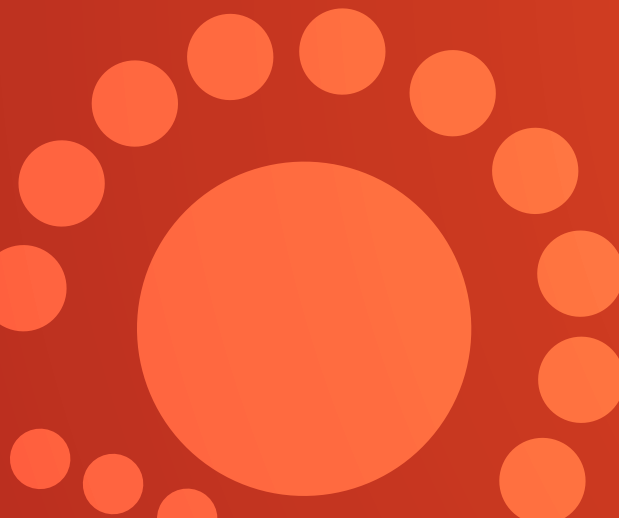
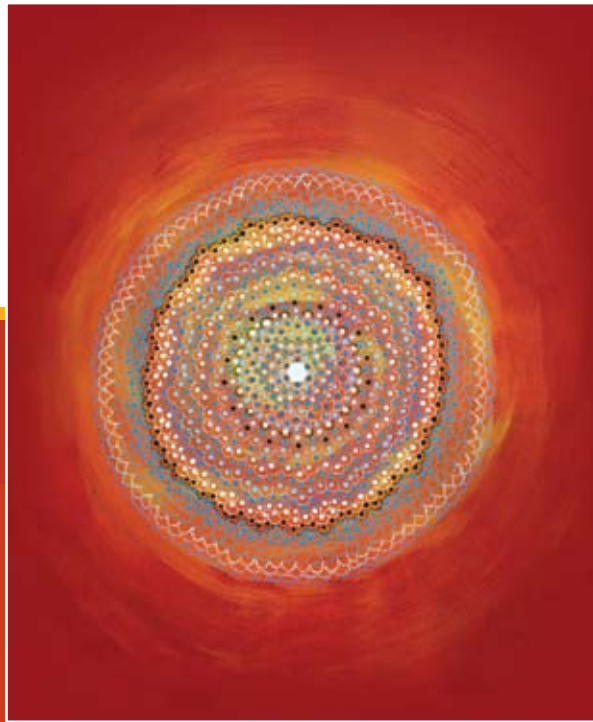




ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2010-2015

AN ACT GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO
IMPROVE THE STATUS AND LIVES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS





WOMAN'S JOURNEY

BELINDA NELSON MCDOWELL.

A Yinaa's (Woman's) journey, her life, family, song, dance, travel, country and culture, linked to and being one with the land Mother Earth Dreaming.

This is a record of her life. The circles represent her journey through life.

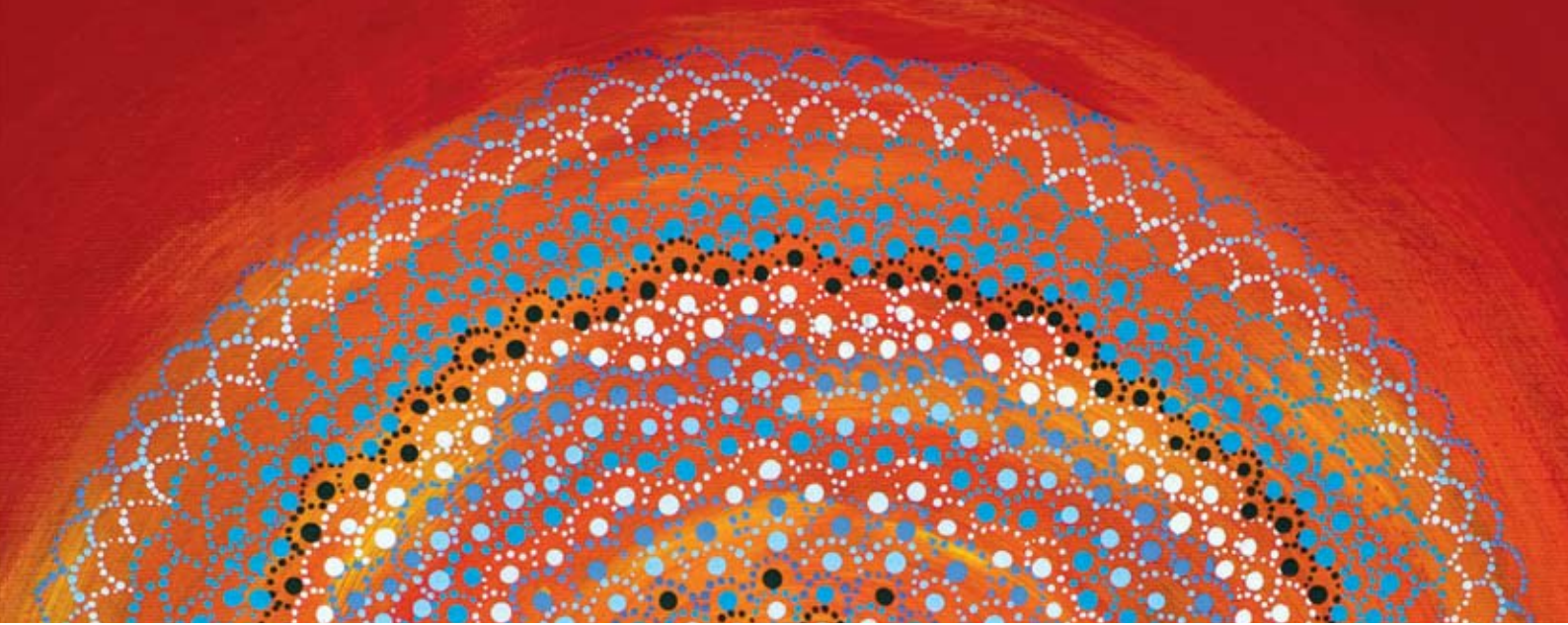
The mystery, wonder, struggles and experiences are held together in unity. From the centre each layer and colour represents journeys. The red and orange represents the rocks, ochre the land and the territory which is this red country.

