



**ACT**  
Government

# Ministerial Advisory Council on Women

## 2021-22

End of term report

# MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN

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### Ministerial Advisory Council on Women

The Ministerial Advisory Council on Women (the Council) provides strategic advice to the ACT Government on issues affecting women in the ACT. It also provides a link between the Minister for Women and women in the ACT community.

The Council brings together women with a diversity of experience and expertise to assist the ACT Government to develop and implement policies that are relevant to women in the ACT. It represents a wide range of women's views and is a valuable link between ACT women and the ACT Government.

The work of the Council reflects the objectives of the [ACT Women's Plan 2016-26](#). The 2021-22 Council supported the implementation of the *Second Action Plan 2020-22* under the *ACT Women's Plan* and consultation on and development of the Third Action Plan.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many issues affecting women and girls in the ACT increased in complexity and breadth of impact. Many members of the Council were employed in client facing, advocacy and policy roles during the 2021-22 term and provided vital support to Canberrans during different stages of the pandemic, including providing essential support during periods of lockdown.

This report acknowledges the significant advocacy role the Council played throughout the pandemic and the increased external demands members experienced during the 2021-22 term.

### Meetings

Council meetings occurred bi-monthly throughout the 2021-22 term. Meetings were guided by priorities of the Minister for Women and *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.

The Minister for Women had a standing invitation to Council meetings and attended meetings periodically to update members on ACT Government priorities to support gender equity. Other guest speakers from across ACT Government were also invited to attend Council meetings to seek input on policies and initiatives impacting gender equity in the ACT.

On 22 May 2021, Council members participated in a planning session to map priorities over the term.

Regular meetings during the Council's 2021-22 term occurred on:

- 11 March 2021
- 29 April 2021
- 17 June 2021
- 7 October 2021
- 2 December 2021
- 10 February 2022
- 7 April 2022
- 16 June 2022
- 18 August 2022
- 11 November 2022
- 8 December 2022

## Members

Membership of the Council seeks to be representative of the diversity of women in the ACT community. Members include representatives from diverse women's organisations and peak bodies and people with less formal or no affiliations with women's organisations.

Members of 2021-22 Council included:

- Elizabeth Cowan, former Chair (resigned)
- Skye Saunders, Chair and former Deputy Chair
- Tina Dixson, former Deputy Chair
- Sarah Ambrose
- Radhika Chaudhri
- Karen Demmery
- Jemma Irving
- Sian Keys
- Sara Paniker
- Ajar Sana
- Tulika Saxena
- Chrystina Stanford
- Zsuzsoka Kecskes (resigned)
- Gulnara Abbasova (resigned)

## Consultation and advocacy

The 2021-22 Council played a leading role in advocating for women and girls in the ACT. Through its ongoing engagement with government, the Council provided advice to promote enhanced consideration of gender in policy and program development.

The Council's Chair was a member of the Joint Advisory Chairs Council (JACC), which facilitates information sharing and collaboration between Ministerial Advisory Councils.

### ACT Women's Plan 2016-26

During the 2021-22 term, the Council played a key role in progressing commitments under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*. The *ACT Women's Plan* is the ACT Government's commitment to achieving gender equality in the ACT, and guided priorities for the Council during the 2021-22 term.

The Council was engaged in the implementation of actions under the *Second Action Plan 2020-22* of the *ACT Women's Plan* as well as supporting consultation on and development of the Third Action Plan.

### Second Action Plan 2020-22

The Council had an ongoing role in the implementation of actions in the *Second Action Plan*. The following table provides a summary of the Council's role against key actions.

Action	Council's role
2.8 Develop and promote a series of e-learning modules on workplace rights, unconscious bias in recruitment, flexible working for women and men, gender impact analysis and Gender Equity Strategies	The Council tested, reviewed and provided feedback on the e-learning module content throughout development.

3.5 Develop and implement gender sensitive design principles to assist with design and development of public urban spaces and infrastructure and transport infrastructure, including wayfinding	Provided advice to support public consultation on the development of gender sensitive urban design principles.
5.2 Develop education materials for ACT Government teams on gender analysis and gender responsive budgeting processes	Provided ongoing advice on the ACT Government's iterative approach to embedding gender responsive budgeting.

### Third Action Plan

The Third Action Plan under the *ACT Women's Plan* will build on progress made under the first and second action plans.

In June 2022, the Council held a planning session to inform advice to the ACT Government on priority areas in the Third Action Plan. During this consultation, the Council identified that objectives in the *Second Action Plan* remain relevant and are, in many instances, more relevant as a result of COVID-19. The Council recommended leveraging existing work to support gender equity through a renewed focus on the following priority areas in the Third Action Plan:

- Health and wellbeing
- Safety and inclusion
- Housing and homelessness
- Leadership and workforce participation
- Accessible and appropriate services

The Council has further supported the Third Action Plan by promoting public consultation with key community organisations and committing to support consultation activities with Canberrans.

