's initiative to improve mental health responses for people with mental health disorders. See more at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/resources/Factsheets/mh-project-air.PDF>

Another recurring theme is the limited extent to which some services adequately consider an individual's gender, culture, language, religion and life experiences, despite there being a legislative requirement to provide culturally responsive and person-centred care. The PA works with treating teams and specialist services (including cultural supports) to promote appropriate responses to need and minimise the risk of biased assessment and treatment decisions.

The PA also reviews restrictive practice notifications to ensure restrictions on liberty in places of involuntary treatment and detention meet legislative requirements and are respectful of human dignity. The PA makes enquiries where necessary, raises concerns at the Restraint, Seclusion and Restrictive Practices Review Committee meetings and advocates for consumers including by actively intervening when concerns arise.

Advocacy to ensure an individual's views were considered

Lang was receiving treatment under a community Mental Health Order and experienced significant side effects from their prescribed antipsychotic medication. Despite raising these concerns with their treating team, no changes were made and the side effects continued, affecting Lang's quality of life.

With Lang's consent, the PA intervened by communicating directly with Lang's treating psychiatrist and senior mental health service staff. The PA outlined the seriousness of the reported side effects, referred to independent evidence of their experiences and conveyed Lang's views, wishes and preferences about their treatment.

While not seeking to influence clinical decision-making, the PA emphasised the legislative need to consider the rights of people receiving involuntary treatment under the MH Act and HR Act. As a result, Lang's medication regime was reviewed and changed, with close monitoring put in place to support their wellbeing and safety.

Strengthening sexual safety

The PA recognises that everyone has the right to access health services, including mental health services, free from discrimination and in a safe environment. The PA supports action to prevent, identify and respond to factors affecting sexual safety in mental health inpatient and residential settings, and notes this is a global issue due to the increased risks for consumers in these settings.

In this reporting period, the PA has observed occasions where disclosures of sexual violence may have occurred alongside symptoms of psychosis or delusions. Regardless of psychiatric diagnosis, services should take all reports seriously, assess risks and provide timely access to support, information, forensic examination, medical screenings and adequate safety measures. Missed opportunities to support a person to feel heard, preserve evidence and provide timely medical care (eg emergency birth control and a pre-exposure prophylaxis test) can substantially increase harm and undermine future help-seeking.

To appropriately uphold human rights, mental health services must consistently operationalise enforceable policies that set out minimum standards, positive duty obligations and procedures for responding to disclosures, preserving evidence and reporting incidents. Risk assessment and care planning should address sexual safety and address the needs of people with history of sexual trauma, particularly in mixed-gender settings.

The PA continues to raise concerns where it appears that allegations are dismissed as delusions without adequate investigation and has advocated for appropriate supports, accountability and appropriate management of identified risks in care planning. Cultural, organisational and practice change is needed to protect sexual safety for individuals accessing mental health supports, and the PA is committed to continue advocating for these needs to be met.

Identifying and responding to potential coercive control

The PA identified multiple Mental Health Order applications relating to Satu, lodged by a family member. In line with section 99A of the HRC Act, the PA engaged with the VOCC and other support services to better understand the individual's circumstances. This information indicated potential family violence dynamics that were not fully reflected in the applications, which the PA brought to the attention of ACAT and sought further clarification about, and advocated for safety measures for Satu at the hearing and after.

ACAT ultimately dismissed the application. Relevant services were advised of concerns regarding repeated applications and informed of options to address potentially vexatious applications. The PA's intervention ensured that potential coercive control and family violence indicators were identified and appropriately considered by the tribunal.

Upcoming review of the Mental Health Act 2015

Under section 271A of the MH Act, a review of substantial parts of the Act must be undertaken, with public submissions to be invited before 28 August 2026. The PA looks forward to the opportunity to make a submission and has welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Chief Psychiatrist's Advisory Committee and Legislative Working Group during this reporting period. The PA is particularly interested in:

- amendments that strengthen independent oversight
- enhanced review rights and procedural safeguards; and
- promoting greater alignment with the HR Act and contemporary human rights protections reflected in mental health legislation across other Australian jurisdictions.

The PA emphasises the importance of meaningful consultation with people who are most impacted by the proposed legislative changes. The PA encourages opportunities for targeted and tailored engagement with these cohorts, particularly in custodial settings, to ensure their lived experience informs the reform process. The PA has also advocated for a consultation and engagement approach that is inclusive, accessible and responsive to diverse needs so that all interested individuals can participate equitably and have their voices heard.

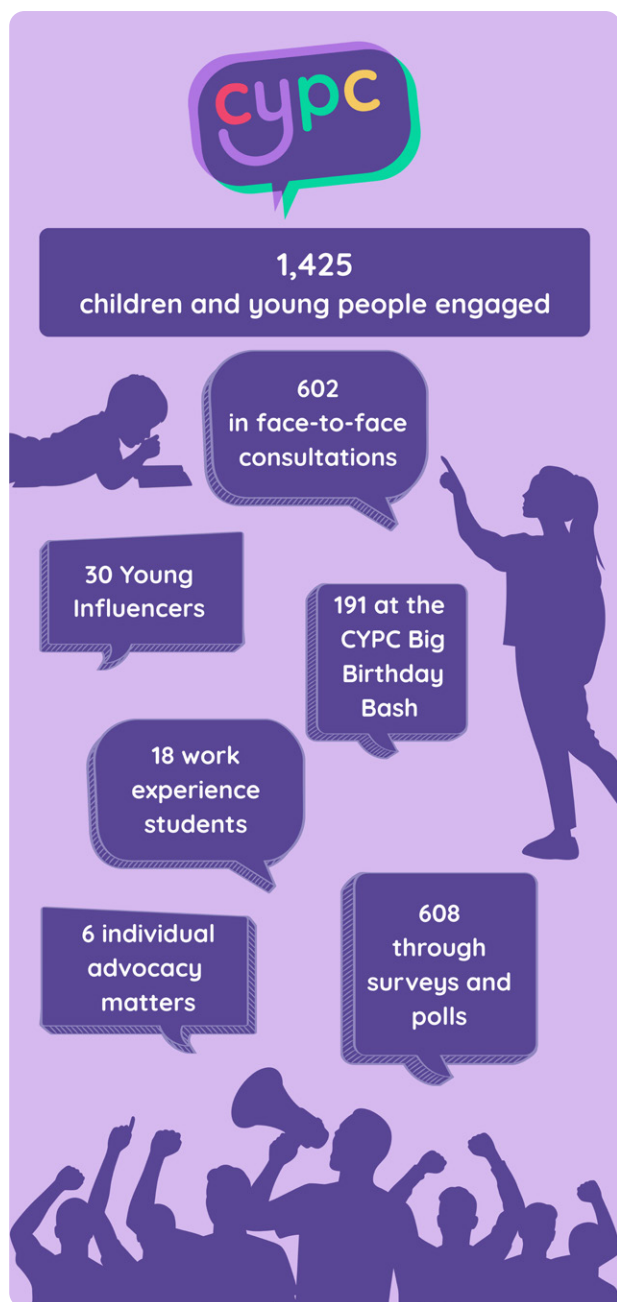
Ensuring least restrictive treatment options are considered

The PA attended a hearing for an electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) application, concerned that there was insufficient evidence regarding alternative treatment options having been trialled and that little time had passed to determine whether existing treatments were ineffective for Marley.

At the hearing, Marley was not legally represented. The treating team advised that the application had been made to keep ECT available should it be needed in the future. The PA raised concerns regarding its need, noting that ECT should be considered a treatment of last resort rather than a precautionary option. At the same time, both Marley's presentation and the treating team's evidence indicated signs of improvement.

The Tribunal adjourned the matter and requested further evidence. The treating team subsequently withdrew the application, demonstrating the value of independent oversight in ensuring treatment decisions are evidence based, clinically justified and no more restrictive than necessary.

