ANNUAL STATEMENT ON DISASTER RESILIENCE 2026

SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SENIOR OFFICIALS GROUP (SEMSOG)

ACT Government

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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INTRODUCTION

The ACT Disaster Resilience Strategy 2024-2030 (the Strategy) provides a framework for a whole-of-society approach to achieving disaster resilience in the ACT. Released in September 2024, the Strategy aims to guide and influence action to enhance disaster resilience and embed consideration of disaster resilience across all policy contexts and settings.

The Strategy outlines six key principles and twelve strategic priorities, providing a common vision and framework for achieving a disaster resilient society in the ACT. It aims to address the systemic issues influencing disaster resilience and empower all sectors of society to take steps to better cope with crises.

This Statement provides an assessment of the second phase of the Strategy's implementation. The first Annual Statement on Disaster Resilience, prepared in November 2025, recognised that all areas of the ACT Government had delivered activities that align to the Strategy, contributing to a growing recognition of disaster resilience concepts across government and the community. The 2025 Annual Statement also identified the priority areas for the second phase of implementation.

The annual production of a disaster resilience statement allows tracking of progress and trends over time and helps identify areas for future effort. This enables the most effective action to be taken to prepare communities and government for disasters and mitigate their potential impacts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

To support the Strategy to achieve its objectives, whole-of-government Implementation Plans have been developed. The Phase One Implementation Plan ran from September 2024 – September 2025. It established foundational awareness, capability, and partnerships to enable coordinated action on disaster resilience across the ACT.

The Phase Two Implementation Plan sets priorities and key activities for disaster resilience in the ACT, strengthens a shared understanding among stakeholders, and builds on the partnerships, structures and initiatives developed during the first phase of the Strategy's implementation.

The 2025 Annual Statement on Disaster Resilience highlighted key achievements, challenges and areas requiring greater attention during the first phase of the Strategy's implementation. These findings have informed the development of the Phase Two Implementation Plan, which focuses on five priority areas:

- Building social connection;
- Developing a strategic approach to extreme heat;
- Enabling inclusive disaster resilience planning;
- Expanding preparedness campaigns; and
- Embedding systemic consideration of disaster resilience.

A range of ACT Government activities have been delivered during the current implementation period that broadly achieve the aims of the Phase Two Implementation Plan. As implementation of Phase Two continues, additional activities will be delivered and reported in future Annual Statements. These government initiatives are complemented by a range of community and non-government efforts that contribute to disaster resilience across the Territory.

Key ACT Government initiatives are highlighted below, with further details provided in **Appendix A**.

Building Social Connection

Bringing people together helps build the social networks that are critical to coping in times of crisis, particularly as social engagement declines. This includes supporting volunteering, which strengthens community connections and provides an important resource for disaster response and recovery.

Across the ACT, several initiatives contributed to this goal. A Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Round Two project led by the Australian Red Cross in partnership with the Multicultural Hub Canberra, expanded community preparedness activities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The project delivered 34 EmergencyRedi workshops and 12 Pillowcase workshops, helping participants build practical preparedness skills and awareness of emergency risks. It also

recruited, trained and supported volunteer facilitators, and implemented a community engagement plan to align workshop delivery with community needs and seasonal risks.

Across government, agencies strengthened partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through shared decision-making, culturally informed programs, and the integration of cultural principles and ways of working into practice. Canberra Health Services (CHS) progressed a formal partnership agreement with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Leadership Group to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, patients and families. Infrastructure Canberra (iCBR) advanced reconciliation and cultural inclusion through its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, the embedding of Yindyamarra principles, and the delivery of the co-designed CIT Yurauna building. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) strengthened cultural connections through the Yurwan Ghuda On Country program and partnerships with Aboriginal-owned organisations and cultural practitioners. ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) also deepened its partnership with the Ngunnawal community by supporting cultural burning practices, including removing permit requirements for their use.

The Suburban Land Agency (SLA) supported community connection through its Mingle Community Development Program, which empowers residents to lead local activities, events and community projects through funding and in-kind support. The Mingle Community Support Fund helped residents deliver initiatives such as neighbourhood celebrations, workshops and the Whitlam Community Gardens, strengthening local networks, volunteering and community resilience.

The Place Curation Program at the Whitlam Display Village further supported community connection through cultural, community and small business events. In partnership with local providers, the program delivered sustainability workshops, including Growing a Resilient Garden, Growing Food Through the Seasons and Building a Sustainable Home, building skills that support community resilience.

Developing a strategic approach to extreme heat

The ACT is developing a strategic, systemic, whole of government approach to managing the impacts of extreme heat across the built, environmental, social, economic and governance domains. Unlike heatwaves, which are discrete events managed primarily through a health-focused response, extreme heat is a long-term climate hazard characterised by rising average temperatures and more frequent hot days. As temperatures continue to increase, extreme heat is expected to have cascading and compounding impacts across communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and essential services.

The ACT Government's Extreme Heat Capability Mapping Project established a clear baseline of whole-of-government capability for managing extreme heat risks. In July 2026 stakeholders from across government participated in an Extreme Heat Capability Mapping exercise. The exercise explored extreme heat exercise scenarios for 2030 and 2050 to assess current capabilities and identified gaps and priorities. Findings will be reported to the Security and Emergency Management Senior Officials Group (SEMSOG) to inform discussions for strategic policy options to address identified capability gaps.

Housing ACT continued its Heatwave Response for Seniors, providing welfare checks for vulnerable older public housing tenants during periods of extreme heat (3+ days over 35°C). The initiative is helping reduce the health impacts of extreme heat for older and at-risk residents.

