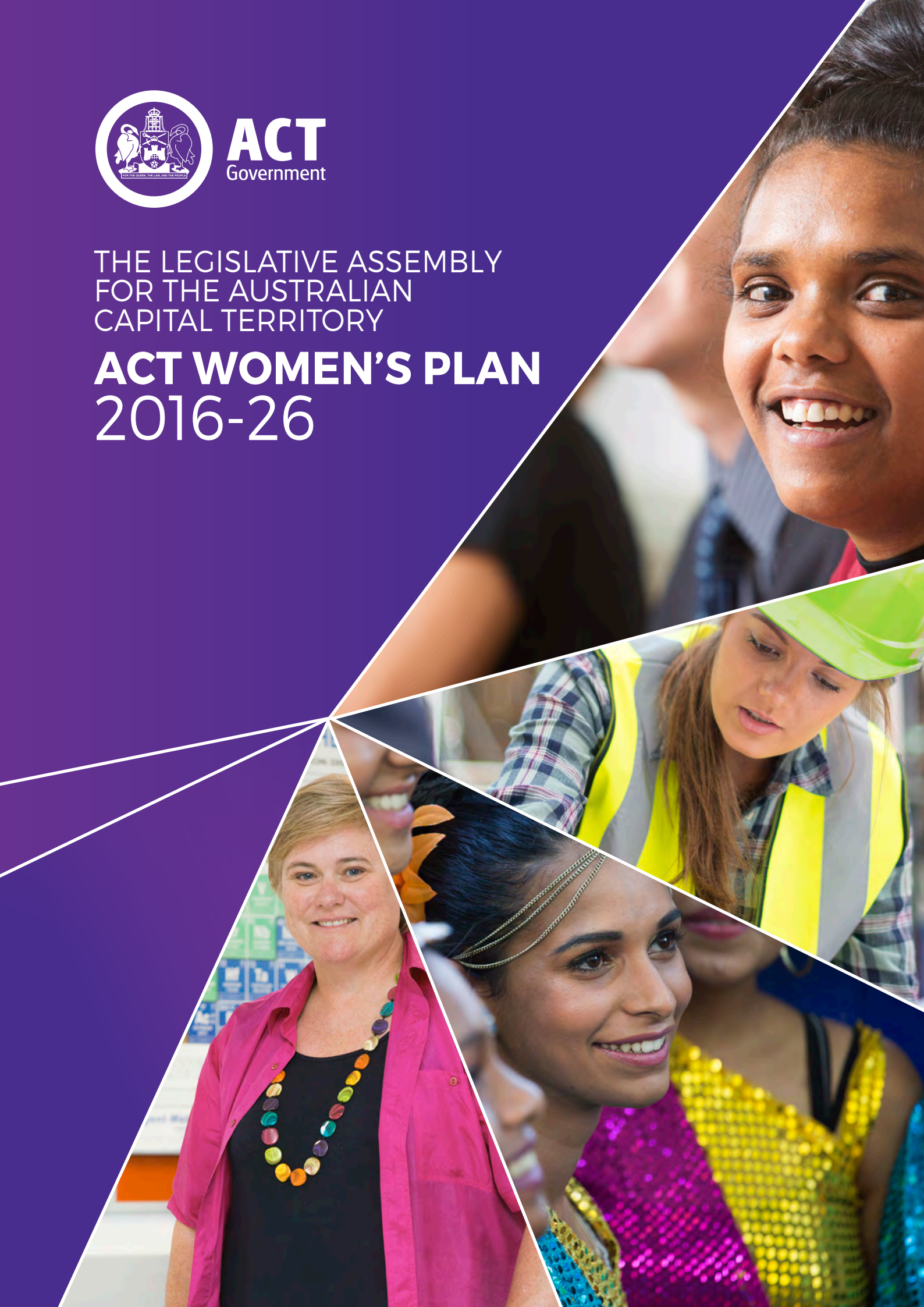




ACT
Government

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY

ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2016-26



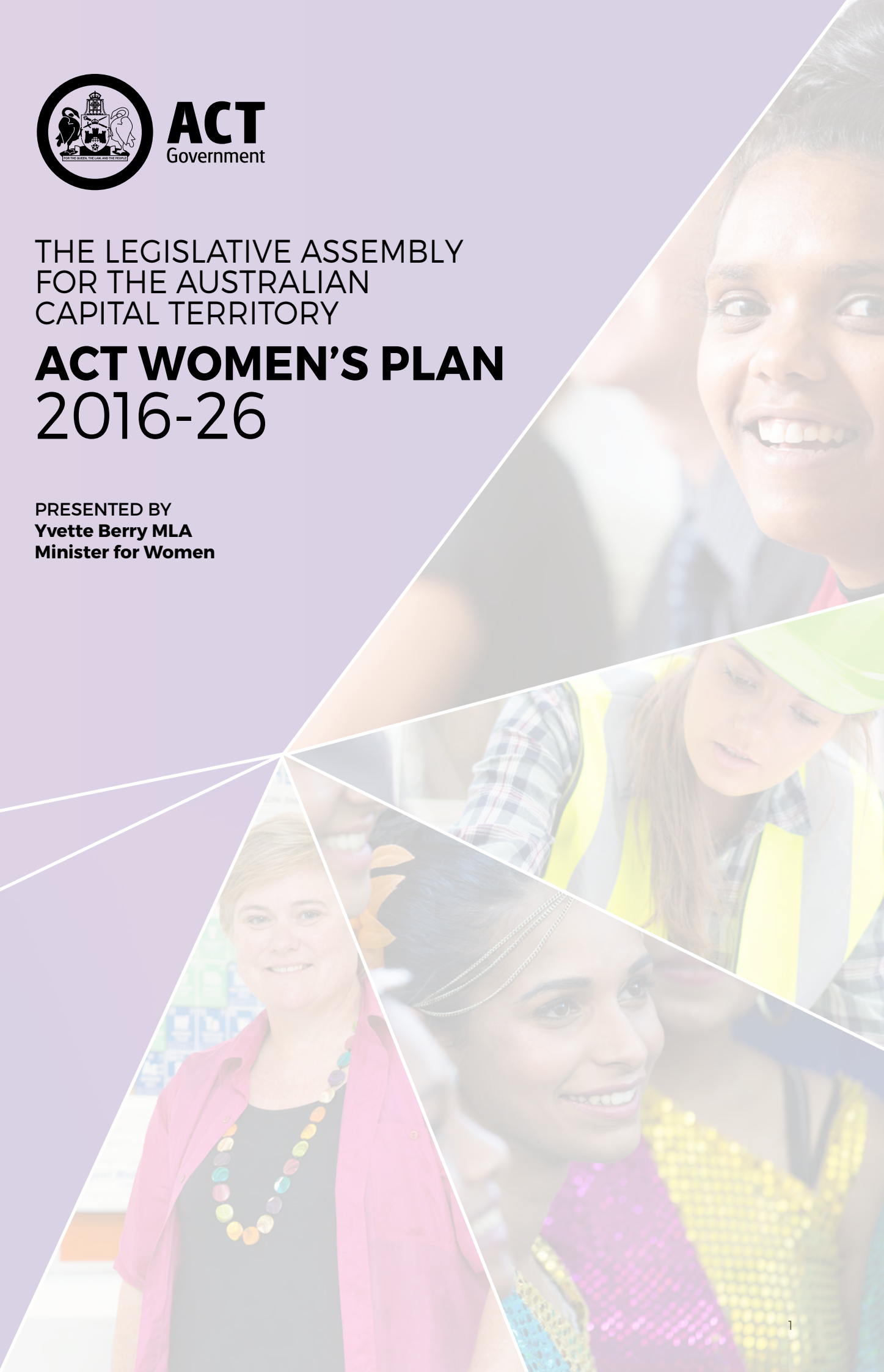


ACT
Government

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY

ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2016-26

PRESENTED BY
Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Women



© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra 2016

This work is copyright under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part of it may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Territory Records Office, ACT Government, GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601.

