

Canberra Times

ACT government to make \$61 million investment in public housing



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ACT Housing Minister Yvette Berry has announced a \$61 million investment into public housing. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

The ACT government is set to invest \$61 million into public housing in the territory.

There would be \$32 million worth of land allocated to the construction of new public housing properties. These would be designed to be adaptable and accommodate people with a disability and older Canberrans.

An extra \$20 million is also set to be poured into the government's public housing renewal program and the program will be extended by one year, to 2025. At least 260 new dwellings will be built and 1000 properties would be renewed. Two-hundred new dwellings were originally promised.

The announcement came as new data released on Monday showed [there was a shortfall of 3000 social housing properties in the territory](#). This number is expected to rise due to the coronavirus pandemic.

ACT Housing Minister Yvette Berry said the territory had the most public housing of any state or territory at 26 per 1000 people, the national average is 12.

"The ACT government has now significantly increased what was already the largest per capita investment in public housing in Australia," she said.

As well, \$8.9 million would be spent on the maintenance of public housing properties. This would be spent over two years for general property and energy efficiency upgrades.

Reverse-cycle heating and cooling, highly efficient electric hot water systems and new stoves will be installed in up to 1300 homes.

There will be upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms or laundries in at least 250 homes, as well as roof replacements to some dwellings.

Four multi-unit complexes will also undergo maintenance. Two blocks will be externally painted, one block will have balconies replaced and there will be roof upgrades at a fourth.

A pilot program that offers land tax exemptions for property owners who rent their properties through community housing providers to low and medium income tenants will be expanded from 100 to 125 properties. A two-year limit on the pilot program will also be scrapped.

"The ACT government believes every Canberran, no matter their circumstances, should have access to safe and affordable housing that suits their needs," Ms Berry said.

"This new investment will ensure that Canberra's public housing stock can meet demand as this city grows."

READ MORE:

- [Shortfall of 3000 social housing properties in Canberra](#)
- [Advocates call for social housing investment](#)
- [Canberra rough sleepers to be housed in \\$3 million coronavirus response package](#)

An announcement from the ACT government into social housing had been promised and it followed calls from [Canberra housing advocates and community housing providers](#) for further investment.

Ms Berry also said the government would look to develop longer term leases with community housing providers.

"Community housing providers have expertise in meeting the complex needs of some members of the ACT community. The government is committed to providing community housing providers with certainty through longer term leases," she said.

Ms Berry said the announcement would create 80 jobs in public housing maintenance. The government's maintenance contract requires that [targets be met](#)

for [employment diversity](#) and the Housing Minister said this investment would be focused on opportunities for women.

"The ACT government is increasing the availability of public housing for those who need it. This program will also support the recovery of the ACT's economy by protecting and creating more local jobs in the building and construction sector," she said.