In response to the increasing likelihood of severe and extreme heatwave events, the ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS) is reviewing the ACT Heatwave Sub-Plan to strengthen arrangements for

coordinated responses ahead of the 2026–27 high-risk weather season. ACTAS also worked with NSW Ambulance to deliver a coordinated approach to extreme heat events, including aligned public messaging, response triggers and operational practices to ensure consistency for communities across the region.

Enabling inclusive disaster resilience planning

Disaster resilience planning extends beyond education to actively engage government, communities, and the non-government sector in risk assessment, preparedness, response and recovery. This requires clear mechanisms for collaboration, including processes that embed lived experience and lessons learned into policy development, planning and decision making.

ESA trialled innovative approaches to move communities from awareness to action in disaster preparedness through the Ginninderry pilot community exercise and the 'Interrupted' exercise in Weston Creek. The Ginninderry exercise tested household survival plans in realistic scenarios, while the larger scale 'Interrupted' exercise involved residents in testing preparedness arrangements and providing feedback. These activities are informing future program design and strengthening shared ownership of resilience and preparedness outcomes.

Through the DRF Round Two 'Strengthening Social Recovery Partnerships and Community Engagement' project, the Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) Office for Disability partnered with the ACT State Emergency Service (ESA) and Chief Minister, Treasury, Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) to co-design an ACT Accessible Disaster Communications Toolkit. The toolkit provides practical guidance to support accessible, inclusive and actionable disaster communications, helping ensure emergency information can be understood and acted upon by all Canberrans.

Expanding preparedness campaigns

The ACT is expanding preparedness initiatives across community, business and non-government sectors to harness existing capacity and promote collective responsibility for disaster management.

Updates to the ACT's Community Disaster Resilience Hub improved its clarity, navigation and usability, making it easier for individuals, businesses and community organisations to access the information and resources for disaster resilience activities. Changes were made to simplify language, streamline content and clarify the roles of government and the community. Additional content was developed on disease outbreaks, biosecurity incidents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, business preparedness, and resources for parents and carers, and animal owners.

ESA continued to promote a shared responsibility approach to disaster management through targeted community preparedness campaigns and exercises. ESA partnered with the University of New South Wales to deliver immersive community engagement activities during the Enlighten Festival, encouraging community risk awareness and preparedness.

ACT Fire and Rescue (ACTF&R) delivered targeted, evidence-based public safety campaigns and a community awareness program designed to reduce fire risk, encourage behaviour change and strengthen community resilience. Campaigns included 'Smoke Alarm Action Day', which promotes routine testing and maintenance of smoke alarms, and a lithium-ion battery safety campaign, providing guidance on safe use, charging, storage and disposal of batteries.

City and Environment Directorate's (CED) Household Programs team delivered a DRF Round Two project to install thermally backed curtains in 315 low-income households by 30 June 2026. St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra and Goulburn was responsible for identifying participating

households and delivering the curtains. The project aims to increase the resilience of participating households to heatwaves and extreme heat or cold by improving thermal comfort, reducing energy use and costs and supporting health and wellbeing.

Embedding systemic consideration of disaster resilience

The ACT is embedding disaster resilience into policies, plans and programs through the development of tools, knowledge, networks and processes needed to support a systemic approach to risk management. This approach recognises the interconnected nature of systems and sectors, as well as the potential for risks and impacts to cascade across them.

Planning is underway for a second ACT Disaster Resilience Research Forum to be held in late 2026, bringing together disaster resilience practitioners, policymakers and researchers to identify opportunities to advance disaster resilience research and its practical application in the ACT. Building on the outcomes of the inaugural forum, the event will focus on systemic resilience challenges and priorities, supporting stronger evidence-based policy, planning and decision-making.

Several ACT Government agencies are embedding climate change and extreme heat considerations into resilience planning, risk management and investment decisions. The ACT Insurance Authority (ACTIA) partnered with the CED and the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water to strengthen climate risk capability and incorporate climate and disaster risk into its Risk in Leadership program. HCSD and social recovery partners reviewed the National Climate Risk Assessment to better understand risks to communities, essential services and recovery systems, while CHS integrated climate risk modelling into infrastructure planning. CMTEDD is working to integrate climate risks and Territory Wide All Hazard and Risk Register (TWAHRR) hazards into risk management and business continuity planning activities.

The Emergencies Act 2004 (ACT) is undergoing a review to ensure that emergency arrangements remain relevant, contemporary and fit for purpose in a changing environment. The Act establishes strategic and whole-of-government arrangements for emergency management in the ACT and describes the mechanisms to manage emergencies and their consequences. The review will help ensure that the legislation and frameworks that underpin emergency management in the ACT recognise the interconnected nature of emergencies and their consequences.

PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS

Several ACT Government agencies identified priority areas for focus in 2026 and 2027 that will further strengthen disaster resilience, preparedness and adaptation capabilities across the Territory. These priorities align with the key focus areas of the ACT Disaster Resilience Strategy Phase Two Implementation Plan and will be reported on through future Disaster Resilience Annual Statements.

Building social connection and inclusive disaster resilience planning

iCBR identified strengthening community engagement and increasing transparency around resilience outcomes as a key area for focus. Similarly, through implementation of the new ACT Government Risk Policy, the ACT Insurance Authority (ACTIA) identified opportunities to strengthen shared risk ownership and collaborative risk management across government, communities and stakeholders.