Belinda Nelson McDowell is a young Wiradjuri/Yorta Yorta woman from Cowra in the Central West of New South Wales. Her totems are the Sand Goanna and the Magpie.

Belinda won the Inaugural Foundation for Youth Indigenous Art Award at the ACT Legislative Assembly in 2007. She is represented in the National Museum of Australia's Indiglass Collection 2008. Belinda has won numerous awards for her art, including the 2008 ACT Tenancy Week and 2009 International Tenants' Day awards. She is a member of the Indigenous Textiles and Glass Artist Group and is involved at The Canberra Glassworks.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY IS NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY.

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. The region was also an important meeting place and significant to other Aboriginal groups.

The ACT Government acknowledges historical dispossession and its continuing legacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and also acknowledges their vital contribution to the ACT community.

ACT Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women provided valuable input into the Plan including the following. Their words provide important insight into the living journey of reconciliation.

Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women play an intricate role in their family and community. We are the proud holders of specific knowledge that empowers each other's journeys. We understand that while it is important to look forward to the future, it is also important to glance back to acknowledge the past – the good and the bad – and all that we can learn from it to assist us to be successful in the future. Let our knowledge, wisdom and culture be mine, yours and ours for yesterday, today and tomorrow.

As Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women in the ACT we are proud of our cultures and spirituality. We believe in our right to be respected, to be heard, to be safe and to participate and share in the benefits of our community.

We empathise with other women and girls who experience various barriers - all women and girls have the right to enjoy equity, participation and social harmony.

As Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women, we want:

- *women and girls to honour ourselves and each other;*
- *women and girls to empower each other to: develop our skills, be good parents as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins and girl-friends, reach our full potential;*
- *opportunities to celebrate being women and girls;*
- *opportunities to celebrate our rich cultures;*
- *opportunities to share our knowledge; and*
- *women and girls to remember that we all exercise leadership in everything we do.*

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR WOMEN

JOY BURCH MLA



The *ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015* sets out the ACT Government's vision for working with the whole community to improve the status and lives of women and girls who live, work and study in the ACT.

The ACT Government is committed to building a community where women and girls equally and fully participate in the economy, their community and their city. Opportunity, safety and sustainability are key priorities.

This Plan is guided by *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century* which promotes the vision of Canberra as an inclusive, creative and sustainable centre of economic growth and innovation. Under both Plans, women and girls are provided with opportunities and are supported to share in all aspects of Canberra life to the benefit of themselves and their community.

Government departments will be responsible for implementing actions in accordance with the priorities in the Plan and to partner with the community and business sectors. Progress over the course of the previous *ACT Women's Plan 2004-2009* has shown that a positive difference can be made to the status and lives of women in the ACT. There is more to achieve, which will require Government, the community and business to work together.

The critical focus of the Women's Plan is to embed an understanding of the different needs of women and girls and men and boys into policy and practice, as a mechanism for improving gender equity. Improving the lives of women and girls is of benefit for all Canberrans and requires active interest and participation from the whole community.

Men and boys play a role in the lives of women and girls around them. Our community needs strong male role models to challenge stereotyping of women and girls and to encourage other males to value and support women and girls in our community.

I wish to acknowledge and thank those who made this Plan possible, particularly Canberra women and girls who shared their ideas and experiences. I would especially like to thank the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, a body that advises me on issues relating to women, for their assistance with the development of the Plan.

This Plan will ensure that the interests of women and girls continue to be considered across the ACT Government, to work towards their equity and participation and addressing their needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy Burch'.

Joy Burch MLA
Minister for Women

SETTING THE SCENE

This *ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015* is a strategic framework to assist the ACT Government work with the community to improve the status and lives of women and girls in the ACT. It continues the work of the *ACT Women's Plan 2004-2009* by outlining priority areas for women and girls based on principles of access, equity, participation and safety.

The ACT Government promotes the vision of economic, social and environmental development in Canberra in *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century* and its companion plans: *Capital Development: Towards our Second Century*, *The Canberra Social Plan* and *The Canberra Spatial Plan*.

This Plan moves women and girls beyond the traditional 'social policy' paradigm by using economic, social and environmental aspects of life to highlight where they contribute, but also where they require support in these areas. Women and girls' participation and interests need to be taken into consideration in all of these areas so that their opportunities can be maximised.

Consultation feedback identified that each of these three aspects of life were underpinned by key priorities:

Economic:

- responsive education, training and lifelong learning;
- flexible workplaces;
- economic independence and opportunities; and
- leadership and decision making.

Social:

- safe and respectful relationships;
- good health and wellbeing; and
- safe and accessible housing.

Environmental:

- safe and responsive transport and urban planning; and
- sustainable environment.

These priorities therefore form the basis of the Plan.

Implementation of this five year Plan will require ACT Government Departments to:

- look at how gender is considered in the planning, development and implementation of policies, programs and services and in workplace practices; and
- provide gender sensitive data and reports to measure progress towards equity and participation for women and girls.

PROFILE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE ACT

As a group, women and girls in the ACT reflect many different cultures, backgrounds and life experiences. Each one has a unique story to tell, a unique contribution to make and unique aspirations and needs in their life journey. The rich diversity among ACT women and girls is worthy of celebration.

Women and girls in the ACT generally enjoy a high standard of living. However, this is not the case for all, particularly those who experience disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation. Their opportunities for participation can be impacted by inequalities, inability to access appropriate services and transport, violence, homelessness and financial insecurity including poverty. It is important that the Plan sets objectives to address the needs of these women and girls.