Produced by Publishing Services

Publication No: 16/0901

<http://www.act.gov.au>

Telephone: Access Canberra 132 281

ACCESSIBILITY

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues accessible to as many people as possible. If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an alternative format – such as large print and audio – please call the Canberra Blind Society on (02) 6247 4580.

If English is not your first language and you require the translating and interpreting service, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450. If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require assistance, please call the National Relay Service on 133 677.



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The full participation of women and girls in all aspects of society is critical to the wellbeing of the whole community. The ACT Government is committed to removing barriers to enable women and girls to reach their potential, contribute to innovation and ideas and to take up leadership positions. The *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* articulates the ACT Government's plan to achieving this commitment.

We learnt from our previous *Women's Plan 2010-2015* that many women in the ACT are doing well in relation to pay, leadership and participation. However, we also learnt that some women experience a range of challenges to their participation in our community and in reaching their full potential. It is critical that we focus on

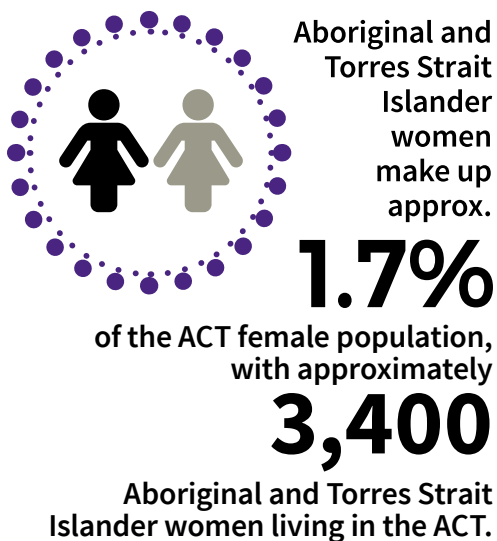
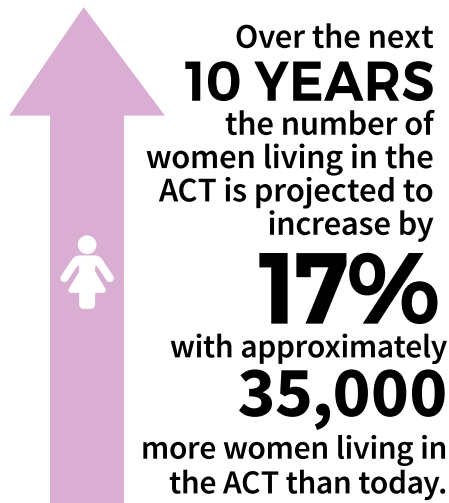
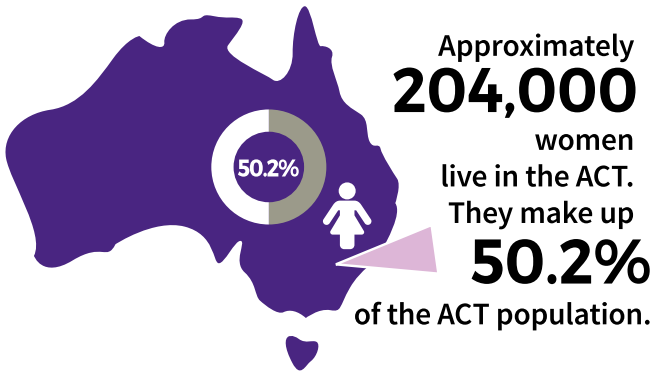
better understanding the challenges and barriers for particular groups of women in the ACT and what works to improve their lives and their participation in our community.

Achieving gender equality requires strong and broad commitment and leadership. The action plans that will be developed by each ACT Government Directorate under this plan will outline the ways in which the ACT Government will work to engage community members, the community sector, the private sector and across government to ensure our whole community is actively working towards true equality for women and girls.

We recognise there must be a particular focus on both understanding the nature and interactions of the range of discrimination women and girls are experiencing in the ACT and developing practical actions to directly improve their lives.