Children and Young People Commissioner



CYPC in numbers.

The CYPC is committed to embedding the rights of C&YP in all aspects of its work. The CYPC's vision is that all C&YP in the ACT feel safe, respected and valued.

The CYPC promotes the participation of C&YP in decisions that affect their lives and supports organisations to implement the CSS.

Through these functions, the CYPC works to strengthen the capacity of C&YP, their families and communities to better understand and exercise their rights, while supporting governments, service providers and other duty bearers to meet their responsibilities through rights-informed policy, legislation, systems and practice.

Guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the CYPC recognises C&YP as rights holders whose views should inform the decisions that affect them. By promoting participation, strengthening child safety and influencing systems, the CYPC seeks to address the drivers of intergenerational disadvantage and support C&YP to contribute to the future wellbeing of the community.

Listening directly to C&YP is the foundation of this work.

Listening, participation and rights education

C&YP consistently tell the CYPC they want adults to listen, take their views seriously and create safer, more inclusive environments. During 2025–26, the CYPC expanded consultation activities, strengthened participation pathways, released new child safe resources and increased its contribution to systems reform through evidence gathered directly from C&YP.

2025 Listening Tour

In 2025, the CYPC conducted a Listening Tour to hear directly from C&YP about how to make the ACT a better place to grow up. Through face-to-face workshops, online submissions, and postcards, the CYPC engaged with more than 280 C&YP across the ACT.

C&YP identified a range of issues affecting their lives, including bullying, education, family wellbeing, online safety, inclusion and the environment. Across all consultations, one message was particularly clear: C&YP want adults to listen to them and take their views seriously. One young person captured this sentiment saying, "I want adults to know that when I'm frustrated no one listens to me".

The findings have informed submissions to inquiries, advocacy and systemic reform work throughout the year.

Article 12 – children’s right to have a say

‘All children should have a say, not adults taking over the environment and education programs.’

A consistent message from consultations over the past few years is that many C&YP do not feel their right to participate is being realised. They describe feeling ignored, dismissed or excluded from decisions that affect their lives.

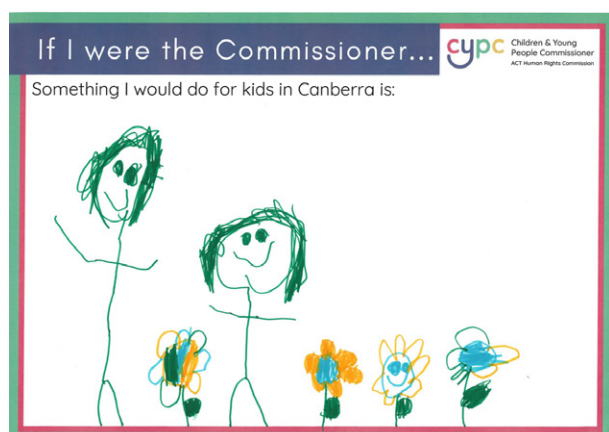
‘I hate that adults don’t listen to me.’

These concerns have remained consistent across successive consultations and continue to inform CYPC advocacy for stronger participation mechanisms and greater accountability for decision-makers.

C&YP are asking for adults who listen, systems that take their views seriously and meaningful opportunities to shape the policies and decisions that affect their lives.

There is strong evidence that this results in better programs, more efficient systems and safer organisations. The message is clear: participation must be respected as a fundamental human right, not treated as an optional extra.

‘Listening to children and accepting how they feel instead of making your own decision about how they feel.’



Drawings done by children during consultations. Children and young people can share their views in any format they want. They can write, draw or talk.

School attendance consultation

Many YP have told us the pressures they face at school are not always understood or acknowledged by adults. They say, ‘I wish adults knew how much school life has changed since them going to school ... I wish they saw our point of view.’

In 2025–26, the CYPC commenced consultation with C&YP on school attendance and engagement. The consultation responds to growing concerns about increasing rates of student non-attendance, inconsistent school responses and the lack of participation pathways for students to inform policy discussions, research and recommendations to improve engagement, attendance and educational outcomes.

‘I wish adults knew that school actually is hard. Wish they would understand how much school actually pressures us.’

‘It feels like you’re not supported even when they say they care.’

Preliminary engagement identified common concerns including stress, bullying, lack of belonging, discrimination and inadequate support for neurodivergent students and students with disability.

‘Some of my friends haven’t attended school because they are afraid of being attacked by other individuals.’

The CYPC's consultation, a partnership with the Education Directorate, will place C&YP's views and experiences at the centre of discussions about attendance and identify effective, child-rights-based approaches to improving engagement, educational outcomes, support for students and strengthened participation in decision-making.

Feeling safe matters

In 2025–26, the CYPC published findings from 3 C&YP Feelings of Safety surveys. Findings highlighted strengths and opportunities for improvement and will inform future child safe initiatives and sector support.

Key findings across the 3 reports highlighted the importance of adults paying attention to the behaviour of other adults, noticing if a child or young person is feeling uncomfortable and stepping in proactively. They also wanted to understand what adult behaviour is acceptable, and how to protect themselves when confronted with an uncomfortable or unsafe situation. Promisingly, most respondents felt safe in organisations and were satisfied that enough was being done to keep them safe.

Findings have informed areas for further targeting of awareness raising and capability development to support organisational improvement.

Youth Thinkers @ Work

The CYPC continued to create opportunities for YP to contribute to the work of the office while learning about their rights.

Through the Young Thinkers @ Work program, 18 students from 9 schools explored issues affecting C&YP, including access to health care, emotional wellbeing in high school, social media, toxic masculinity and rape culture, youth homelessness and cost of living.

The CYPC regularly calls on Legislative Assembly committees to create more avenues for C&YP to exercise their right to participate in civic issues. This year, 4 Young Thinkers @ Work were invited to share their perspectives directly with the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation during their *Inquiry into Barriers and Opportunities for Participation in Community Sports*.

Young Influencer Network

The CYPC's Young Influencer Network grew by 17 members in 2025–26, bringing the total membership to 30 members. The network engages C&YP aged 14–24 years in the PA/CYPC's advocacy, consultation and project work.

Members are provided opportunities to contribute to submissions, consultations, projects and events, while also identifying issues and priorities affecting C&YP in the ACT.

The network continues to provide an important mechanism to capture the perspectives of C&YP and inform the CYPC's work.

CareersXpo

Every year, CYPC attends the ACT CareersXpo to inform students about the work it does to promote their rights, safety and wellbeing, and provide an opportunity for them to have a say on a key issue. This is an annual event that draws approximately 9,000 students across 2 days.