These priorities reflect a growing recognition of the critical role of community partnerships in building disaster resilience. While progress is being made, opportunities remain to further embed a whole-of-society approach across government. This includes ensuring that the knowledge, lived experience and needs of communities, businesses and not-for-profit organisations are systematically reflected in policies, plans and investment decisions. It also requires effective governance arrangements, engagement mechanisms and partnership models that enable meaningful participation in risk assessment, preparedness, response and recovery. Strengthening these mechanisms will support more inclusive, locally informed and equitable resilience outcomes across the Territory.

Expanding preparedness and ensuring information about disaster risk and resilience is accessible.

Preparedness remains a key area of focus across agencies, particularly through improving public awareness of risks and strengthening engagement with priority populations.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) Communications and Engagement will partner with the ESA to deliver a Territory-wide emergency preparedness awareness campaign from October 2026 to February 2027. The campaign will seek to improve community understanding of disaster risks and the actions individuals and households can take before, during and after emergencies.

ACT Fire and Rescue (ACTF&R) identified targeted preparedness initiatives for priority and vulnerable populations as a key area of future focus and will expand public safety campaigns through programs including:

- The Deaf Connect Program;
- The Seniors Home Fire Safety Program; and
- The Inclusive Fire Education Program for children with additional needs.

These initiatives support more inclusive preparedness outcomes by ensuring that information, resources and resilience-building activities are accessible to a broader range of community members.

There are opportunities to strengthen community preparedness by supporting a more community-led approach. This includes harnessing the capabilities of community leaders, local networks, not-for-profit organisations and community champions to support risk communication, preparedness activities and locally driven resilience initiatives. Strengthening these partnerships can improve the reach, relevance and effectiveness of resilience efforts across the Territory.

Embedding systemic consideration of disaster resilience

A strong theme across agencies was the need to further embed disaster resilience and climate adaptation considerations into governance, planning and operational decision-making.

Several agencies identified climate adaptation as a key area for future focus. ACTIA is strengthening risk-based decision-making and the integration of climate risks and Territory Wide All Hazard and Risk Register (TWAHRR) hazards into organisational planning. iCBR is embedding net zero and climate resilience considerations into capital works and strengthening cross-government adaptation efforts. CMTEDD is improving preparedness for climate-related risks affecting major events. The Suburban Land Agency (SLA) will continue to integrate climate adaptation and resilience measures into the planning and design of upcoming developments in Molonglo Town Centre, Kenny and Bandler. CHS is advancing climate adaptation planning across health facilities. Together, these initiatives demonstrate a growing focus on embedding climate resilience across government systems, infrastructure and operations.

There is an opportunity for ACT Government agencies to further embed a systemic approach to disaster risk and resilience. This includes strengthening understanding of the interdependencies that exist across systems, sectors and organisational boundaries, and how risks can cascade and compound across them. It also requires consideration of how institutional assumptions, values and perspectives influence the identification, prioritisation and management of risk. Recognising these factors can support more inclusive and forward-looking decision-making, while strengthening the ACT Government's ability to anticipate and respond to interconnected and cascading risks.

APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF ACT GOVERNMENT DISASTER RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

This Appendix provides a snapshot of ACT Government initiatives delivered in line with the Strategy's twelve strategic priorities. It focuses on initiatives that have commenced, been revised or delivered new outputs since July 2025.

Initiatives that are core business or have not delivered a community outcome in the 2025-26 reporting period are not documented in this report but will be provided in a future report once deliverables have been completed.

While many initiatives align to multiple strategic priorities, they are generally listed under the strategic priority most strongly aligned to.

Strategic Priority 1.1	**Strengthen partnerships between governments, industry, and non-government organisations**

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) led a program of exercises to test and strengthen emergency management arrangements across government. This included **MJEX26**, a structured series of counter-terrorism exercises comprising tactical, operational and strategic discussion activities designed to validate improvements arising from lessons identified during the 2025 counter-terrorism field exercise.

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) conducted a **Major Event Risk workshop,** focused on community safety with Events ACT, Venues Canberra, National Arboretum Canberra, CMTEDD People Safety, CMTEDD Security, ACT Insurance Agency (ACTIA), JACS and Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) (the Multicultural Festival). The workshop shared insights on emerging threats and lessons learned, strengthening coordinated risk management and preparedness for major events.

The **ACT Health Emergency Management Committee** and the **ACT Health Emergency Community of Practice (HECoP)** were established in 2025 to strengthen health emergency preparedness and response. HECoP brings together more than 34 organisations to support collaboration, information sharing and coordinated action. Together these forums improve strategic coordination, enhance practitioner capability and expand professional networks.

ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) working with JACS and other stakeholders formed the **Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) 2025 Relief and Recovery Working Group** to integrate AIIMS 2025 relief and recovery concepts into ACT incident management by defining responsibilities, developing supporting resources, and improving the transition from response to recovery. The group is assisting ESA to update training, qualifications,

operational processes and recovery arrangements so that ESA can operate consistently with contemporary Australian and New Zealand Emergency management standards.

JACS partnered with the NSW Reconstruction Authority to establish the Cross Border Working Group to identify and address barriers to effective cross-border recovery. The group has developed a workplan to support implementation of the ACT-NSW Cross-Border Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with work ongoing.

Partnerships between ESA and NSW Ambulance **enhanced cross-border interoperability and emergency response capability**. ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS) worked with NSW Ambulance to deliver a coordinated approach to extreme heat events, including aligned public messaging, response triggers and operational practices to ensure consistency for communities across the region. **Aeromedical partnerships with NSW** were also strengthened through biannual courses and multi-agency mass casualty simulation exercises that support consistent training, shared procedures, and coordinated response capability across jurisdictions.