### Other government consultations

Throughout its term, the Council regularly engaged with ACT Government directorates and agencies to provide feedback to inform the development of new and existing initiatives. These consultations are summarised in the table below.

ACT Government Directorate/Agency	Consultation	Date
Office for Women, Community Services Directorate	Gender responsive budgeting and Women's Budget Statement	April 2021 June 2021
Major Projects Canberra	Women's safety in public	June 2021
Strategic Policy, Community Services Directorate	Commissioning for outcomes	December 2021
Legislation, Policy and Programs, Justice and Community Safety Directorate	Discrimination Law Reform	December 2021
Libraries ACT	Libraries ACT to 2030	April 2022
Office for Women, Community Services Directorate	ACT Women's Awards	April 2022

## COVID-19 advocacy

In 2021, the Council wrote to the Minister for Women to advocate for further consideration of the impacts of COVID-19 related visitor restrictions in hospitals on women experiencing vulnerability, including some single mothers.

## Submission

In early 2022, the Commonwealth Government opened a public feedback process on the draft *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children*. The Council provided a submission as part of this process to provide feedback on the draft plan.

## Other activities

In 2021 and 2022, the Council played an important role supporting and promoting ACT Government programs and services that aim to support the full participation of women and girls in the ACT.

## Grants

Members of the Council regularly participated on assessment panels for Community Services Directorate grant programs that aim to support the full participation of women and girls in the ACT, including:

- The Women's Safety Grants
- The Women's Participation Grants
- The Audrey Fagan Enrichment Grants

Members provided valuable contributions to grant assessment processes through their broad understanding of the issues impacting women and girls in the ACT.

Members also provided feedback on how grant programs delivered by the Community Services Directorate could be streamlined to be made more accessible for applicants.

## ACT Women's Awards

In April 2022, the Council consulted with the Office for Women to provide feedback on delivery of the ACT Women's Awards and Honour Roll.

The ACT Women's Awards are presented to women, non-binary and gender diverse people who improve the status and lives of women and girls in the ACT. Each year, the awards recognise a woman of the year, a young woman of the year and a senior woman of the year.

The Women's Honour Roll showcases the achievements of women, non-binary and gender diverse people in the ACT and those who are excelling in their field. Their work may be in the ACT or more broadly across Australia or the world.

The Council's feedback resulted in changes to the delivery of the Women's Awards and Honour Roll, including:

- Refinement of the assessment criteria, including enhancing the focus on achievements that aim to improve gender equity and updating the focus from number of people impacted to depth of overall impact.
- Updates to the guidelines to clarify the circumstances in which a person can be nominated for achievements relating to their paid employment.

- Extending the nomination period to increase total number of nominations.
- Updating promotion of nominations to improve accessibility and inclusive language.

Representatives of the Council also participated on the assessment panels for the 2022 and 2023 ACT Women's Awards to identify suitable winners, finalists and Honour Roll inductees.

### Audrey Fagan Board Traineeship program

In 2021 and 2022, the Council participated in the Audrey Fagan Board Traineeship Program. As a participating council, members provided mentorship and guidance to program participants seeking to start their board careers and invited participants to attend Council meetings as observers.

### Women's Safety Audit

Representatives of the Council attended Summernats 2022 to conduct a Women's Safety Audit.

## Reflections

At the conclusion of the 2021-22 term, members made the following reflections on their experiences during their time on the Council.

- *I am thankful for the experience of being a member of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women.*
- *I have been grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the work happening in the ACT to improve gender equity, including work to support more women to enter the construction industry.*
- *I have appreciated the opportunity to work closely with members who have diverse subject matter expertise and learn from them.*
- *I acknowledge the impact of COVID-19, including the tremendous amount of work many members have done through their paid roles to support Canberrans during the 2021-22 term.*

## Conclusion

Over the 2021-22 term, the Council provided regular advice to the Minister for Women and ACT Government to strengthen consideration of the issues impacting women and girls in policy development and implementation.

The Council was responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledges the significant impacts of the pandemic on women, girls, gender diverse and non-binary people in the ACT. It undertook advocacy throughout its term to ensure responses to the pandemic considered the unique needs of women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse people in the ACT.

The Council thanks the Minister for Women for her support during the 2021-22 term, and the opportunity to represent the diverse views of women in the ACT.

The Council looks forward to seeing the work undertaken during the 2021-22 term built on by the 2023-24 Ministerial Advisory Council on Women.