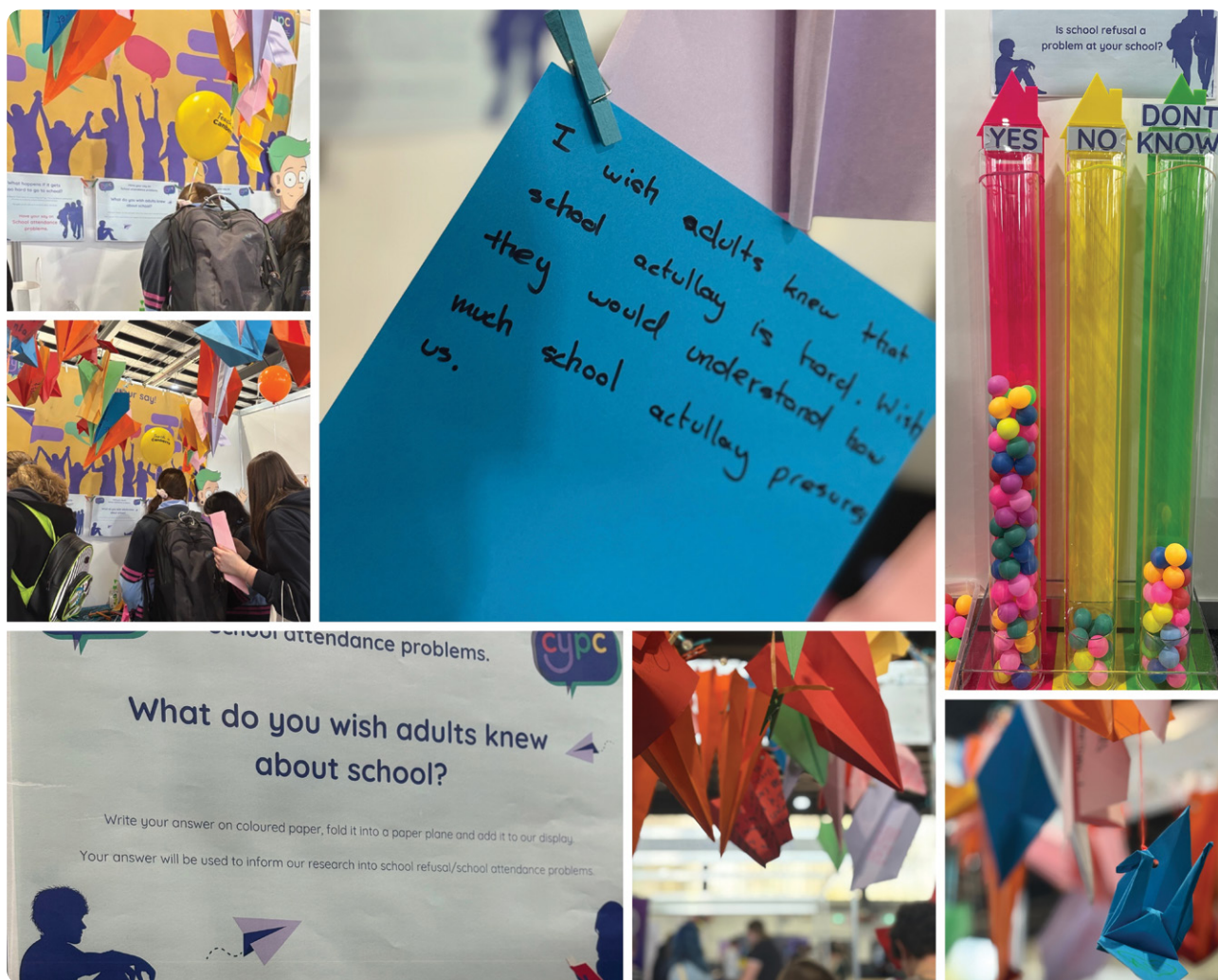
In 2025–26, the CYPC team asked, 'What do you wish adults knew about school?' The question was deliberately tied to scoping for the school attendance consultation and resulted in 90 reflections.

'People learn differently and shouldn't face harsh consequences for not going to a place that doesn't suit their way of learning.'

'School support systems are not very accessible to a lot of students. Many are overlooked and dismissed.'

'Not everyone has it easy at school.'

Students were asked to write their responses on coloured paper, then fold them into paper planes, which were hung from the ceiling. This resulted in a highly visual and interactive booth. Each paper plane was then brought back to the office, documented, analysed thematically and used in submissions, as part of HRC consultation data and to inform CYPC advocacy.



Every year CYPC attends CareersXpo and engages students through hands on activities. In 2025, students were asked what they wanted to tell adults about school. They folded their responses into paper planes and hung them from the ceiling.

Rights education

A key focus of the CYPC is to provide C&YP with accessible, age-appropriate information about their rights. During 2025–26, the CYPC delivered 12 child rights workshops to approximately 450 C&YP across the ACT. These workshops supported participants to build their understanding of children’s rights and share their views, experiences and priorities, helping to inform the Commissioner’s work and amplify C&YP’s voices in advocacy and systemic reform.

The CYPC also produced child- and youth-friendly resources, including 11 editions of *Rights in ACTION* for primary school-aged children, 115 Instagram posts for older YP, a child-friendly version of the PA/CYPC 2024–25 Annual Report and a children’s book about their rights pitched for children in early primary school.

The CYPC actively uses social media to communicate to C&YP about their rights. In 2026, the CYPC reformed its social media approach, creating content using only themes and views heard through consultation. This approach was developed to show C&YP how the CYPC has used their contributions and to call on adults to pay attention to what C&YP are saying.

Big Birthday Bash

In November 2025, more than 200 students and teachers attended the CYPC Big Birthday Bash celebrating 35 years of the UNCRC, 20 years of the CYPC role being established in the ACT and the 10th occasion on which Commissioner Griffiths-Cook had celebrated this day in the CYPC role. The event promoted children's rights, connected C&YP with local services and provided opportunities for participation through a child rights consultation activity.

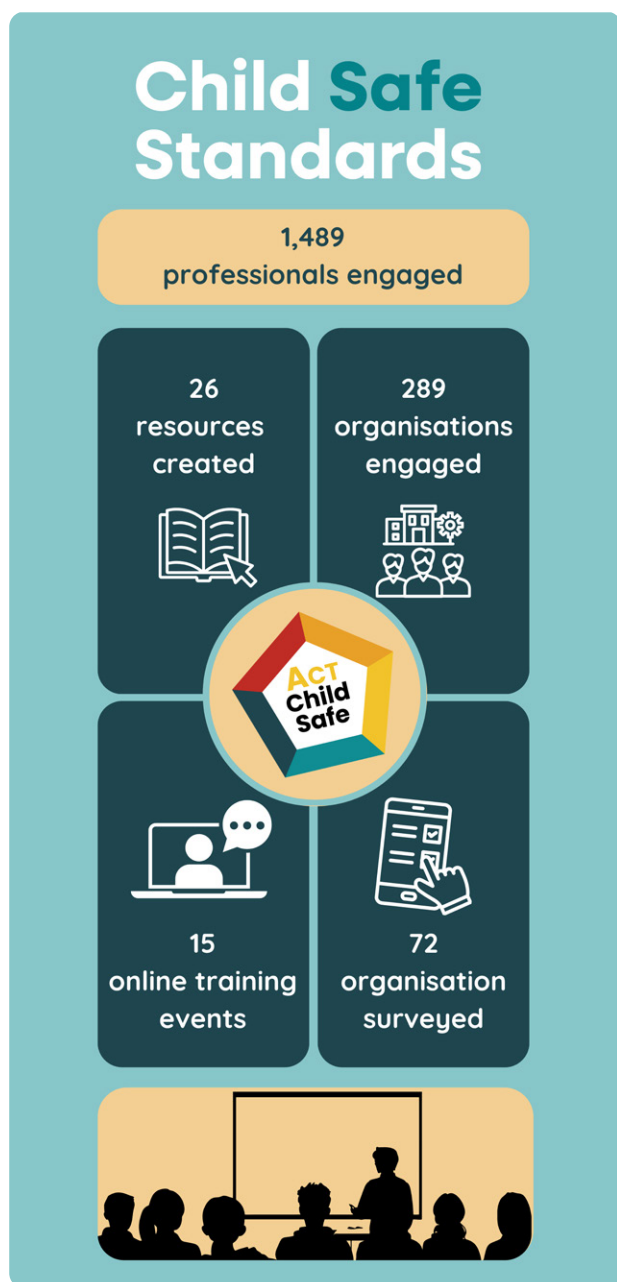
It was a fabulous way to raise the profile of child rights and provide opportunities for C&YP to engage directly with child-focused services.



CYPC celebrated children's rights with special guests, cake and balloons! Everything a party needs.

Creating safer organisations: Implementation of the ACT Child Safe Standards Scheme

C&YP consistently tell us that safety matters. Their views continue to shape the CYPC's work supporting organisations to create environments where rights, participation, safety and wellbeing are actively upheld. During 2025–26, the CYPC expanded support for organisations implementing the CSS Scheme, which commenced on 1 August 2024, with a focus on helping organisations move from understanding the CSS to embedding them in everyday practice.