Infrastructure Canberra (iCBR) launched its **Industry Engagement Plan**, bringing together government and industry to support infrastructure delivery for a growing Canberra. **Five Industry Engagement Roundtables** engaged 196 participants from 58 organisations across the construction, finance and housing sectors to address issues including ACT's social and affordable housing agenda, productivity, design quality and workforce culture.

iCBR also implemented the **Culture Standard for the Construction Industry (Culture Standard),** encouraging suppliers and contractors on government-funded infrastructure projects to improve wellbeing, time for life, and inclusion and diversity across the sector. iCBR also introduced **Infrastructure Design Requirements (IDR),** which embed resilience, sustainability and environmental considerations into Territory infrastructure projects, promoting greater consistency and alignment between government and industry. A formal review commenced in March 2026 to support the framework's ongoing improvement.

At Molonglo Town Centre and Kenny, **the Green Star Communities certification tool** helped build partnerships across government, industry and the community to deliver resilient, sustainable and future-ready communities. The framework is supporting a coordinated approach to climate resilience, community wellbeing and the management of risks such as extreme weather and urban heat.

The ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) strengthened national and international collaboration through the **Earth Fire Alliance,** a network supported by philanthropic and technology partners, supporting the adoption of **low Earth orbit satellite technology** to enhance early fire detection capability.

Strategic Priority 1.2 Build community connection

The Suburban Land Agency (SLA) supported community connection through its **Mingle Community Development Program,** which empowers residents to lead local activities, events and community

projects across developing suburbs through funding and in-kind support. The **Mingle Community Support Fund** helped residents deliver community events, workshops and shared-space projects, including local celebrations, neighbourhood open days, Floriade activities, the Whitlam Community Gardens and a community clean-up group.

The **Place Curation Program,** delivered at the SLA Display Village in Whitlam, created opportunities for community connection through a range of cultural, community and small business events and initiatives. As part of this program, SLA partnered with local providers to deliver sustainability-focused workshops, including **Growing a Resilient Garden, Growing Food Through the Seasons, and Building a Sustainable Home,** helping residents build practical knowledge and skills that support community resilience.

ESA led a Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Round One **partnership with the Belconnen Men's Shed** to develop an interactive "Flood Table" education tool, supporting community understanding of flood risks and preparedness through accessible, flexible and community-based engagement which can be adapted across a wide range of community settings. **SES volunteers also continued to deliver community education** activities to raise awareness of storm and flood preparedness.

Arts ACT strengthened connections across the arts sector through **consultation activities**, including surveys, interviews and roundtables for the **Creative Spaces Mapping project and the Arts, Culture and Creative Policy review,** while continuing programs that support artists, creative practice and ACT Government-owned arts facilities. These activities contribute to community wellbeing and social connection.

The National Arboretum Canberra and Stromlo Forest Park supported **volunteer programs that increased community participation** while contributing to landscape resilience through trail building, mulching, plant care and pruning activities. Across Canberra, the City Services Urban Parks and Volunteer Program supported 123 volunteer groups in 2025–26, continuing strong growth in community-led environmental stewardship. Through these activities, volunteers played an important role in strengthening environmental resilience and community connections.

The ACT Natural Resource Management **First Nations Conservation Training Program (2024-28)** is supporting First Nations workforce development and environmental stewardship. Through the program, **four** Ngunnawal community members are gaining hands-on land management experience while undertaking land management activities at the North Wright Sustainable Precinct Display Homes.

Canberra Health Services (CHS) progressed **a formal partnership agreement with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Leadership Group** to strengthen shared decision-making and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, patients and families.

iCBR strengthened partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through its inaugural **Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-26** and the **embedding of Yindyamarra**, a community-led values and decision-making framework of the Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal Nations, into organisational practices. This included delivery of the CIT Yurauna building, which was co-designed with the Ngunnawal community to create a culturally safe and welcoming learning environment connected to Country.

JACS strengthened community connections through culturally informed programs and partnerships. A key initiative was **the Yurwan Ghuda On Country program**, which supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to strengthen connections to culture, Country and community. **Partnerships with Aboriginal-owned organisations, cultural practitioners and schools** further supported culturally safe, community-led engagement and aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement.

ESA also deepened its partnership with the Ngunnawal community, recognising the importance of Aboriginal knowledge, cultural practices and self-determination in land and emergency management. This included **introducing a Notifiable Instrument removing permit requirements for cultural burning practices.**

ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) piloted a **Work Release Program** to support rehabilitation and community participation, with detainees undertaking supervised work alongside Park Rangers. Positive outcomes for participants and the community have supported the program's continuation while future expansion options are explored.

The Education Directorate's (EDU) Schools Facilities Management Branch is strengthening the **ACT Government's Inclusive Works** program to improve accessibility and inclusivity in public schools, drawing on best practice from New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand to inform future infrastructure planning and delivery.

Strategic Priority 1.3 Everyone understands their role in disaster management

The ACTAS finalised and secured approval of the **updated ACT Mass Casualty Incident Sub-Plan**, establishing clear strategic arrangements and defined roles and responsibilities for managing mass casualty incidents. ACTAS is also **reviewing the ACT Heatwave Sub-Plan** to reinforce coordinated arrangements for responding to severe and extreme heat events ahead of the 2026-27 high-risk weather season.