Demographic trends

- Women make up just over 50% of the total ACT population. Between 1996 and 2006, the census count of women living in the ACT increased from over 150,000 to over 164,000 – an increase of 0.9% per annum.¹
- The ACT fertility rate has been increasing in recent years and there is a trend towards women giving birth later in life.²
- In 2006, of the 120,225 women over the age of 14 years, 47.8% were married and 9.6% were in de facto relationships including same sex couples. Over 42% of women were not married, compared to 39.8% of men.³

Young women

- In 2006, there were approximately 33,894 young women in the ACT aged between 12-25 years, representing over 11% of the ACT population.⁴
- In 2008-09, 50% of migrants arriving in the ACT aged between 10-19 years were female.⁵

Older women

- From 1996 to 2006, the size of the 50 to 69 age group increased by 5.3% per annum compared with the total population increase of 0.9% per annum.⁶
- Since 1996, the number of ACT women over 65 years has increased by 41.3%.⁷

Aboriginal women

- In 2006, 1,942 women in the ACT identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This represents 1.2% of the ACT female population.⁸

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- In 2006, approximately 22% of females in the ACT were born overseas.⁹
- In the ACT, approximately 41% of females had at least one parent born overseas.¹⁰

Women with disabilities and carers

- In 2003, approximately 6% of women in the ACT had a profound or severe core activity limitation. 17% of women in the ACT reported having a disability.¹¹
- In 2008-09, women represented 74% of those who accessed services provided by Carers ACT, and represented 64% of all young carers who accessed services.¹²

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

In the past century there has been a profound shift in the status of women in the developed world. Significant achievements towards gender equity have been won through the efforts of many women, including Australian women, over time. In the ACT today, women and girls enjoy many opportunities that were not available to their grandmothers.

In 2002, the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on the Status of Women's Report, *The Status of Women in the ACT*, highlighted ongoing areas of gender inequity. It identified groups of women who were vulnerable to discrimination, poor health, violence, poverty and social exclusion.

ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2004-2009

In 2004, the *ACT Women's Plan 2004-2009* was launched to improve the status of women in the ACT. It was informed by the Status of Women report and identified as a strategic action under *Building our Community: the Canberra Social Plan*.

The six objectives of the 2004-2009 Women's Plan were:

- representation and leadership;
- good health and wellbeing;
- responsive housing;
- safe inclusive communities;
- economic security and opportunities; and
- flexible education and training.

The ACT Government's achievements against these objectives were acknowledged in the discussion paper *Looking Forward: Informing a new plan for ACT women and girls (2009)* and *Taking Stock: Reporting on the ACT Women's Plan 2004-2009 - Indicators of Success (2009)*.

MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN

In 2002, the Minister for Women established the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women to provide strategic advice to the ACT Government on issues affecting women in the ACT.

The Council will continue to provide pathways for women to engage with the ACT Government and community and business sectors to ensure their interests are represented.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2010-2015

The ACT Government's ongoing commitment to women and girls is reflected in the development of this second ACT Women's Plan which builds on the achievements of the *ACT Women's Plan 2004-2009*.

The Office for Women partnered with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women to develop the Plan.

The Council consulted with diverse groups of women, including those experiencing marginalisation and isolation.

The development of the Plan was informed by an advisory group with representatives from ACT Government Departments and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women.

The Plan was informed by the:

- *International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*
- Beijing Platform
- *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*
- *International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*
- *International Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *International Labor Convention*

- Commonwealth, States, Territories and New Zealand Ministerial Conference of the Status of Women's policy priorities
- development of the upcoming *National Plan on the Prevention of Violence against Women and their Children*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *ACT Discrimination Act 1991*
- *ACT Human Rights Act 2004*
- framework of *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century*.

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Consultation feedback from individuals, organisations and the community was invaluable to the development of the Plan.

Importance was placed on human rights, accountability and analysing data on women to provide an evidence base for the development of responsive policies, programs and services. Measuring progress was considered critical.

Feedback identified that particular groups of women and girls are more vulnerable, and that the following factors can impact on disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation:

- poverty;
- homelessness;
- inability to access transport;
- barriers to education and employment;
- poor physical and mental health;
- alcohol and other drug misuse;
- disabilities;
- caring responsibilities;
- age;
- violence;
- sexual orientation; and
- involvement with the legal and justice systems.

Other themes that emerged from the consultations were access, equity, participation and safety for women and girls across demographics. Feedback raised the following areas of importance to women and girls in the ACT:

- women and girls are a diverse group and their contributions to all aspects of Canberra life are significant;
- inequalities still exist between women and men and between different groups of women and girls;
- improvements to access, equity, participation and safety of women and girls will benefit all Canberrans;
- changes in one area of a woman's life can influence other areas of her life and this is likely to impact on her family and the broader community;
- a targeted and flexible approach is needed to improve outcomes for women and girls experiencing disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation;
- violence against women and their children and community safety need to be addressed;
- a whole of government and whole of community approach are pivotal to the development of effective and responsive policies, programs and services to meet the needs of women and girls; and
- improved collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data will more effectively measure and progress outcomes for women and girls.

Community feedback is reflected in the *Report on Consultations undertaken to inform the ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015 (2009)*.

Quotes from consultations are captured throughout this document.

THE JOURNEY FORWARD

VISION

In the ACT, women and girls realise their potential, are recognised for their contribution and share in the benefits of our community.

The Government is committed to valuing and investing in women and girls and promoting and safeguarding the freedoms and rights necessary for all women and girls to actively participate in all areas of Canberra life.

PRINCIPLES

The Plan is underpinned by the following principles that align with the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *ACT Human Rights Act 2004* and *ACT Discrimination Act 1991*.