Highlights from the implementation of the CSS Scheme.

Understanding implementation progress

Implementation of the CSS centres on changing organisational cultures to reduce the likelihood of harm to C&YP occurring and increase the capacity of organisations to recognise and respond to risks and concerns early.

The Year 2 Organisational Survey received 72 responses and highlighted strong engagement with the CSS across the ACT. Respondents reported positive progress in policy development, workforce training and governance practices, with leadership commitment and practical resources identified as important enablers of implementation.

Organisations also identified ongoing challenges, including workforce capacity, competing priorities and creating meaningful opportunities for C&YP to participate in decision-making.

Respondents consistently requested practical guidance, training and opportunities to learn from others.

These findings suggest that relevant sectors are increasingly confident in understanding the CSS and seeking more targeted support to apply them in practice.

Building capability across the sector

In response to these findings, the CYPC expanded practical capability-building activities during 2025–26. The CYPC engaged with 289 organisations and almost 1,500 individual contacts through webinars, training, Communities of Practice and sector engagement, and produced 26 new printable information resources. Organisations represented a broad range of sectors, including education, early childhood services, sport and recreation, community services, faith-based organisations and government agencies.

Support activities included:

- 15 live online learning events with more than 780 attendees
- 7 bespoke information sessions representing 5 organisations, and 11 in-person training sessions representing 7 organisations
- 26 printable information resources including practical guides, fact sheets, etc, some of which are general and some more targeted and specific
- establishing a Community of Practice and hosting 2 meetings to date.

Together, these initiatives supported organisations to strengthen child-safe culture, governance and service delivery.

Feedback on CYPC support

Satisfaction survey findings indicated a high level of satisfaction with the information and support provided by the CYPC.

Participants highlighted the value of practical guidance, presentations, webinars and sector engagement activities. Feedback also reinforced demand for

sector-specific examples, peer discussion opportunities and implementation-focused resources.

These findings confirmed the importance of continuing to provide practical, accessible and responsive support as organisations mature in their implementation of the Standards.

Collaborating for outcomes

The CYPC partnered with A Gender Agenda to strengthen understanding about how organisations can support the rights, safety, wellbeing and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ C&YP.

The partnership resulted in a suite of practical resources for organisations, a public webinar and specialist training for CYPC staff. The resources were designed to help organisations consider the unique experiences of LGBTIQ+ C&YP and address barriers to safety, participation and belonging.

This work reinforced an important principle of the CSS that C&YP are safest when they feel respected, included and valued for who they are.

Additional resources will also be released over the coming year.

Advocacy and systems influence on ACT issues

Listening only matters if what C&YP say leads to action. Throughout 2025–26, insights gathered through consultations, complaints, surveys and engagement activities directly informed CYPC advocacy with government, inquiries and service systems.

Responding to C&YP's concerns

The CYPC continued to see increasing direct contact from C&YP seeking support when they felt their concerns had not been heard or addressed. Many reported that systems had failed to adequately consider their views, respond to complaints or ensure they felt safe and supported.

Responses included direct advocacy with services to change processes and increase participation of C&YP in decision-making, the making of warm referrals within the HRC on behalf of C&YP, and requests to services for action to address concerns raised by C&YP or improve decision-making processes.

Supporting young people to advocate for systems change

A young person contacted the CYPC to raise concerns about a government agency having excluded them from contributing to a significant decision affecting a family member. Rather than seeking a review of their individual circumstances, the young person wanted systemic changes to help ensure other C&YP could participate meaningfully in similar decision-making processes in the future.

With the young person's permission, the CYPC contacted the agency and recommended that the limited consideration of the young person's views and the lack of child-friendly information available about the process be used to inform a broader review of service practices.

Following the young person's advocacy, the service developed a new child-friendly resource to help C&YP better understand and engage with the process. The young person was invited to provide feedback on the resource ahead of its finalisation and work to strengthen broader systemic processes remains ongoing.

This example demonstrates how individual concerns can contribute to broader systems change.

Consultation and submissions

CYPC submissions draw directly on evidence gathered through consultations, complaints, participation activities and research. During 2025–26, the CYPC contributed to a range of ACT and national inquiries to ensure children's rights and perspectives informed decision-making.

ACT Inquiries

- Standing Committee on Social Policy's *Inquiry into Men's Suicide Rates*
- Standing Committee on Legal Affairs' *Inquiry into the Civil Law (Wrongs) (Organisational Child Abuse Liability) Amendment Bill 2025*
- ACT Government Education Directorate's Future of Education Strategy Phase 3
- ACT Budget Consultation
- Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation's *Inquiry into Barriers and Opportunities for Participation in Community Sports in the ACT*.

Ending physical punishment of Australian children

Consistent with the CYPC's role in promoting the rights, safety and wellbeing of C&YP, in 2025–26, the PA/CYPC continued advocating for explicit legislation to ban corporal punishment of C&YP in the ACT. Currently, the use of physical punishment of C&YP in all Australian jurisdictions (including the ACT) remains open to common-law defences such as 'reasonable chastisement' or 'lawful correction'. This is despite ample evidence of harm and Australia's obligations to protect C&YP from all forms of violence. C&YP are the only group in Australia not fully protected by law in respect of physical violence.

International experience indicates that legislative reform, supported by education and support for families, can reduce use of physical punishment without increasing criminalisation of parents.

The PA/CYPC co-chairs the ACT End Physical Punishment of Australian Children campaign, which aims to increase public awareness about the impact of physical punishment, as well as the positive, non-violent alternatives to parenting and behavioural guidance, and advocate for legislative reform to prevent the 'legal chastisement' defence. Advocacy during 2025–26 focused on government engagement, with broader public awareness activities planned for 2026–27.

Contributions to national advocacy

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates

In 2025–26, the PA/CYPC assumed the role of Co-Chair of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) network, comprising national, state and territory representatives whose roles centre on protecting and promoting the rights, safety and wellbeing of C&YP. As the longest-serving member of the ANZCCGA, the PA/CYPC has been instrumental in driving commentary on national issues affecting C&YP.

Joint statements

In 2025–26, the PA/CYPC led the development of 2 joint statements on behalf of the ANZCCGA, as follows:

- joint submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee's *Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System* – December 2025
- letter to the Prime Minister and Members of the Australian Parliament on *Future Generations Policy* – November 2025.

Further to this, in 2025–26 the PA/CYPC contributed to a joint ANZCCGA statement calling for immediate action and transformational national reform following the release of the Queensland Child Death Review Board's *In Plain Sight report* in February 2026.

National Inquiries

The PA/CYPC made submissions to the following national inquiries:

- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education's *Inquiry into the Factors Driving Educational Attainment*
- Australian Education Union's *Schools for our Future Inquiry*
- submission to the national report for the United Nations Human Rights Council's 4th Universal Periodic Review for Australia
- submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee's *Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System* (in addition to the joint ANZCCGA submission mentioned above)
- contribution to a joint HRC submission to the *Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence Directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

The Commission participates in large ACT festivals and events, reaching a range of community members with information on its free supports and services, programs and advocacy work. In the past year, the Commission hosted stalls at the CareersXpo (August 2025), ACT Seniors and Better Ageing Expo (September 2025),

SpringOut (November 2025), the National Multicultural Festival (February 2026) and the National Reconciliation Day fair (June 2026). Commissioners and staff also presented at and attended events, lectures and forums organised by stakeholder and community organisations.

President and Human Rights Commissioner



Panellists from the 2025 human rights day forum (from left): Sue Hendy, Director, International Federation on Ageing; Karen Toohey, ACT Discrimination Commissioner; Robert Fitzgerald AM, Age Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission and Dr Penelope Mathew, ACT Human Rights Commissioner.