HCSD's Population Health Division strengthened incident management capability through training, exercises and implementation of **a public health incident management framework** to guide responses to public health emergencies. HCSD also continued working with Capital Health Network and the Primary Care Emergency Response Committee **to strengthen preparedness and response across the primary and community care sector**.

CHS strengthened its disaster mental health capability through enhancements to the **Disaster Wellbeing Officer Surge Workforce Model.** Key achievements included establishment and induction of a tiered surge workforce, completion of a workforce mobilisation plan, testing of activation arrangements, and development of operational readiness procedures. CHS also delivered **psychosocial preparedness training on moral injury and psychosocial risk** to 181 participants across CHS, ACT Emergency Services Agency, primary care and community sector organisations.

EDU progressed implementation of its **Incident and Emergency Management Framework,** including development of guidance materials, templates, standardised communications tools for schools, and updates to policies and procedures. The Directorate is also **developing a Common Operating Picture (COP)** following the emergency response to the contaminated sand event. The COP will support shared situational awareness and coordinated decision-making during incidents and emergencies.

Strategic Priority 2.1 Ensure information about disaster risk and resilience is accessible

The **ACT Community Disaster Resilience Hub** provides a central source of information for individuals, businesses and community organisations to access resources that help them understand hazards, reduce disaster impacts and navigate disaster recovery after disasters. In late 2025, user testing identified opportunities to improve clarity, navigation and usability. Changes were made to simplify language, streamline content and clarify the roles of government and the community. Additional content was developed on **disease outbreaks, biosecurity incidents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, business preparedness, and resources for parents and carers, and animal owners.**

HCSD's Office for Disability partnered with ESA and CMTEDD to co-design **an ACT Accessible Disaster Communications Toolkit.** The toolkit provides practical guidance to support accessible, inclusive and actionable disaster communications for all Canberrans.

ESA also improved access to preparedness information through targeted, community-based engagement. This included developing **Easy English, Easy Read** and **translated resources**, including survival plans, emergency kit guides and preparedness materials, to better reach diverse communities.

Through its Mingle Community Development Program, the SLA improved access to disaster preparedness information through **'Welcome Bags' for new residents** and publicly available resources at the Whitlam Community Space, including **Emergency Ready materials in multiple languages such as Hindi and Arabic.**

ESA continued to strengthen the accessibility, timeliness and consistency of emergency information through enhancements to the **Single Point of Truth (SPOT) platform**. These enhancements support the rapid delivery of accurate and consistent emergency warnings across multiple communication channels, enabling informed decision-making and timely action during emergencies.

ACTIA updated its **catastrophic loss modelling** for flood, bushfire, storm and earthquake risks to ensure insurance coverage remains appropriate for Territory assets. The modelling informed reinsurance negotiations in 2026, helping optimise coverage and strengthen the Territory's financial resilience.

Roads ACT worked with other areas of the City and Environment Directorate (CED) and the Emergency Services Agency (ESA) to improve the **clarity and efficiency of information sharing**

during bushfire events. This included exploring the proposed 'Fire Mapper' tool, designed to give City Services real-time access to critical information and enhance coordination and decision-making during emergency response activities.

Strategic Priority 2.2	Enable all stakeholders to contribute to disaster resilience planning

JACS developed **Exercise Management Guidelines and a supporting Toolkit** to establish a common approach to the planning, delivery and evaluation of exercises, strengthening stakeholders' understanding of emergency management roles, responsibilities and response arrangements and supporting greater participation, coordination and interoperability across agencies.

ACTIA, iCBR and CED collaborated to strengthen the **integration of climate and disaster resilience across ACT Government projects**. A whole-of-government project risk assessment template was developed to embed climate and disaster risk considerations, including heat, bushfire and flooding, into project planning and decision-making.

In March 2026, ACT No Waste supported the Capital Region Joint Organisation's development of a **Regional Disaster Waste Management Plan** by sharing lessons from past disaster events, business continuity planning information, waste infrastructure data, and ACT-specific GIS mapping resources. This collaboration helped inform regional planning for disaster waste management and cross-border coordination.

In October 2025, Domestic Animal Services participated in a social recovery exercise, standing up **an Evacuation Centre** and **providing a purpose-built trailer**, designed to be deployed to manage animals at these centres.

Strategic Priority 2.3	Encourage individual and community preparedness

ESA trialled innovative approaches to move communities from awareness to action in disaster preparedness through the **Ginninderry pilot community exercise** and the **Interrupted exercise** in Weston Creek. The Ginninderry exercise tested household survival plans in realistic scenarios, while the larger-scale Interrupted exercise involved residents in testing preparedness arrangements and providing feedback. These activities are informing future program design and strengthening shared ownership of resilience and preparedness outcomes.

ACT Fire and Rescue (ACTF&R) delivered targeted, evidence-based public safety campaigns and a community awareness program designed to reduce fire risk, encourage behaviour change and strengthen community resilience. Campaigns included **Smoke Alarm Action Day,** which promotes routine testing and maintenance of smoke alarms, and **a lithium-ion battery safety campaign**, providing guidance on safe use, charging, storage and disposal of batteries.

ESA continued to promote a shared responsibility approach to disaster management through targeted community preparedness campaigns. ESA partnered with UNSW to deliver **immersive community engagement activities** during the Enlighten Festival encouraging community risk awareness and preparedness.

Through the 'Mingle' program, SLA partnered with Community Services #1 and ESA to deliver **Be Emergency Ready** workshops in Whitlam and Taylor, providing practical emergency preparedness information, including household survival planning. The program was supported by in-session translation and Mingle also facilitated First Aid workshops delivered by St John Ambulance ACT.