Women and girls have a right to:

- dignity and respect;
- freedom from discrimination or stereotypical portrayals;
- be valued for their diversity;
- participate in and enjoy the benefits of family and community life;
- be valued for their contributions to family and community life and their contributions to improving the welfare of the whole community;
- economic independence;
- equitable opportunities for representation in leadership and decision making roles;
- access information and services to meet their needs;
- equitable opportunities in all aspects of their lives to achieve their aspirations; and
- be safe and secure in their home and in the community.

LINKS TO OTHER FRAMEWORKS

The Plan links to the following frameworks and endorses their contribution to improving opportunities, equity and participation for women and girls.

The ACT Children's Plan 2004-10: Making Canberra a great place for children - supports building a child friendly Canberra for children to reach their potential.

Young People's Plan 2009-2014 - supports the contributions young women make to their family and community, their access to services, engagement in education, training and employment and participation in environmental sustainability.

ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2009-2014 - supports the right to respect and safety of older women and their right to enjoy retirement, good health and community participation.

ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009-2013 - supports representation and recognition of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, their access to resources and ways to address health needs.

Future Directions: Towards Challenge 2014 - supports women and girls with disabilities to access supports and information, receive quality services; and engage and contribute to their community.

The purpose of these frameworks and other international, national and local frameworks are outlined in Appendix A.

STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

The Plan outlines strategic outcomes, objectives and priority areas against the economic, social and environmental aspects of life. This shows where ACT Government Departments, community organisations and business can work together to provide opportunities which support women and girls in achieving equity and participation. The community and business sectors play an important role in facilitating opportunities and pathways for women and girls in the workplace and as members of the community.

The Plan outlines contributions made by women and girls, areas to improve equity for women and girls, and ways to progress equity and participation within economic, social and environmental areas.

The Plan supports the ACT Government's commitment to introducing gender measures and triple bottom line reporting across the whole ACT Government.

The Indicators of Progress will be measured by enhanced data collection and analysis that is intended to be strengthened over the life of the Plan. This will assist with building a clearer picture of progress towards women and girl's equity and participation and meeting their needs. It aims to inform and guide future legislation, budgets, policies, programs and services that impact on ACT women and girls.

The ACT Government invites all Canberrans - women, girls, men and boys - to assist with the implementation of this Plan by recognising and promoting the contributions women and girls make, and taking an active interest in providing opportunities to support them to achieve in life.

THE PLAN

VISION

In the ACT, women and girls realise their potential, are recognised for their contribution and share in the benefits of our community.

ECONOMIC

Strategic outcome

Women and girls equally and fully participate in and benefit from the ACT economy.

Objectives

The ACT provides:

- flexible education and training opportunities for women and girls;
- opportunities for women to increase economic independence throughout their lifecycle, including equitable pay for the true value of their work;
- flexible employment opportunities for women in the workforce and entering or re-entering the workforce;
- safe and equitable workplaces; and
- leadership and decision making opportunities for women and girls.

Priority areas

- Responsive education, training and lifelong learning;
- Flexible workplaces;
- Economic independence and opportunities; and
- Leadership and decision making.

Indicators of Progress

Evidence of:

- pathways for women and girls in education and training;
- increased opportunities for the advancement of women in the workforce;
- increased economic leadership and decision making opportunities for women and girls; and
- improved financial equity.

SOCIAL

Strategic outcome

Women and girls equally and fully participate in sustaining their families and communities and enjoy community inclusion and wellbeing.

Objectives

The ACT provides:

- mechanisms through which the contributions women and girls make to their community are valued;
- opportunities to empower women and girls in the community, in leadership and in decision making roles;
- accessible services for women and girls to enhance their health and wellbeing throughout their lifecycle;
- accessible pathways for women and girls experiencing social exclusion and isolation, including in areas such as housing and accommodation and health; and
- strategies to prevent violence against women and their children and instill an anti-violence culture in the community.

Priority areas

- Safe and respectful relationships;
- Good health and wellbeing; and
- Safe and accessible housing.

Indicators of Progress

Evidence of:

- recognition of women and girls' contributions to the community;
- increased community leadership and decision making opportunities for women and girls;
- affordable and accessible gender and culturally sensitive services;
- pathways for women experiencing disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation; and
- addressing violence against women and their children and protection and support for victims.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Strategic outcome

Women and girls equally and fully participate in planning and sharing a safe, accessible and sustainable city.

Objectives

The ACT provides:

- equitable representation of women and girls in decision making on urban planning and transport;
- safe, secure and accessible facilities in public places for women and girls;
- public safety initiatives for women and girls in the community; and
- opportunities for women to increase their contribution towards environmental sustainability.

Priority areas

- Safe and responsive transport and urban planning; and
- Sustainable environment.

Indicators of Progress

Evidence of:

- available opportunities for women and girls in decisions about urban planning, transport and the environment; and
- consideration towards women and girls' safety, security and accessibility when designing, building or retrofitting public facilities.

ECONOMIC

Strategic outcome

Women and girls equally and fully participate in and benefit from the ACT economy.

Objectives

The ACT provides:

- flexible education and training opportunities for women and girls;
- opportunities for women to increase economic independence throughout their lifecourse, including equitable pay for the true value of their work;
- flexible employment opportunities for women in the workforce and entering or re-entering the workforce;
- safe and equitable workplaces; and
- leadership and decision making opportunities for women and girls.

Priority areas

The priority areas over the life of the Plan will be:

- responsive education, training and lifelong learning;
- flexible workplaces;
- economic independence and opportunities; and
- leadership and decision making.

Indicators of Progress

Evidence of:

- education and training pathways for women and girls;
- increased opportunities for the advancement of women in the workforce;
- increased economic leadership and decision making opportunities for women and girls; and
- improved financial equity.

WOMEN AND GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR ECONOMY

Women and girls make significant contributions and want to be recognised for their roles in our economy.