A large part of the role of the Human Rights Commissioner and her team is to engage with the community to promote knowledge and understanding of human rights and to hear from the public, community organisations and frontline workers about their experiences and human rights concerns. A selection of community engagement and education activities of the team in the reporting period include:

- On 30 September 2025, Dr Mathew spoke at the Festival of Urbanism held at the Shine Dome on the Australian National University (ANU) campus and talked about the relationship between regeneration and human rights, with a particular focus on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- The human rights legal team continued its ongoing arrangement of delivering human rights training to new correctional officer recruits to the AMC as well as to new youth worker recruits to Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Three such half-day trainings occurred in the reporting period in October and November 2025 and in June 2026. The team also delivered a pilot human rights training for supervising correctional officers at the AMC in February 2026.
- In November 2026, the Human Rights Commissioner and one of her staff delivered a presentation to Legal Aid lawyers on using human rights in civil litigation.

- On Human Rights Day in December 2025, the Human Rights Commissioner hosted a community forum on rights for older people. Commissioner Karen Toohey, Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Age Discrimination Commissioner, Robert Fitzgerald, and the Director of the International Federation on Ageing, Sue Hendy, joined Dr Mathew to speak at the event, held both in person and online.
- Throughout the reporting period, the Human Rights Commissioner and her staff held a large number of consultations for the first of the Commissioner's reviews of the Right to Healthy Environment. See page 23.
- In January 2026, the Human Rights Commissioner and one of her human rights legal advisers participated in a roundtable consultation at Parliament House on the federal government's Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026 hosted by Senator David Pocock. Commissioner Toohey also participated.
- Dr Mathew addressed a forum exploring free speech and its limits, hosted by independent MLA Thomas Emerson, in March 2026. Commissioner Toohey spoke at the same forum, organised in response to the Australian Federal Police removing satirical posters from a Canberra café in February 2026.
- In March 2026 Dr Mathew participated in a workshop held at Parliament House and hosted by the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum to explore how multicultural communities can increase their collaborative efforts to strengthen social cohesion. Commissioner Karen Toohey also participated.
- Dr Mathew delivered a keynote speech to the Women & Girls of Afghanistan: Intellectual-Academic Forum held at Parliament House in March 2026.
- The Commission held a joint event with the AHRC in April 2026, to celebrate the AHRC's 40th anniversary. Dr Mathew was a panellist at the seminar which explored how human rights can help solve issues like housing, Closing the Gap targets, racism and discrimination.
- In May 2026, Dr Mathew and the Commission's cultural advisor delivered a lecture to ANU students on human rights and the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- In June 2026, Dr Mathew gave a presentation on leadership and her journey as Human Rights Commissioner to the National Council of Women Australia mid-term conference.



Human Rights Commissioner Dr Penelope Mathew (second from the left, at the top of the table) at the consultation on the federal government's Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026.

Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner and Information Privacy Commissioner

The DHSDCSC and Information Privacy Commissioner (IPC) team do a range of community engagement activities to ensure Canberra community members, agencies and ACT organisations are aware of the breadth of complaints that can be brought to the Commission; and to promote the free, accessible conciliation process provided by the Commission.

The DHSDCSC hosted the national meeting of the ACHCE in November 2025 which included engagement with key stakeholders such as Ahpra, the National Disability Insurance Agency and Therapeutic Goods Agency. The team does regular information sessions with organisations such as the ACT Justice of the Peace Network, attends panels and workshops hosted by Canberra multicultural community members such as the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum to hear from community about issues like experiences of racism in Canberra. In March 2026 the DHSDCSC participated in a panel event at Dissent Café focusing on free speech, hate speech and proposed changes in hate speech regulation nationally and in the ACT.

The DHSDCSC sponsored the COTA ACT Seniors Expo in September 2025 and sponsored and spoke at the Retirement Village Resident Association forum in May 2026 as part of our role promoting wellbeing among older people in the ACT. The team did a number of information sessions at retirement villages, with the University of the Third Age, events for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and convenes the ACT Elder Abuse Prevention Network, previously convened by COTA ACT. The DHSDCSC participated in a number of events regarding elder abuse and domestic violence and preventing elder abuse among older women in the ACT. The DHSDCSC and IPC participated in a number of panel discussions on privacy regulation in the ACT, AI and mental health services and digital health services.

The DHSDCSC team also participated in O-Week market day at ANU, a number of university convened panels on racism and racism in healthcare, Spring Out, NAIDOC events; a range of information sessions delivered to government and non-government agencies; and events on the Discrimination Act positive duties and the complaints handling functions provided by the DHSDCSC team.

Victims of Crime Commissioner

The VOCC and her teams continued to strengthen relationships with community and stakeholders throughout the year, promoting awareness and understanding of victims' rights in the justice system and the supports and services available to victims of crime.

VSACT staff delivered presentations to stakeholders including Canberra Health Services, ACT Corrective Services, DVCS, Headspace, Vinnies and Medicare mental health counsellors. These sessions provided information about the supports and services available through VSACT and promoted understanding of the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime. By building stakeholder knowledge and capability, these engagements aimed to support appropriate referrals and improve access to VSACT's assistance for victims of crime.

The SVLS continued its commitment to collaboration and community education and delivered training for community workers in partnership with Legal Aid ACT's Law for Community Workers: Reporting Sexual Violence, hosted an information stall at the annual protest against sexual assault and harassment on ANU campus organised by the ANU Women's Department, and facilitated information-sharing sessions with Knowmore, the Canberra Rape Crisis Service, the DPP, the ACT Health Perinatal Mental Health Consultation Service and the ACT Therapeutic Support

Panel. These activities provided valuable opportunities to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and enhance awareness and understanding of the SVLS and improve referral pathways for priority client groups.

In May 2026, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Program hosted a community event at Boomanulla Oval providing an opportunity for community members to meet the incoming VOCC Juliette Ford and other Commissioners. The event fostered connection and community awareness of the Commission's role and services. In response to community feedback, the Program will facilitate similar events on a regular basis in the future.

In June 2026, the ACT Intermediary Program hosted the Australasian Intermediary Conference, achieving engagement from almost 200 cross-jurisdictional participants across a full day program, inclusive of panel sessions facilitated with judicial officers, legal practitioners and police officers. Across the year, the Intermediary Program also delivered tailored training and information sessions for key justice sector stakeholders including the DPP, Legal Aid ACT, ACT Policing and the ACT Courts. This included delivering specialised training to the Sexual Offence and Child Abuse Teams as part of the broader Sexual Offence and Child Abuse Program.

These initiatives collectively supported greater understanding of the role of intermediaries in assisting vulnerable complainants, witnesses, suspects and accused persons to participate effectively in the justice process.

In March 2026, VOCC Juliette Ford participated as a panellist at the YWCA's sold-out International Women's Day event, Balance the Scales, held at The Street Theatre. The event brought together frontline services and the lived

experiences of victim-survivors seeking safety, advocacy and justice. The VOCC contributed to discussions on issues affecting victim-survivors' experiences of the justice system and highlighted ACT initiatives that support victim participation and access to justice, including the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime, the SVLS, and VSACT's co-located advocates embedded within ACT Policing.

Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner

The PA/CYPC and her team work to raise awareness about human rights and the role and functions of the PA/CYPC (and HRC more broadly) in helping people address

concerns relating to their rights, safety and wellbeing. This is done through attendance at community events, targeted information sessions and children's rights workshops.

Community events

During the 2025–26 reporting period, local community engagement activities for the PA/CYPC included:

- attending 15 local community events
- delivering a child rights keynote address at Arawang Primary's Professional Learning Day
- engaging with over 70 young people at the ACT Youth Assembly
- visiting 7 services during the CYPC's 2025 Listening Tour
- participating in the 2026 Child First Forum

- hosting a stall at the ACT CareersXpo and at the Erindale College community services expos
- contributing to 16 national safeguarding conversations, and 15 local safeguarding conversations
- leading and contributing to 19 Child Rights conversations and workshops
- attending the 2025 Kinship and Foster Carer Appreciation event
- presenting to 2 ANU Youth Law Clinics.