CED funded the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) to **develop a sector wide climate adaptation plan** to provide strategic direction for the sector's climate and disaster preparedness. The HCSD Social Recovery Sub-Committee **funded 10 community partners to enhance social recovery planning and preparedness**, supporting communities before, during and after emergencies.

HCSD and social recovery partners strengthened preparedness and recovery capability by **mapping community sector services and volunteer capacity.**

CED's Household Programs team delivered a DRF Round Two project **to install thermally backed curtains in 315 low-income households** by 30 June 2026. St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra and Goulburn was responsible for identifying participating households and delivering the curtains. The project aims to increase the resilience of participating households to heatwaves and extreme heat or cold by improving thermal comfort, reducing energy use and costs and supporting health and wellbeing.

EDU strengthened partnerships with HCSD and non-government organisations to **support evacuation centre arrangements** and **delivery of educational and wellbeing support programs** for children, young people and families affected by emergencies.

ESA strengthened emergency communications capability by supporting the rollout of **AusAlert,** the new national emergency alert system. Using cell broadcast technology, AusAlert enables rapid, targeted warnings to mobile devices in affected areas, even where there is network congestion. The ACT hosted the first national community-based trial in June 2026, ahead of nationwide adoption, with **accessible online resources to support vulnerable and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.**

Strategic Priority 3.1 Prioritise the preservation of the things that are important to us

Two DRF projects **improved the resilience of visitor infrastructure in Canberra's nature reserves.** Key works included reconstructing and resurfacing 1.5 km of Old Well Station Road through Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve, upgrading stormwater infrastructure along Sullivan's Creek

tributaries to improve flood resilience, and enhancing trail and drainage infrastructure in high-use reserves such as Red Hill and Woodstock Nature Reserves.

Environment Protection Authority (EPA) **strengthened industry capability to implement erosion and sediment controls** that perform under more extreme weather conditions, helping reduce sediment runoff, protect waterways and minimise pollution risks associated with intensified storm events.

CED's Environment, Heritage and Parks (EHP) also opened the **10 km Mindjagari Track at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve**, a dual-purpose walking track and fire access trail that improves access for hazard reduction and bushfire-response activities, helping protect significant ecological and cultural values while providing a new recreational asset for the community.

A further DRF project is helping **protect and preserve Ngunnawal cultural sites, artefacts and other cultural heritage values at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve from the impacts of fire.** The project developed guidelines and response plans, under guidance of Traditional Custodians, to support emergency personnel in protecting cultural heritage during fire events.

The Molonglo Conservation Group partnership with the SLA delivered **four conservation initiatives for the Whitlam community**. This included 'Scats and Tracks' and 'Namarag Bushtucker and Planting Day' (October), 'Frog Friendly Gardens' (February), 'Waterbugs of the Molonglo' (April).

A major upgrade of the ACT Government's heritage-listed **Gorman Arts Centre** is underway to conserve its heritage features. The upgrade will enhance the site's safety, accessibility and sustainability through improvements to fire protection and communications systems as well as electrification of the site's infrastructure.

iCBR continued delivering its **Asset Renewal Program** across more than 240 government and community assets, addressing safety, compliance and maintenance issues to improve infrastructure resilience and reduce disruption risks.

CHS continued to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure through its **Asset Replacement Program** and long-term asset renewal strategies. Key initiatives included expanding backup power generation, upgrading critical electrical and medical gas infrastructure, improving fire safety systems, enhancing water security through greater supply redundancy, and expanding remote monitoring capabilities to improve reliability, maintenance and operational continuity. These investments help reduce the risk of asset failure and support the continuity of essential health services during disruptions.

The **Electrification of Government Gas Assets (EoGGA) Program** continues to replace gas assets with electric solutions and coordination of associated electricity network upgrades in ACT Government owned and operated facilities. Key achievements during 2025-26 include:

- Preliminary site investigation reports prepared for five ACT Government owned sites, enabling the scope of electrification works to be further refined;
- Detailed designs expected for four ACT Government owned sites, providing specifications and a comprehensive plan to inform future construction;

- Projected removal of 28 assets powered with natural gas by the end of FY2025-26, replaced with electric solutions; and
- The electrification of Albert Hall, expected to be complete in FY2026-27.

iCBR, in partnership with CIT and Lendlease, delivered the **all-electric CIT Woden Campus** in July 2025, designed to a 6-star standard. The project received the 2025 Bluebell Sustainable Business Award for Energy Transition, recognising its replacement of gas-based systems with energy-efficient electric alternatives.

The new **Woden Transport Interchange** opened in April 2026, connecting CIT Woden and improving connectivity, accessibility and supporting a more resilient and sustainable transport network.

Construction of the Molonglo River Bridge is underway with completion expected in late 2026. Above the one-in-100-year flood level, the bridge will improve connectivity across the Molonglo Valley and strengthen transport resilience to extreme weather. The project also includes environmental initiatives, such as active travel links, habitat restoration and sustainability measures to minimise environmental impacts.

Strategic Priority 3.2 Maintain a continued focus on resilience efforts

The Emergencies Act 2004 (ACT) is being reviewed to ensure ACT emergency management arrangements remain contemporary and fit for purpose. The review will help ensure the legislation and supporting frameworks reflect the interconnected and cascading nature of emergencies and their consequences.

Housing policy reforms were introduced to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the ACT. Key initiatives included the passage of the *Human Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill 2025*, which enshrines the right to adequate housing in the ACT Human Rights Act; the *Planning (Territory Priority Project) Amendment Bill 2025*, which exempts eligible community and public housing developments from third-party appeal rights; and the establishment of a framework to support reduced Lease Variation Charges for eligible social and affordable housing projects.