Increasing numbers of girls and young women recognise the role education plays in gaining meaningful employment opportunities.¹³ In the ACT, female secondary students have a high retention rate and are achieving high university entrance scores.¹⁴ A greater number of women are enrolled in higher education and just over 50% of Vocational Education and Training enrolments are women.¹⁵

Women's participation rate in the workforce has increased, and a growing number of women who have childcare responsibilities are employed.¹⁶ In 2009, the ACT had one of the highest female labour force participation rates in Australia.¹⁷

An increasing number of women are employed in professional occupations.¹⁸ 67% of the ACT Public Service workforce are women and 39.7% of senior executive service positions are held by women.¹⁹ In the ACT, 48% of members on ACT Government boards and committees are women; this is the highest participation rate of any State or Territory. In 2007, women in the ACT were employed in the following occupations: 27% professionals, 26% intermediate clerical, sales and service workers, 15% associate professionals and 13% managers and administrators.²⁰ In 2009, 41% of the 7th ACT Legislative Assembly members are women.

Carers are important for people with disabilities or long term chronic illness and the elderly to remain living in their community.²¹ In Australia, informal carers provide services that are estimated to be worth \$30.5 billion annually.²² In 2006, 60% of primary carers in Australia over the age of 15 were women.²³

Women's participation in voluntary work is significant for the economy. In 2006, 5.2 million people nationally participated in voluntary work, contributing 713 million hours to the community. In 2007, 36% of women in Australia performed voluntary work and the ACT had one of the highest proportions of its population volunteering at 38%.²⁴

Increasing women's participation in the workforce could increase national output of more than \$98 billion by 2040.

(Access Economics, Meeting Australia's ageing challenge: the importance of women's workforce participation, report to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Human Services, November 2006)

AREAS TO IMPROVE EQUITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR ECONOMY

Women's work is often undervalued.²⁵ This can be reflected in segregated occupations²⁶ such as community work and child care.

In the ACT, men earn on average 15.1% more than women.²⁷ Women are also more likely to work in casual and part-time employment and in low paid sectors and occupations.²⁸

Older women, Aboriginal women, Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women with disabilities are more likely to experience barriers to accessing education and training. This can impact on their ability to gain paid employment or lead to employment that offers lower rates of pay. They are also more likely to experience discrimination due to their age, race, sex and/or disability. This can disadvantage them in job selection, training and promotions.²⁹

Refugee and migrant women may face challenges in obtaining education, training and employment. These challenges include low levels of English proficiency, low literacy in their own language and/or overseas qualifications not being recognised.³⁰

A limited income can impact on the socio-economic status of women and lead to social exclusion, isolation and poverty. Women on low incomes or women who have had gaps in earnings due to time out of the workforce are usually not in a position to consider long term financial savings plans or may have reduced or inadequate superannuation.³¹

Women may also face other barriers in the workplace such as discrimination, harassment and bullying, particularly during pregnancy.³²

Inequality between women and men exists in the division of work and maintenance of caring responsibilities and domestic tasks in the home. Many women work two part-time jobs to balance family with work.³³ Women are more likely to be occupied with caring duties and miss out on unemployment benefits, labour market programs, training assistance and superannuation.³⁴

Women in unpaid caring roles can experience difficulties balancing employment with caring responsibilities and be forced to reduce their hours or leave work.³⁵ While mothers caring for children with disabilities receive more in government benefits than other women, these payments do not compensate fully for the income they forgo from paid work. Additionally, their superannuation may become insufficient at the time of retirement.³⁶

“Women want comparable pay for comparable work; young women want comparable starting salaries in the non traditional trades”

(consultation feedback)

“Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds want mentoring and leadership opportunities to improve their skills to contribute to their community”

(consultation feedback)

From a business, economic and competitiveness viewpoint, targeting gender parity is a necessary condition for progress.

(World Economic Forum Committee to improving the State of the World, The Global Gender Gap Report, Geneva, Switzerland, 2009.)

PROGRESSING EQUITY AND PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR ECONOMY

Increased female participation in the paid workforce has been supported by accessible child care and more flexible work conditions to accommodate family life. However, not all women have access to these supports.

Women experiencing disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation require support to access education and training to enter the workforce. The ACT Government offers education, training, grants and scholarship programs to assist women and girls with their education, and provides micro-credit loans and a return to work grants program to increase their financial independence.

Women in the workforce benefit from workplace flexibility. In 2004-05, the ACT Government provided a payroll tax exemption for private employers who give 14 weeks primary care leave to their employees following the birth or adoption of a child. Flexibility within the ACT Public Service workforce now includes 18 weeks paid maternity leave for permanent staff.

The ACT Government supports women and girls' leadership and decision making opportunities in workforce issues and the economy and is committed to achieving and maintaining a 50:50 gender balance on its boards and committees.

SOCIAL

Strategic outcome

Women and girls equally and fully participate in sustaining their families and communities and enjoy community inclusion and wellbeing.

Objectives

The ACT provides:

- mechanisms through which the contributions women and girls make to their community are valued;
- opportunities to empower women and girls in the community, in leadership and in decision making roles;
- accessible services for women and girls to enhance their health and wellbeing throughout their lifecourse;
- accessible pathways for women and girls experiencing social exclusion and isolation, including in areas such as housing and accommodation, and health; and
- strategies to break the cycle of violence against women and their children and instill an anti-violence culture in the community.

Priority areas

The priority areas over the life of the Plan will be:

- safe and respectful relationships;
- good health and wellbeing; and
- safe and accessible housing.

Indicators of Progress

Evidence of:

- recognition of women and girls' contributions to the community;
- increased community leadership and decision making opportunities for women and girls;
- affordable and accessible gender and culturally sensitive services;
- pathways for women experiencing disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation; and
- addressing violence against women and their children and protection and support for victims.

WOMEN AND GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR SOCIETY

The ACT community enjoys a high level of social interaction and relationships,³⁷ and women and girls play active roles in their family and the ACT community.