Jodie Griffiths-Cook at Arawang Primary School.



A staff member at Erindale College's expo on community services available for young people in the ACT

Targeted information sessions

Throughout 2025–26, the PA/CYPC delivered information sessions to 3 government and 2 non-government agencies, over 7 occasions. These information sessions provided an

overview of human rights in the ACT and explained the role of the PA/CYPC as well as other services available through the broader HRC.

Children's rights workshops

In 2025–26, the CYPC and her team conducted 12 free child rights workshops at 9 schools and other services. These workshops support C&YP to understand their rights and how to exercise them while also educating them about the history of child rights and how to contact the CYPC/HRC if they want to raise concerns.

Additionally, the CYPC engaged directly with 1,425 C&YP including (but not limited to):

- consulting face-to-face with 602 C&YP
- engaging 608 C&YP through surveys and polls
- hosting 18 work experience students.

Children and Young People Commissioner awards

Each year, the PA/CYPC actively looks for opportunities to recognise C&YP whose actions reflect a commitment to social justice and the rights of their peers.



Jodie Griffiths-Cook (left) and Felicity Gribble at the Children's Week Awards.

Children's Week

Each year during Children's Week, the PA/CYPC presents an award to a child or young person whose actions reflect a commitment to social justice and the rights of C&YP. In 2025, the Children's Week theme was 'Everyone should know about Children's Rights', with the CYPC presenting her award to Felicity Gribble. The award recognised Felicity's compassion, initiative and personal sacrifice by fundraising and cutting off her hair to donate to Wigs for Kids, exemplifying what it means to act with empathy, courage and service.

Daydream Machine was also acknowledged for the opportunities and consistent respect and support they provide to C&YP.

Inaugural CYPC Yogie Award

In 2025, the PA/CYPC partnered with the Youth Coalition of the ACT to present the Inaugural Children and Young People Commissioner's Yogie Award. The Yogies recognise the exceptional commitment, talent and innovation in the youth sector.

This CYPC Award recognises a young person who shows a strong commitment to social justice and C&YP's rights. The inaugural award was presented to Leaf Jeppesen. The award recognised Leaf's advocacy for wellbeing and social justice issues for YP, standing up for what's right in the face of adversity, and bringing about attitudinal and behavioural changes in their school to ensure that every student felt seen and safe.

CORPORATE INFORMATION AND REPORTING

Scrutiny

During the reporting period the Commission did not have any undertakings made in reports that are produced by reporting entities charged with responsibility for scrutiny.

Risk management

In developing the risk register, the Commission draws on the resources of the JACSD risk framework, including the policy and standard operating procedure, with regular tabling of the Commission's risk register at the JACSD Strategic Management Committee.

During the reporting period, the Commission continued to utilise the JACSD enterprise risk management software for the recording and monitoring of risks, aimed at providing improved transparency of the JACSD risk environment.

Internally, the Commission consults on and communicates risks through monthly Commission meetings, where risks are recorded and reported upon as they arise. At these meetings, the Commission identifies potential systemic risks and incorporates them into the risk register as needed.

Internal audit

JACSD's internal audit policies and procedures apply to the Commission, with the President attending JACSD Audit and Risk Committee meetings as required and providing input into the JACSD 3-year strategic internal audit program. See the JACSD annual report.

Fraud prevention

In the reporting period, JACSD's fraud control policies and procedures applied to the Commission, with compliance detailed in the JACSD annual report.

Freedom of information

The Commission promotes the community's right to access government information in keeping with the objectives of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*. Members of the public can apply for access to information under the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* or they can contact the Commission before resorting to a formal freedom of information (FOI) procedure.

Open access information

The Commission published 13 documents that provided government information under Open Access on the website, and on the ACT Government Open Access Information website.¹²

Making an FOI request

Information on how to make an FOI application is available on the Commission's website.¹³ Applications can be submitted to the Commission via email (preferred method), mail or in person:

Ph: 02 6205 2222
human.rights@act.gov.au
ACT Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

¹² www.act.gov.au/open-access

¹³ www.hrc.act.gov.au/about-us/freedom-of-information

As required, FOI requests to the Commission are generally listed and available in the JACSD disclosure log.¹⁴ Requests for personal information are not published on the disclosure log.

In the 2025–26 reporting period, the Commission received 14 FOI access applications, with 8 applications finalised during the year. Fees were not charged or collected by the Commission for access applications.

Of the 8 applications that were finalised, all were decided within section 40 timelines.

Of the 8 applications:

- one provided full access
- 3 provided partial access
- 3 refused access under Schedule 1.8
- one refused to confirm or deny the existence of information under section 35(1)(e)(ii).

The Commission also reports annually to the ACT Ombudsman on the above information. Further detail can be found in their annual report.

Ombudsman review

During the reporting period, the Ombudsman received one request to review an FOI access decision made by the Commission, which resulted in no review under section 82(5)(b).

Further information can be found in the Ombudsman's annual report.

¹⁴ www.justice.act.gov.au/about-us/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log

Closing the Gap: progress in implementing the National Agreement and the ACT Agreement

This section supports accountability under:

- the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).
- the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028 (ACT Agreement).

Table 17: Reporting against relevant priority reforms

Priority reform	Supporting actions
1 Formal partnerships and shared decision-making	Partnerships are prioritised in our strategic plan. See page 11. Three Commissioners met with community members at Boomanulla Oval and agreed to quarterly meetings, to support strong collaborative relationships and allow community to raise important matters directly with Commissioners. See page 58. Through their respective functions, Commissioners also engage regularly with community members, including seeking guidance where needed to improve the cultural lens used to progress key pieces of work. The Commission's cultural adviser met regularly with community leaders and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) and updated Commissioners on community concerns as they emerged throughout the year. Staff from VSACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Program engage regularly with ACCOs when assisting Aboriginal clients. See page 58. The PA and her team engage regularly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner and team on both individual client matters as well as systemic issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander C&YP and their families, and work together to identify the most appropriate approach to facilitate improved outcomes. Early conversations have also been held between the CYPC and the Health and Community Services Directorate to engage an ACCO or an individual/s on a piece of work to apply a cultural lens to implementation of the CSS.
2 Transforming government institutions	The Commission has put considerable work into a Closing the Gap planning day to be held August 2026. Aboriginal consultants engaged for this project have helped design the day, and a preparatory exercise has helped staff to reflect on when and how they can make a tangible difference to Aboriginal clients and community members, through interventions, advocacy and liaison. Over 80 staff took part in trainings to support and build cultural capability: Aboriginal traditional owners and cultural custodians were engaged to run staff training sessions including tours on country and Ngunnawal language training sessions. Feedback from the trainings was positive, with staff saying that they had a better understanding of and respect for Aboriginal knowledge systems, culture and ongoing relationships to country. Work was undertaken to identify mandatory cultural capability training and roll it out to all staff via the learning management system. Staff attended the following training: 25 staff attended JACS Mulanggari – Keeping Culture Alive; 14 staff completed the ACT Public Service Cultural Awareness e-learning; and 2 staff participated in Engoori. The Commission adopted a cultural safety charter in 2019. Cultural safety is prioritised in our strategic plan. New staff are introduced to the charter in induction training. See page 13. The Commission recognises that more needs to be done on cultural load for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; and in the area of racism and unconscious bias.

Priority reform	Supporting actions
3 Shared access to data and information	The Commission's privacy policy is available on the website and includes information for clients on requesting data the Commission holds. More work will need to be done to make this information accessible for Aboriginal clients, and to assist them to safely engage with the Commission about their data.