CED's Infrastructure Planning and Assessment team is delivering a **10-year rolling program of flood studies** across major urban catchments to ensure flood risk assessments remain current and reflect the impacts of climate change.

CED's Environment, Heritage and Parks team is delivering a DRF Round Two project to develop a **disaster-resilient investment framework for ACT reserve assets**. Informed by lessons from past local disasters and supported by scenario-based cost-benefit analysis, the framework will help the ACT Government to identify priority resilience investments in grey and blue-green infrastructure, support future business cases, and strengthen understanding of the opportunities and costs in disaster-resilient and climate-ready action.

Across the health sector, investments were made in building evidence and intelligence for future risks. HCSD and social recovery partners **reviewed the National Climate Risk Assessment** to better understand the long-term impacts of climate change on communities, essential services and social

recovery systems. The review highlighted increasing pressures associated with housing stress, food insecurity, mental health challenges and service delivery disruptions, building evidence for a shift towards more proactive resilience planning.

Building on its longstanding disaster resilience focus, SLA is **incorporating climate adaptation and resilience** into new developments to help future-proof communities.

HCSD's Population Health Division continued **preparedness and surveillance activities for emerging public health hazards,** including Hantavirus, avian influenza, Ebola and diphtheria.

CHS strengthened the **evidence base for disaster mental health planning** through a review of mental health and wellbeing datasets, identifying opportunities to improve data integration, governance and system-wide monitoring. This work will support more consistent, coordinated and evidence-informed planning across agencies. A cross-agency working group will be established to carry this work forward.

CHS strengthened resilience of critical services through a **diesel fuel security program**, including off-site storage arrangements and assessment of additional fuel capacity to reduce supply chain risks.

ESA is investing in future operational capability of frontline response agencies through **Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB),** working with stakeholders to confirm PSMB capability requirements and endorse a preferred operating model with the project expected to begin in the next 12 months.

ESA strengthened intelligence and decision-making capabilities through **investments in geospatial, intelligence and remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) capabilities** enabling more accurate, timely, and actionable insights across emergency management functions. ESA also progressed the transition of its **Mapping and Planning Support (MAPS) Strategy into a sustainable intelligence capability** and harnessed the growing expertise of its volunteer cohort by embedding their contributions.

Strategic Priority 3.3 Embrace new ways of doing things

ESA is leading a DRF Round Three initiative to establish a **Flash Flood Warning System** that combines flood data, weather observations and advanced modelling to provide timely, location-specific, actionable warnings. The system will strengthen early warning capability, enable more targeted public alerts and support emergency decision-making and improve community preparedness for flash flood events.

Roads ACT is delivering **innovative road safety and flood resilience measures**, including automated gates at low-level crossings that provide rapid, technology-enabled road closures during flood events.

CED's Environment, Heritage and Parks (EHP) team is leading a DRF Round One initiative to improve **the resilience of the Lower Cotter Catchment and protect drinking water quality** by addressing erosion and strengthening catchment health. Innovative creekbank erosion control will

improve water quality while native revegetation and targeted erosion remediation will help reduce the long-term impacts of bushfires and floods on water quality and catchment resilience.

Through the **Whitlam Water Quality Project**, the SLA is testing innovative erosion and sediment control measures suited to the area's steep, complex terrain. A green wall has been installed to reduce erosion, improve air quality, soften road noise and capture stormwater, preventing sediment from entering nearby roads and waterways. These innovations will also inform scalable best-practice solutions for future developments.

iCBR is delivering the ACT Government's first **geothermal heating and cooling system at Weetangera Primary School.** Geothermal bore holes, pipework and all-electric ground source heat pumps have been installed, and the project is expected to be completed in the second half of 2026. Once operational, the system is expected to reduce energy consumption, operating costs and greenhouse gas emissions while ensuring more stable indoor temperatures and comfortable learning environments. The initiative will also inform planning for sustainable energy solutions across ACT Government facilities.

CHS is strengthening infrastructure resilience through **smart building technologies, modernised Building Management Systems and data-driven maintenance practices** that improve reliability and support early identification of potential system failures. CHS is also enhancing energy resilience through **renewable energy initiatives**, including solar PV, battery storage and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, while incorporating climate risk modelling and adaptation into infrastructure planning and investment decisions.

The ACTAS is exploring the **use of community responders to provide early CPR and defibrillation** before paramedics arrive. Trained volunteers are alerted to nearby cardiac arrests via a mobile application linked to ESA Communications Centre. Evidence shows that such early interventions can improve survival rates, strengthening community capability.

ACT Courts and Tribunals (ACTCT) introduced **remote service delivery capabilities**, including virtual hearings, hybrid participation models and expanded digital services. These innovations improve access to justice during disruptions, reduce barriers to participation and strengthen the resilience of court and tribunal operations.

Strategic Priority 4.1 Targeted support is available to priority populations

JACS developed **Priority Population Factsheets** to support emergency management planners to consider the needs of priority populations when developing and reviewing plans and sub-plans. The factsheets help ensure planning arrangements promote equitable access to safety, communication, support services and healthcare during emergencies, strengthening inclusive and people-centred disaster preparedness and response.

JACS also delivered **culturally safe, trauma-informed and inclusive programs** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; embedded inclusive practices for people with a disability and complex needs; supported healing and recovery through On Country and community-based programs; and strengthened service access for justice-involved and other vulnerable cohorts.