Women, who continue to be the main carers of children, contribute significantly towards raising future generations. Society benefits socially and economically from children having been nurtured and raised in a safe home, as they are more likely to enjoy better development, health and social outcomes.³⁸ Family unity impacts positively on individuals, family and community wellbeing and strengthens social capital.³⁹

AREAS TO IMPROVE EQUITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR SOCIETY

Economically, women's roles in their family and community are undervalued as these roles are not measured as contributing to increased productivity or generating wealth. External factors can influence a woman's decision to take time out of the workforce or to reduce hours. These factors contribute to women's over-representation in lower social-economic groups.⁴⁰ In 2006, one parent families comprised 15% of all households in the ACT, of which 85% were headed by females.⁴¹ This brings with it significant social disadvantages in meeting basic needs and striving towards personal aspirations.

Women require support in their parenting role so that they can enjoy their time with their family and fulfill other roles. The provision of childcare, paid maternity leave, other family friendly working conditions and shared responsibilities of caring go beyond economic benefits; they send a message that the multiple roles of women are important and that parenting is a shared responsibility.

Many people in the ACT have strong support networks and enjoy weekly contact with family and friends.⁴² However, there are women who experience social exclusion and isolation due to discrimination about their sex, age, race and culture, disability and/or sexual orientation. These women include mothers who remain at home with their children, young women, older women, Aboriginal women, Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities and carers. Changes to relationships within families, such as divorce, separation or bereavement, can lead to isolation for women.

Since 2004-05, the number of female offenders in the ACT has increased by 14%.⁴³ Support for women, including young women, leaving the criminal justice system is important to assist them to transition back into the community.

There are women who suffer from health conditions that affect their participation in daily activities and general quality of life. Economic and social disadvantage such as low income and poverty, violence and abuse can result in poor health for women.^{44, 45} These can lead to mental illness and alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.⁴⁶ Women in these situations are less likely to access and use health services. Aboriginal women and women with disabilities have greater and more specialised health care needs than other women.⁴⁷ Female carers have poorer health than other women as they do not have time to look after themselves or the cost of maintaining their health is prohibitive.⁴⁸

Many women experiencing poverty are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. In the ACT, women are more likely than men to access homelessness services for reasons such as domestic and family violence and relationship and family breakdown. Women with disabilities mainly accessed Home and Community Care seeking services such as personal care, home help, maintenance, transport, respite care, community nursing, paramedical services and food services.⁴⁹

“Women - in particular younger women, older women, Aboriginal women, Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women with disabilities - want affordable services that understand and accommodate gender specific and individualised needs”

(consultation feedback)

“Women want affordable housing options and to be placed near residents with whom they feel safe”

(consultation feedback)

Communities, governments and services working together
can make a real difference to reducing violence.

*Australian Government, The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women:
Immediate Government Actions, Commonwealth of Australia, April 2009*

Women and their children continue to experience violence and abuse - abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological and financial. The estimated cost of violence (including family violence and sexual assault) against women nationally is \$13.6 billion per annum.⁵⁰ Older women, Aboriginal women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women with disabilities are most at risk of violence.⁵¹ These women are vulnerable to health concerns, disrupted employment and income, homelessness, low self-esteem, drug and alcohol use and social isolation.

International evidence shows that increased opportunities
for women benefit children and families.

*(The Institute for Regional Development, Cradle Coast Campus, unpublished report,
The Future of Micro-credit in Australia: Opportunities for Economic Empowerment, August 2009)*

PROGRESSING EQUITY AND PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR SOCIETY

Family and community connections and good health lead to social harmony and wellbeing. The ACT Government is committed to whole-of-government engagement with the ACT community to foster community inclusion in addressing social disadvantage.

The ACT Government provides or funds services to assist women in their parenting role and to give them the ability to connect with other community supports, such as the Child and Family Centres and through the Women's Information and Referral Centre. In 2010, the ACT Government will commence construction of a hospital specific to women and children's health needs.

The ACT Government supports a shared approach to caring responsibilities. In 2005, a *Work and Life Balance* policy was introduced for ACT Government public servants. This is demonstrated by workplace practices such as flex time and flexible personal leave that cover parenting and other carer responsibilities.

The ACT Government is working with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions to develop strategies to prevent violence against women and their children. The ACT is developing a Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy that is expected to be finalised in mid-June 2010. This Strategy will encompass a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to responding to violence against women and their children and will provide a focus on diversion, early intervention and primary prevention, and accountability for perpetrators.

The ACT has made a stand on violence against women by legislating that perpetrators may be removed from the home after the incident of violence to allow women and children to remain in the home. The ACT Government also funds programs to support victims of violence. These measures send the message that violence is not acceptable in our community.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Strategic outcome

Women and girls equally and fully participate in planning and sharing a safe, accessible and sustainable city.

Objectives

The ACT provides:

- equitable representation of women and girls in decision making on urban planning and transport;
- safe, secure and accessible facilities in public places for women and girls;
- public safety initiatives for women and girls in the community; and
- opportunities for women to increase their contribution towards environmental sustainability.

Priority areas

The priority areas over the life of the Plan will be:

- safe and responsive transport and urban planning; and
- sustainable environment.

Indicators of Progress

Evidence of:

- opportunities for women and girls in decisions about urban planning, transport and the environment; and
- consideration towards women and girls' safety, security and accessibility when designing, building or retrofitting public facilities.