Other supporting contributions include:

- Aboriginal clients were assisted to access VSACT supports in ways that felt safe, respectful and culturally appropriate. The Aboriginal liaison unit supported 113 Aboriginal clients and focused on improved client access to FAS applications and therapeutic counselling supports. See page 58.
- Aboriginal clients accounted for 16 per cent of FAS applicants and 13 per cent of Victim Services Scheme clients.
- The Intermediary Program Team continued to provide communication assessments and assistance for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander witnesses, complainants, suspects and accused persons engaged with police and ACT Courts. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 10 per cent of all police and ACT Court referrals during the reporting period.
- Complaints from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People accounted for 10 per cent of all complaints received by the Commission in 2025–26.
- In November 2025, the PA/CYPC hosted the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) meeting and First Nations Caucus in Canberra, providing opportunities to share culture, strengthen relationships and support collaboration across jurisdictions.

Disability Inclusion Act 2024 reporting

The JACSD annual report provides information on reporting obligations for the *Disability Inclusion Act 2024*.

Multiculturalism Act 2023 reporting

See page 59 for a full report from the VSACT MLO.

Requirements under the Multiculturalism Act	Actions
Promotes multiculturalism (recruitment policies and guidance)	The Commission's social inclusion plan (SIP) includes specific commitments about supporting staff and clients from multicultural backgrounds. Under the SIP, the Commission has committed to welcoming applications from priority groups in its job advertisements. In media statements and published opinion pieces, the Human Rights Commissioner outlined the strengths and benefits of multiculturalism, highlighted the factual inaccuracies of anti-immigration rallies and affirmed the Commission's solidarity with the vibrant immigrant communities of the ACT.
Takes into account the charter for multiculturalism in exercising functions (boards and committees are diverse)	The Commission did not have any boards or committees during the reporting period.
Develops, applies and reviews policies, programs and services in a way that promotes multiculturalism (procurement policies and guidance)	Through SIP commitments, and via the work of the MLO, multicultural clients are supported and there is a welcoming atmosphere for staff from diverse backgrounds. The MLO facilitated regular sessions with VSACT staff to discuss multicultural matters impacting clients. The MLO also supported VSACT staff from multicultural backgrounds. The MLO has continued weekly outreach activities at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre and regularly attends meetings with multicultural community leaders. This engagement has strengthened MLO relationships with multicultural communities.

Requirements under the Multiculturalism Act	Actions
	The DHSDCSC attended community events, organised by cultural and faith groups, including speaking engagements where she talked about racism and discrimination complaint pathways available to community members. Within FVSAP, a senior team member provided guidance and advice to address cultural barriers to the justice system. The PA has assisted clients to access interpreting services in the courts/ACAT. There was a 50 per cent increase in court referrals for culturally and linguistically diverse clients for the ACT Intermediary Program.
Consults with ACT Ministerial Advisory Council and ACT community about how to promote multiculturalism (encouraging communication in languages other than English)	In meetings with the council, the DHSDCSC discussed promoting multiculturalism, and the role of the positive duty obligations in making the ACT a safe and inclusive society.
Works with the council and other organisations to promote multiculturalism (diversity action plans)	The MLO continued to advise various government agencies, including the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Office and Restorative Justice Unit and ACT Policing supporting migrants impacted by crime. The MLO works closely with the Multicultural Hub, Companion House and Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services.
Provides effective and equitable access to information and programs and services to the ACT community (provides translating and interpreting services in an accessible manner)	The DHSDCSC ran a 6-month campaign on CMS radio (October 2025 to April 2026), broadcasting information on racism complaints across 7 radio programs (South Asian and African programs). In April 2026, another radio campaign began on Canberra's 2 FM stations, with information on discrimination complaints and general complaints, reaching a wide mainstream Canberra audience. The DHSDCSC produced a booklet for the Chinese community, with information in 2 languages on complaints for older people, and elder abuse. Other materials in 8 languages are available on the Commission website,¹⁵ and posters in 8 languages are available for community events and outreach. Other consumer materials include information on accessing TIS National services. The MLO also trains Commission staff on effectively engaging with interpreters for clients.

Period Products and Facilities (Access) Act 2023 reporting

The JACSD annual report provides information on the reporting obligations for *Period Products and Facilities (Access) Act 2023* reporting.

Work health and safety

The Commission recognises that staff may be exposed to hearing about, responding to or processing information about experiences of trauma, abuse, violence and exploitation. The Commission is committed to supporting staff in preventing psychosocial injuries and providing a mentally healthy workplace.

During the reporting period the Commission undertook risk assessments to ensure appropriate risk mitigation occurs within the Commission. This mitigation included the development of policies and procedures, the coordination of training, and the building works undertaken in the Allara Street office premises.

The JACSD annual report provides information on the reporting obligations for work health and safety within the Commission.

¹⁵ www.hrc.act.gov.au/languages

Human resources management

The ACT Government's shared services portal and JACSD's people, culture and safety branch assisted the Commission with recruitment in 2025–26. The Commission manages staff retention and support, with training managed in conjunction with JACSD. In 2025–26, the Commission employed 135 staff, 88.9 per cent of whom identified as female.

Table 18: Full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount by branch

Classification group	FTE	Headcount
Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner and Information Privacy Commissioner	16	17
Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner	18.36	22
President and Human Rights Commissioner	13.10	14
Victims of Crime Commissioner	75.66	82
TOTAL	123.12	135

Table 19: Full-time equivalent (FTE) headcount by gender

Classification group	Female	Male	Non-binary	Total
FTE by gender	109.82	12.40	0.9	123.12
Headcount by gender	120	14	1	135
Percentage of workforce by headcount	88.9%	10.4%	0.7%	100%

Table 20: Headcount by employment classification and gender

Classification group	Female	Male	Non-binary	Total
Total	120	14	1	135
Administrative officers	59	7	0	66
Health professional officers	2	0	0	2
Legal officers	2	1	0	3
Senior officers	53	6	1	60
Statutory office holders	4	0	0	4

Table 21: Gender pay gap

Classification group	Female avg. salary (\$)	Male avg. salary (\$)	Pay gap
Total	128,192	128,982	0.6%
Administrative officers	106,381	110,271	3.5%
Health professional officers	125,570	0	0.0%
Legal officers	159,757	159,757	0.0%
Senior officers	151,381	145,682	–3.9%
Statutory office holders	284,358	0	0.0%

* Note: Some positions are currently only held by female staff and analysis of a gender pay gap for such positions is not meaningful.

Table 22: Headcount by employment classification and gender

Employment category	Female	Male	Non-binary	Total
Total	120	14	1	135
Casual	0	0	0	0
Permanent full-time	81	11	0	92
Permanent part-time	25	2	1	28
Temporary full-time	11	1	0	12
Temporary part-time	3	0	0	3

Table 23: Headcount by age and gender

Age group	Female	Male	Non-binary	Total
Total	120	14	1	135
Under 25 years	1	0	0	1
25–34 years	35	3	1	39
35–44 years	36	5	0	41
45–54 years	29	6	0	35
55 years and over	19	0	0	19

Table 24: Headcount by diversity group

Group	Headcount	Total
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	6	4.4%
Culturally and linguistically diverse	21	15.6%
People with disability	21	15.6%

Table 25: Average years of service by gender

Female	Male	Non-binary	All staff
4.8	8.0	1.3	5.1

Table 26: Recruitment and separation rates

Recruitment rate	Separation rate
14.6%	10.3%

Learning and development

The Commission continues to invest in building the capability of the workforce to meet service delivery standards and outcomes. Training of staff includes an initial Commission induction and core learning requirements, supplemented by specialised operational training for frontline workers.

During the reporting period, work was undertaken to identify core learning curricula for all Commission staff, which complements the core training required by the ACT Public Sector and JACSD. These core curricula were developed in consultation with staff and approved by the Commissioners for delivery to all staff via the learning management system in early 2026–27.

Staff at the Commission undertake training through a central training fund that is managed by JACSD. Reporting on these programs is in the JACSD annual report.

Specialised training delivered by the Commission

The Commission delivers specialised training to ACT Government employees and stakeholders on a range of topics, including but not limited to:

- HR Act, public authority obligations under the Act and cultural rights
- the Discrimination Act including positive duties
- the ACT CSS
- the *Disability Inclusion Act 2024*.

