

Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister

Minister for Education and Early Childhood

Minister for Homes and New Suburbs

Minister for Sport and Recreation

Member for Ginninderra

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 2****Friday, 7 February 2025****Question No. 143****MR CAIN:** To ask the Minister for Homes and New Suburbs

1. What actions are the ACT Government currently taking to reduce and eliminate chronic homelessness in Canberra.
2. What support services for the homeless are currently available in the ACT.
3. What specific partnerships with government and community organisations has the Government formed to address chronic homelessness in the ACT, and what results have these partnerships achieved.
4. What impact does the long wait times to access Housing ACT accommodation have on chronic homelessness in the ACT.
5. How many people does the ACT Government estimate are homeless in the ACT on any given night in 2025.

Yvette Berry MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. What actions are the ACT Government currently taking to reduce and eliminate chronic homelessness in Canberra.

The ACT Government has increased investment in homelessness services to respond to increased demand and complexity of need. To support those who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, the ACT Government is providing approximately \$36 million in funding to the specialist homelessness sector over 2024-25. This supports a range of services including emergency, crisis, transitional and longer-term accommodation, as well as food, counselling and social inclusion supports. These supports aim to assist people to resolve crisis, re-establish family links where appropriate, and enhance the capacity of people to live independently.

The ACT Government is committed to reaching its targets under the ACT Housing Strategy, by providing a range of accommodation options and supports needs for people experiencing homelessness, with a focus on preventing people becoming homeless in the first place to reduce the intergenerational impact of homelessness, and to respond to new and emerging groups vulnerable to homelessness.

2. What support services for the homeless are currently available in the ACT.

In 2024-25, the ACT Government is providing approximately \$36 million towards support services for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness in the ACT. This funds a continuum of services ranging from short-term emergency accommodation, refuge, crisis, transitional and longer-term accommodation. A range of other support services are also available, including counselling, support services and free meals for those in need. These supports are available to a range of cohorts, including single women, single men, families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, youth, and vulnerable Canberrans with more complex needs who many require more intensive supports.

3. What specific partnerships with government and community organisations has the Government formed to address chronic homelessness in the ACT, and what results have these partnerships achieved.

Strong partnerships have been formed via the Joint Pathways Executive – a sector representative group who works closely with the Community Services Directorate (CSD) to inform strategic priorities and areas of reform. This also consists of a broader Joint Pathways Network forum, with broad representation of frontline workers from across the sector to work who meet regularly with CSD to discuss sector updates and facilitate working relationships across sector partners. OneLink is part of both forums and works closely with sector representatives to facilitate initial crisis responses, to triage and connect vulnerable people to appropriate services.

4. What impact does the long wait times to access Housing ACT accommodation have on chronic homelessness in the ACT.

Those experiencing chronic homelessness generally experience higher levels of complexity and often require both higher levels of support and often more than one episode of support. For those experiencing chronic homelessness, the appropriate accommodation solution can often take time to develop and requires significant outreach and engagement from support services. Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) are funded to provide tenancy and property management, as well as wrap around supports to engage with people who are experiencing chronic homelessness and to build their skills to be able to sustain an independent tenancy. While the waitlist for Housing ACT accommodation places pressure on exit pathways from the homelessness sector, the reality is many people experiencing chronic homelessness may never sustain an independent tenancy and will always need the support from specialist services.

5. How many people does the ACT Government estimate are homeless in the ACT on any given night in 2025.

Data is not collected regarding the number of people homelessness each night. However, according to the most recent 2021 Census data the number of homeless persons in the ACT on Census night was 1,777. This included 59 rough sleepers.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

Yvette Berry MLA

Minister for Homes and New Suburbs

Date: 27/02/25

This response required 45 minutes to complete, at an approximate cost of \$66.59.