WOMEN AND GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUTURE OF THE CITY AND ITS SETTING

Across Australia, women indicated strong concern about water shortage and the disposal of household waste. In 2007-08, the ACT community showed greater concern about climate change and the decline of the natural environment than other jurisdictions.⁵²

Many girls and young women in the ACT are keen to champion the protection of our environment. Children have concerns about our environment and want safe places to spend quality time with their family and friends⁵³. Young women share their concerns for our environment.⁵⁴ They are willing to learn how to work in harmony with our environment.⁵⁵

Women are in a strong position to influence decisions within their household about recycling resources and transport. In 2006, ACT households recycled more paper, glass and plastic bottles than other jurisdictions, and a significant number of women used buses or shared private transport.⁵⁶

Over the past two years, there has been an increase of women working in non-traditional areas of the ACT Government, namely in the ACT Planning and Land Authority⁵⁷ and the ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services.⁵⁸ These portfolios cover public areas, urban planning, transport and sustainable environment. Planning and development responsibilities include designing safer and more accessible bus infrastructure; crime prevention through urban design; and designing and retrofitting affordable, accessible, functional and aesthetically appealing buildings.⁵⁹

AREAS TO IMPROVE EQUITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR CITY AND ITS SETTING

Women often have leadership roles in resource management and the environment. However, it is internationally acknowledged that greater recognition of women's contributions to managing natural resources and environmental sustainability is required to influence sustainable development at different levels.⁶⁰

“Women want safe and accessible transport”

(consultation feedback)

In the ACT, a proportion of women have indicated that they do not feel safe in their neighbourhood, do not feel their home is safe and do not feel that they can trust people in their neighbourhood.⁶¹ Consultation feedback raised concerns about women and girls' safety in public areas and at bus interchanges. Public areas and facilities need to be accessible and conducive to the needs of women and girls so that they feel safe and secure to participate and enjoy social activities, including sports and recreation.

PROGRESSING EQUITY AND PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR CITY AND ITS SETTING

The ACT Government supports economic, social and environmental sustainability in recognition that these aspects of life are interdependent. It encourages all members of our community to be innovative and creative to keep our environment healthy and to enjoy the benefits.

The ACT Government values the unique perspectives of women and girls in planning and achieving a safe, friendly and sustainable city. The views of women have been and will continue to be sought during public consultations on the planning of our city, its infrastructure and its setting.

MEASURING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS

ACT women and girls want to equally and fully participate in the economic, social and environmental aspects of life. Feedback from consultations emphasised a need for the ACT Government to develop relevant indicators that will measure progress and demonstrate where advancements have been achieved for ACT women and girls.

ACT Government Departments will use the priority areas in the Plan as a guide to recognise and respond to the interests of women and girls in the planning, development and implementation of new initiatives and in the revision of existing initiatives. Initiatives are to be considered within the workplace, service delivery areas and within partnerships with the community and business sectors. This will raise awareness and support the practice of viewing initiatives through a 'gender lens'.

ACT Government Departments and the Office for Women will undertake actions to enhance data on women and girls in the ACT to build a clearer picture of progress towards their equity and participation and meeting their needs. This will be a staged approach during the life of the Plan. The work will assist to progress the ACT Government's commitment to phase in gender measures and triple bottom line reporting.

REPORTING ON SEX DISAGGREGATED DATA

During the development of the Plan, gaps in sex disaggregated data in the ACT became evident. The Office for Women will collect sex disaggregated data from within ACT Government Departments and external sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics to establish benchmarks and enhance data on women and girls over the life of the Plan.

The Office for Women will work with ACT Government Departments to begin identifying sex disaggregated data to establish benchmarks. The data will focus on female and male employees within the ACT Government, females and males receiving direct ACT Government services and initiatives that advance women's equity and participation and address their needs. Relevant data will also be sourced from the following frameworks:

- *ACT Children's Plan*
- *Young People's Plan 2009-2014*
- *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2009-2014*
- *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009-2013*
- *Future Directions: Towards Challenge 2014* - framework for people with a disability.

ACT Government Departments will provide this data to the Office for Women by September 2010, 2012 and 2014. The Office for Women will use this data to establish a benchmark by June 2011 and to inform future reports in November 2012 and 2014.

REPORTING ON THE IMPACT OF INITIATIVES ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

ACT Government Departments will begin to report on legislation, budget, policy, program and service initiatives that support women and girls against the objectives of the Plan in their Annual Reports. The reports will outline progress on how the interests and unmet needs of women and girls are being addressed within the workplace, service delivery areas and partnerships with community organisations and business. This information will be used to determine progress towards full equity and participation for women and girls.

The objectives are broad to allow departments to consider how their legislation and policy direction, programs and services facilitate women and girls' equity and participation now and into the future. Consideration will be given to diverse groups of women, including girls, young women, older women, Aboriginal women, Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities, women as carers, lesbians, marginalised women and women involved in the justice system.

PROGRESS REPORTS

The Office for Women will publish two reports against the indicators of progress informed by the data provided by ACT Government departments and external sources, the first in November 2012 and the second in November 2014. This will assist in gauging progress towards the achievements of women and girls' equity and participation.

The Plan is a 'living' document. The indicators of progress will be revised during the reporting periods and updated where necessary to reflect emerging future priorities.

An inter-departmental committee will guide the process of engaging with select ACT Government Departments to scope and enhance data, establish benchmarks and report on progress, and to revise and update the indicators of progress.

MEASURING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS - ACTIONS ACROSS AREAS OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL

Year	Action	Purpose	Responsibility	Timeline
2010	Establish an inter-departmental committee	To guide the actions of the ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015	Office for Women	By May 2010
2010	Scope relevant available sex disaggregated data within select ACT Government departments workplaces and direct services	To establish benchmarks on women and girls and progress the commitment to phase in gender measures	ACT Government Departments to provide data to the Office for Women	By September 2010
2010-2011	Establish benchmarks based on sex disaggregated data and send to ACT Government Chief Executives	To inform workplace practice, initiatives and service delivery	Office for Women	By June 2011
2012 and 2014	Report progress against benchmarks on sex disaggregated data*	To enhance data on women and girls for publication	ACT Government Departments to provide data to the Office for Women	By September 2012 By September 2014
2010-2011	Where suitable, report against the objectives set out in the ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015 on legislation, budget, policy, program and service initiatives – past and future progress – in relation to workforce and service delivery*	To identify data on workforce and service delivery initiatives that impact on women and girls, including addressing unmet needs	ACT Government Departments to report in Annual Reports	Each financial year during the life of the Plan starting in 2010-2011
2012-2013				
2013-2014				
2014-2015				
2012 and 2014	Report against indicators of progress set out in the ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015 using information provided by ACT Government departments*	To demonstrate where progress has been made with women and girls' equity and participation and meeting their needs within the economic, social and environmental life aspects	Office for Women	By November 2012 By November 2014

* Inclusive, where possible, of diverse groups of women including girls, young women, older women, Aboriginal women, Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities, women as carers, lesbians, marginalised women and women involved in the justice system.