I am hopeful that we can continue to move ever closer to true gender equality in this country and in particular the ACT. I encourage every individual, business, government directorate, community agency and community group in the ACT to use this plan and the action plans which will follow to consider how they can contribute to making our goal of gender equality a reality.

Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Women



12% of women living in the ACT were born overseas and **9%** speak a language other than English.

Young women aged between 12-25 make up **8.6%** of the ACT population, with approximately **35,000** young women living in the ACT.

Almost **two-thirds** of people living in the ACT over the age of 85 are women.

Women aged 50 years or more make up **15%** of the ACT population, with approximately **60,800** women aged 50 years or more living in the ACT. Approximately **3,500** of these women are over the age of 85.

Approximately **105,000** women are employed in the ACT, with women making up **49%** of the total labour force and **66%** of the part time labour force.

Domestic Violence Crisis Service reports from 1988 to May 2016,

65 women
and
3 children

lost their lives as a result of domestic violence in the ACT.

ACT women headed

84.9%

of one-parent families in the ACT in 2011 .



In one year

2,701

women were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies across the ACT (2014-15)

43% of women who were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies were part of a one-parent family.

NATIONALLY:

Australian women account for:

92%

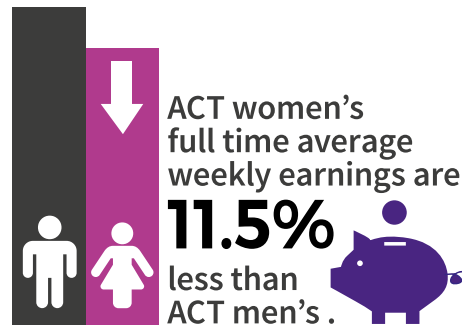
of primary carers for children with disabilities

70%

of primary carers for parents

52%

of primary carers for partners



Approximately

33,000

women living in the ACT report having a disability. That's nearly 1 in 5 women living in the ACT .



NATIONALLY:



1 in 3 women

aged 15 years and older have experienced physical violence in the last five years.

1 in 5 women

have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 .

Women



spend more than twice as many hours each week looking after children compared to men .

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Women's Plan 2016-26 sets out the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to work in partnership with non-government organisations, business and the broader community towards gender equality for all ACT Women. It outlines priority areas for action and a structure for how work will be progressed to enhance the economic status, social inclusion, safety and wellbeing of ACT women, particularly groups of women subject to multiple layers of discrimination.

WHY DO WE NEED A WOMEN'S PLAN

Advancing gender equality in the ACT strengthens the ACT economy and creates social benefits for all Canberrans.

Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all (UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, message for International Women's Day, 8 March, 2014)

Through the dedicated and determined efforts of women, communities and governments there have been significant improvements to the status of women over the past 150 years. These efforts have seen progress in advancing individual women's rights including women's right to vote, their access to reproductive rights and their right to work for equal pay.

Despite these significant improvements to the status of women, gender inequality persists:

- > There is an 11.5 per cent gender pay gap in the ACT that favours men.
- > Women retire with less superannuation, less life savings and are less likely to be home owners.
- > Women carry the majority of responsibility for unpaid domestic work and unpaid caring.

- > The vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women and recent national research shows that societal messages to our girls and boys continue to normalise gender based violence and victim blaming.

These inequalities limit women and girls from realising their full potential and from equally accessing the opportunities and benefits our wealthy nation has to offer.

Work under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* will address the gender related causes of domestic and family violence. In doing so, it will contribute to the significant investment the ACT Government has made towards addressing domestic and family violence through the 2016-17 ACT Budget Safer Families Package.

CONSULTATION

The *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* builds on work already underway to better understand the needs of women and how best to support them. A key feature of the plan is the utilisation of the learnings of work already done across government and the community, as well as the enhancement of our understanding of what works to improve outcomes for ACT women.

The Ministerial Advisory Council on Women (MACW) provides strategic advice to the ACT Government on issues affecting women in the ACT, which has included providing advice on the development of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*. To inform this advice MACW has undertaken several forms of consultation.