The **Social Recovery Sub-Committee** commenced development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outreach and engagement plan in partnership with ACT Aboriginal community organisations to strengthen disaster preparedness, response and recovery through stronger community engagement and support networks.

HCSD partnered with the Australian Red Cross and community stakeholders to co-design a **Community Phone Support and Outreach Service** to support a broad range of community members, with a focus on priority populations. The service will provide daily phone check-ins, information and referrals to support services during emergencies and recovery.

Housing ACT continued its **Heatwave Response for Seniors**, providing welfare checks for vulnerable older public housing tenants during periods of extreme heat (3+ days over 35°C). The initiative helps reduce the health impacts of heatwaves for older and at-risk residents.
Urban Treescapes prioritised **street tree planting in low-canopy residential areas**, focusing on priority populations most vulnerable to extreme heat, as identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

CHS strengthened community disaster mental health capability by delivering **Psychological First Aid training** to 310 participants across community services, schools, faith-based organisations, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and government agencies. Standardised resources improved the consistency and accessibility of PFA training, and on the whole, the initiative enhanced the capacity of trusted community networks to provide timely and culturally appropriate psychosocial support following emergencies.

Strategic Priority 4.2 Recovery efforts have a long-term focus

The **ACT Social Recovery Framework** provided strategic guidance for ACT Government and community partners in planning for long-term recovery. The Framework supports social recovery service mapping, strengthening preparedness and helping ensure recovery arrangements can meet community needs following an emergency or disaster.

HCSD represented the ACT Government on the **Social Recovery Reference Group (SRRG)** supporting knowledge sharing and collaboration with other jurisdictions on long-term recovery challenges. During 2025-26, discussions focused on temporary and transitional housing approaches.

To strengthen recovery coordination, the HCSD Social Recovery Sub-Committee progressed development of an **ACT Government recovery-focused interoperability plan** to support coordinated recovery planning and delivery across agencies and partners.

The ACT Government's ongoing partnership with the University of Canberra to deliver the ***Living Well in the ACT Region*** survey is continuing to provide valuable wellbeing and resilience data on community resilience to climate hazards, including heatwave, flood and bushfire resilience and resilience of the natural environment. In 2025-26, **a new Annual Climate Change Resilience index** was developed strengthening the survey's ability to track resilience over time. Together, these insights support disaster preparedness, response and recovery by monitoring resilience trends

across demographic groups and improving understanding of the long-term impacts of disaster events.

ACT F&R continued to support individuals and families affected by fire through the **provision of post-incident information, practical recovery guidance and referrals to available support services**. This helps affected community members navigate recovery and access appropriate psychosocial assistance following incidents.

Strategic Priority 4.3 We place personal experience at the centre of our learning

ACT Government agencies continued to strengthen resilience by systematically capturing lessons from incidents, exercises and operational experience and incorporating those insights into future planning, capability development and decision-making.

The activation of the **Emergency Coordination Centre** during the January storms strengthened intelligence gathering and rapid damage assessment processes. Lessons from previous events informed improvements to situational awareness, helping support timely response actions.

EDU expanded and formalised its use of **After Action Reviews (AARs)** to identify lessons from incidents, exercises and emergency responses and embed improvements into future planning and operations. CHS similarly used AARs and operational debriefs to capture lessons from infrastructure failures and emergency events, informing infrastructure planning, asset upgrades and resilience measures.

The ACTAS contributed to continuous learning **by sharing lessons from major incidents** through national and cross-jurisdictional ambulance and aeromedical forums. This enabled operational experiences and recovery insights to inform future emergency management planning and preparedness across jurisdictions.

ESA embedded mentorship and experiential learning within incident management arrangements, ensuring operational knowledge is transferred across its workforce. **Mentoring opportunities enabled** experienced personnel to support emerging leaders while exercises such as **Exercise Sudden Storm** provided opportunities for practical learning and knowledge transfer.

ACTIA's **monthly risk training program** incorporated lessons from disaster events and participant experiences, providing opportunities to share personal insights and reflect on real-world risk management challenges and helping to build organisational knowledge, strengthen preparedness and support more informed risk management decisions.

ACTCS is developing a **Resilience Maturity Model** to support continuous improvement and organisational preparedness. The self-assessment tool will help senior leaders assess organisational resilience and identify opportunities for improvement.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
ACTAS	ACT Ambulance Service
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service
ACTCS	ACT Corrective Services
ACTCT	ACT Courts and Tribunals
ACTF&R	ACT Fire and Rescue
ACTIA	ACT Insurance Agency
ACT RFS	ACT Rural Fire Service
AIIMS	Australian Inter-Service Incident Management System
CED	City and Environment Directorate, ACT Government
CHS	Canberra Health Services
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, ACT Government
DRF	Disaster Ready Fund is the Australian Government's flagship disaster resilience and risk reduction initiative, which delivers projects that support Australians to manage the physical and social impacts of disasters caused by climate change and other natural hazards.
Disaster resilience	The ability to anticipate and resist the effects of a disruptive event, minimise adverse impacts, respond safely and effectively, maintain or recover functionality, and adapt in a way that allows for learning and thriving (ACT Disaster Resilience Strategy).
EDU	Education Directorate

EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
ESA	ACT Emergency Services Agency
HCSD	Health and Community Services Directorate
iCBR	Infrastructure Canberra, ACT Government
TWAHRR	Territory Wide All Hazards and Risk Register
SLA	Suburban Land Agency
SEMSOG	Security and Emergency Management Senior Officials Group

ACT Government