APPENDIX A

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

Conventions	Purpose
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Addresses obstacles to women's participation in public and private life, calling for full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision making.
Beijing Platform for Action 1995	Builds on the international human rights framework developed by CEDAW and aims to remove all obstacles to women's participation in public and private life – calling for full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision making.
International Labor Organisation Convention 156 (ILO Convention)	Equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women workers, particularly those with family responsibilities.

NATIONAL LINKS

Policy/Legislation	Purpose
Upcoming <i>National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children</i>	National approach to reduce violence against women and their children.
<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i>	<p>Aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promote equality between men and women;• eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibilities, and with respect to dismissals; and• eliminate sexual harassment at work, in educational institutions, in the provision of goods and services, in the provision of accommodation and the delivery of Commonwealth programs. <p>The <i>Act</i> gives effect to Australia's obligations under the CEDAW and aspects of the ILO Convention.</p>

LOCAL LINKS

Policy/Legislation	Purpose
<i>The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century</i> (The Canberra Plan) - released in July 2008 to build on the original <i>Canberra Plan (2004)</i>	Vision for Canberra, based on broad community goals of social inclusion, economic growth and innovation and a healthy environment - underpinned by sustainability and prosperity now and into the future. Strengthens priorities of the ACT Government working with the community and business sectors and the wider ACT community.
<i>Capital Development: Towards our Second Century</i> - builds on the <i>Economic White Paper (2003)</i> and is a companion plan to <i>The Canberra Plan</i>	Guides the development of a self reliant and sustainable economy for Canberra. It recognises that it takes a strong, dynamic and resilient economy to meet the needs of the Canberra community now and into the future. It also recognises that it takes the right environment for people and businesses to achieve positive outcomes to improve the standards of living in Canberra. The strategic themes are: investing in people, encouraging business and innovation, and building infrastructure and planning for the future.
<i>Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan (2004)</i> - companion plan to <i>The Canberra Plan</i>	<p>A vision for Canberra to become a place 'where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community'. Priorities intended to shape decision making are: economic opportunity for all Canberrans; respect, diversity and human rights; a safe, strong and cohesive community; improve health and wellbeing; lead Australia in education, training and lifelong learning; housing for a future Canberra; and respect and protect the environment.</p> <p>An updated Canberra Social Plan is scheduled for release in the first half of 2010.</p>
<i>The Canberra Spatial Plan</i> - companion plan to <i>The Canberra Plan</i>	Strategic direction for the development of Canberra with goals balancing economic development, the provision of housing, infrastructure, services and facilities with maintaining a healthy environment and our heritage.
<i>People, Place, Prosperity: the ACT's Sustainability Policy 2009</i>	ACT Government's commitment to a sustainable government and community in recognition of the long-term need for interdependence of our economy, environment and society.
<i>ACT Human Rights Act 2004</i>	Legal and policy force to civil and political rights that are at the heart of a just and democratic society.
<i>ACT Discrimination Act 1991</i>	<p>The objects aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment in the areas of work, education, access to premises, the provision of goods, services, facilities and accommodation and the activities of clubs, and promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the equality of men and women and the principle of equality of opportunity for all people.

Proposed <i>ACT Government Performance and Accountability Framework</i>	Framework to strengthen policy and service delivery outcomes, foster stronger agency accountability and performance and enhance across-government planning and strategy development and delivery.
<i>ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009-2013</i> - builds on the former <i>Multicultural Strategy 2006-2009</i>	Goals underpinned by legal parameters, rights and responsibilities to celebrate and respond to the needs of Canberra's multicultural community.
<i>Future Directions: Towards Challenge 2014</i> - framework for people with a disability	Strategic priorities to improve pathways and opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve positive outcomes that make a difference to their lives.
<i>ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2009-2014</i>	Strategic priorities to enable seniors to feel respected, valued and safe and to be secure and comfortable to participate in the community.
<i>Young People's Plan 2009-2014</i>	Key directions for the ACT Government to work in partnership with young people and the community to improve outcomes for young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years.
<i>ACT Children's Plan 2004-10: Making Canberra a great place for children</i>	Key areas of focus for the ACT Government and Canberra community to invest in children up to the age of 12 to reach their full potential now and in the future. An updated <i>ACT Children's Plan</i> is scheduled for release in 2010.
<i>Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services Reconciliation Action Plan 2009-2010</i>	Guide to ensure that the services provided for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples contribute to "close the gap" and address disadvantage.
<i>Draft ACT Women's Health Plan: Improving women's access to health care services and information 2009-2014</i>	Framework for planning health services for women in the ACT to ensure that the distinct needs of women are addressed.
<i>Draft ACT Comorbidity Strategy 2010-2013</i>	The purpose and objectives articulate comorbidity; outline the roles of mental health services, alcohol and other drug services and primary care services for those at risk of both mental health and alcohol and/or other drug problems receive the right services at the right time; and where to invest in these areas.
<i>Draft ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2010-2014</i>	Describes in detail the current situation, challenges, target populations, and opportunities for further intervention in relation to tobacco, alcohol, other drugs, consumer participation, education and workforce development. Fifty-seven key strategic priorities have been identified to further minimise the harm from the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and to help improve the health and social wellbeing of people in the ACT.

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CONTACTS

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