Consultations include a 2014 Community Forum held by MACW with the support of the Office for Women. This forum collected feedback on the *ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015* with a view to informing the new plan.

Outcomes of the 2014 Community Forum included the expressed need for the new plan to:

- > support women who face multiple disadvantage; and
- > support efforts to end all forms of violence against women and girls and address women's most pressing health issues.

Also expressed was the need for there to be:

- > a focus on proactive policy measures;
- > a whole-of-government approach; and
- > for the plan to lead to meaningful effective actions.

In 2015, MACW conducted an online survey to gain further feedback from women across the ACT. The most commonly listed key issues for respondents were:

- > domestic violence;
- > health equality; and
- > safety.

More than 50 per cent of respondents listed domestic violence as a key issue. The most commonly listed area viewed to be in need of further funding was housing.

Consultation will continue throughout the life of the plan and will directly inform the development of action plans and progress reviews.

SETTING THE SCENE

There are a range of policies and programs in place in the ACT which support the full and equal participation of women.

- > The 2016-17 ACT Budget allocation for the \$21.42 million Safer Families package pursues urgent action for safer families in recognition of the increasing numbers of people, predominately women, reporting family and domestic violence and sexual assault. The package will provide an unprecedented investment to deliver a range of activities and innovative practices to achieve an integrated and collaborative single service system for those experiencing domestic violence and to respond to those who perpetrate violence.

These initiatives continue and boost work underway under the *ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017* and ACT's contribution to the implementation of *Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

- > Through funding contracts and grants programs, the ACT Government funds a range of women's services and organisations to provide women with targeted support and to improve the wellbeing and status of all ACT women.
- > The Women's Information Service, run by the ACT Office for Women, provides timely information and referral options for a range of issues including domestic violence, financial stress, access to housing, training and employment options and available community supports. The service is provided over the phone and in person through its office in the city centre, as well as through an outreach service operating across Canberra.

- > The ACT Government supports the development and promotion of women to positions of leadership. In 2016, ACT Government boards and committees achieved 48 per cent female membership. Each year workshops assisting women to progress in their director careers are hosted by the ACT Office for Women in partnership with the Australian Institute of Company Directors.
- > The ACT Women's Health Service provides a gender specific medical and counselling service which sees women who have significant difficulty in accessing health services due to the impact of violence, abuse or neglect, identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, language or cultural barriers, homelessness or risk of homelessness, substance abuse or mental health issues, disability or sexual identity issues.
- > ACT Health funds gender-specific services through Service Funding Agreements with Women's Centre for Health Matters, Brindabella Women's Group, and Majura Women's Group. These services recognise the role of social and economic factors in determining women's health, and aim to address factors such as isolation and access to information.
- > Work on the development and implementation of the Human Services Blueprint has assisted to understand what needs to be done to provide services which are more accessible, flexible and responsive to individual needs. This work includes the development of the West Belconnen Local Services Network which has drilled down at the local level to better understand the needs of residents and how things can be done differently to enhance outcomes. This includes examining, in particular, the needs of women and children.

The ACT Government acknowledges the important role that these and many other services and initiatives play, in supporting women and their families during times of need. It is important that future policy development and service planning consider the needs of women, which is a key objective of this plan.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE

The ACT 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 participate in all areas of Canberra life.

Removing barriers to the full and equal participation of women and girls is a human rights issue and is legislated in the ACT by the ACT *Human Rights Act 2004* and the ACT *Discrimination Act 1991*. The ACT was the first jurisdiction in Australia to enact a Human Rights Act. Upholding the human rights of every Canberran continues to be an absolute priority of the ACT Government.

This plan sets out a course of action which places the responsibility and accountability for achieving gender equality with all areas of government and sets a course of action to engage the whole of the ACT community to work with government to advance gender equality.