Learning and development priorities for 2026–27

Given the nature of the work that the Commission undertakes, there will be a continued focus on increasing capability in addressing occupational violence, vicarious trauma and trauma-informed practice in 2026–27.

Priorities also include developing an annual training calendar and refreshing the Commission's induction training package to ensure consistent learning and development opportunities for staff, which was an identified priority in the staff survey results.

Gender action plan and gender impact assessment reporting

In the reporting period, the Commission's gender pay gap dropped to 0.6 per cent. This is a decrease on last reporting period, where the gender pay gap was reported at 4.9 per cent, a change which can largely be attributed to a drop across the Administrative Officers, who reported a 3.5 per cent gap in 2025–26 versus 9.1 per cent in 2024–25.

For the Commission's reporting on progress under the *Gender Action Plan*, as provided for the State of the Service annual reporting, see the JACSD annual report.

Ecological sustainability reporting

In line with the Commission's governance and corporate support protocol with JACSD, its ecological sustainability reporting is included in the JACSD annual report.

Financial management reporting

In line with the Commission's governance and corporate support protocol with JACSD, its financial reporting is included in the JACSD annual report.

Capital works

In line with the Commission's governance and corporate support protocol with JACSD, its financial reporting, including capital works, is included in the JACSD annual report.

Asset management

The JACSD asset management strategies applied to the Commission and are detailed in the JACSD annual report.

Government contracting

The online ACT Government contracts register records ACT Government contracts worth more than \$25,000. Information on Commission contracts, with an execution date from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026, can be accessed at www.tenders.act.gov.au/contract/search

Compliance with Government Procurement Act 2001

The Commission complied with the *Government Procurement Act 2001* in the reporting period.

Secure local jobs code

No exemptions to section 22H of the *Government Procurement Act 2001* were provided to the Commission in the reporting period.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy

The JACSD annual report 2025–26 includes data on the Commission's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement over the reporting period.

Statement of performance

The Commission's objectives, deliverables and accountability indicators are published in the 2025–2026 ACT Budget Statements.

The Commission reports against accountability indicators in Output 1.5 of the JACSD portfolio report. The table

below details the advocacy, complaint handling, advice, community awareness raising and other services provided by the Commission to promote and protect rights, especially for vulnerable members of society.

OUTPUT CLASS 1 JUSTICE SERVICES

Output 1.5 Protection of Rights

Description	Provision of advocacy, complaints handling, advice, community awareness raising and other services in connection with the promotion and protection of rights especially for vulnerable members of society, through services provided by the ACT Human Rights Commission, including the Public Advocate of the ACT and Victim Support ACT. This output also includes services provided by the Privacy Commissioner
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	2025–26 Original Target	2025–26 Actual	Variance %	Note
Total Cost (\$'000)	26,277	31,271	19	1
Controlled Recurrent Payments (\$'000)	24,024	23,588	(2)	
Accountability Indicators				
Human Rights Commission				
a High level of client satisfaction with Human Rights Commission complaints process:				
• Percentage of survey respondents who consider the complaint handling service accessible	80%	84%	5	
• Percentage of survey respondents who consider the complaint handling service to be fair	80%	79%	(1)	
• Percentage of complaints concluded within Commission standards	75%	71%	(5)	
b High level of community education, information and advice in relation to human rights and (i) services for children and young people, (ii) disability services, (iii) discrimination, (iv) health services, and (v) services for older people and other complaint jurisdictions:				
• Number of community engagement activities undertaken by the Commission	90	145	61	2

	2025–26 Original Target	2025–26 Actual	Variance %	Note
Public Advocate				
c The Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner's (PACYPC's) actions towards achieving a caring community where the rights and interests of vulnerable people are protected:				
Proportion of client survey respondents for whom advocacy services are provided by the Public Advocate of the ACT where a high level of satisfaction is reported	75%	86%	15	3
The Public Advocate's actions towards achieving a caring community where the rights and interests of vulnerable people are protected:				
Percentage of referrals to the Public Advocate actioned within five working days	90%	94%	4	
Percentage of compliance documents reviewed within five working days of allocation	80%	91%	14	4
Victim Support ACT				
d Percentage of referrals to Victim Support ACT or the Victims of Crime Commissioner actioned within 5 working days	95%	79%	(17)	5

The above Indicators should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes.

The above Indicators were examined in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1996*. The Total Cost and Controlled Recurrent Payments measures were not examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the Financial Management (Statement of Performance Scrutiny) Guidelines 2019.

Notes—Explanation of Accountability Indicators

- | | |
|---|--|
| a | The indicators report on the timeliness and effectiveness of interactions with clients. Calculation of indicators is based on client feedback, received through evaluation forms, and information from the Commission's case management system which tracks the length of time it takes from receipt to complaint closure. |
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Notes—Explanation of Material Variances (> +/-10%)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | The above budget result is primarily driven by the first year of recognition of a provision expense for counselling sessions approved but not yet provided (\$2.97 m), funding shortfall for the Intermediary Program (\$0.48 m) and increased expenses on counselling invoices (\$0.44 m). |
| 2 | The number of events held includes community consultations on Child Safe Standards (43) and on the Right to a Healthy Environment (21). |
| 3 | The higher than target result reflects PACYPC's commitment to responsive, high-quality service delivery underpinned by a human rights focus that seeks to achieve improved safety and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people, and adults experiencing vulnerability |
| 4 | The above target result represents the Public Advocate's concerted effort to review documentation that may represent limitations to a person's rights, noting that all documentation received has an initial review at the point of data entry, enabling better triage of those documents requiring secondary review. |
| 5 | The below target result reflects the sustained unprecedented demand for victim support services during the reporting period. Increasing service demand and more complex client needs have placed pressure on Victim Support ACT's existing resources, affecting its ability to achieve this indicator from existing resources. |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACAT	ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal
ACCO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation
ACHCE	Australasian Council of Health Complaint Entities
ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
Ahpra	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AMC	Alexander Maconochie Centre
ANU	Australian National University
ANZCCGA	Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates
Bimberi	Bimberi Youth Justice Centre
CAU	CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Adolescent Unit
CIC	Commission-initiated consideration
CMA	Corrections Management Act 2007 (ACT)
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
COTA ACT	Council on the Ageing ACT
CSE	child sexual exploitation
CSS	Child Safe Standards
CTM	Care Team Meeting
CYP Act	Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)
CYF	ACT Office of Children, Youth and Families
CYPC	Children and Young People Commissioner
DAL	Disability Advocacy Lead
DHSDCSC	Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner
Dhulwa	Dhulwa Mental Health Unit
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions (ACT)
DVCS	Domestic Violence Crisis Service
ECT	electroconvulsive therapy
FAS	Financial Assistance Scheme
FVSAP	Family Violence Safety Action Program
HR Act	Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT)

ACAT	ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal
HRC	ACT Human Rights Commission (also 'the Commission')
HRC Act	Human Rights Commission Act 2005 (ACT)
ICS	Inspector of Custodial Services
JACSD	Justice and Community Safety Directorate
LGBTIQA+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexually or gender-diverse people
MH Act	Mental Health Act 2015 (ACT)
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLO	Multicultural Liaison Officer
MPD (OPCAT) Act	Monitoring of Places of Detention (Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture) Act 2018 (ACT)
National Law	Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009 (ACT)
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
NRS	National Redress Scheme
OOHC	out-of-home care
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UN)
PA	Public Advocate
PA/CYPC	Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner
PTO	Psychiatric Treatment Order
SAB	Sentence Administration Board
SACAT	Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team
SAPR	Sexual Assault (Police) Review
SSARM	Standing Sexual Assault Review Mechanism
SVLS	Sexual Violence Legal Service
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VOCC	Victims of Crime Commissioner
VSACT	Victim Support ACT
WLC	Women's Legal Centre ACT
WPO	Workplace Protection Order