The ACT Women's Plan 2016-26 is informed by

- > United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- > Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).
- > United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles
- > United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)

Making gains in the full and equal participation of women and girls is consistent with and supports the ACT Government's priorities set out in:

- > ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017
- > ACT Government Response to Family Violence
- > ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015-2018
- > ACT Active Ageing Framework 2015-2018
- > ACT Multicultural Framework 2015-2020
- > Social Inclusion Statement (2016-17)
- > Involve – Canberra's Disability Commitment

OVERVIEW OF THE ACT WOMEN'S PLAN 2016-26

THE VISION

The ACT community values and respects women and girls, commits to gender equality and promotes and protects the rights, wellbeing and potential of all women and girls.

PRINCIPLES

The *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* is underpinned and guided by key principles:

- > **Equality**- of opportunity, access, security and independence
- > **Non-discrimination**- freedom from any form of discrimination, including assignment of stereotypical gender based roles
- > **Intersectionality**- key to understanding and responding to the needs of all women and girls is an understanding of the intersection of gender with other factors such as race, culture, disability, sexuality, experience of violence and economic status; and how women can face multiple and compounding levels of discrimination and vulnerability as a consequence
- > **Everyone's responsibility**- the necessity to work with women and men, across government, with non-government organisations, business and community to achieve gender equality
- > **Diversity**- every woman is valued for her uniqueness
- > **Safety**- all woman and girls have the right to safety and to live without fear.

PRIORITY AREAS

The *ACT Women’s Plan 2016-26* identifies the following priority areas for action

- Health and Wellbeing
- Housing and Homelessness
- Safety
- Economic Security
- Leadership

To achieve substantial change in each priority area, up to two priority areas will be focused on at any one time, through the development of three year action plans. Action plans will outline measures which all areas of ACT Government will be held accountable for progressing.

This whole of government approach is consistent with addressing the underlying causes and challenges women face in these areas as a result of intersecting factors.

For example, it is recognised that women’s health and wellbeing is impacted by access to education, employment, income and secure housing. Therefore, the reach for government and community effort to address women’s health issues extends beyond the health system.

	PRIORITY AREA	ACTION PLAN
2016	Development of First Action Plan	
2017-2019	Health and Wellbeing	First Action Plan
2020-2022	Housing and Homelessness Safety	Second Action Plan
2023-2025	Economic Security Leadership	Third Action Plan
2026	Consolidation and review	

GENDER ANALYSIS ACROSS ACT GOVERNMENT

Throughout the life of the Plan ACT Government Directorates will be accountable for ensuring gender is considered in the development of policies and programs. This may, for example include assigning a dedicated Gender Advisor for significant reforms, or ensuring robust processes are in place to address gender considerations throughout the policy/program development, implementation and review processes.

FOCUS ON INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the multiple forms of discrimination that can result when individual factors overlap, such as race, gender, age, ethnicity and disability. As a result it is necessary to recognise all factors that contribute to the multiple and compounding discrimination women face and how these factors are inextricably linked.

For example, rather than understanding women's health solely through the lens of gender, to fully understand women's health issues, it is necessary to also simultaneously consider other factors such as disability, age, class, sexual orientation and cultural identity and how these factors intersect.

While action plans will identify measures which will be taken to achieve positive gains against priority areas for all ACT women, there will also be a particular focus on achieving improved outcomes against priority areas for women who are at particular risk of discrimination, and which respond to the intersecting nature of discrimination.

There will be particular consideration of targeted measures for the following population groupings.

- > Women with disability
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- > Older women
- > Women who have experienced violence
- > Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
- > Single parent women

In addition, this plan recognises that gender is not a binary concept. Within each of the groups identified above, there may be some individuals who identify as female, transgender or intersex. This plan is therefore inclusive of sex and gender diversity.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Action plans will be developed through strong partnerships and consultation across government, and with non-government organisations, business and community members. This engagement will be a critical element to the creation of a sense of shared responsibility across government and the community for taking meaningful and effective action to improve the status and wellbeing of women over the life of the plan.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF WOMEN

A key theme to be addressed in each of the priority areas is the development of knowledge about the lives and challenges of women living in Canberra. A review will be taken of what is already known, including the identification of baseline data. Priority areas for further research and improved data collection will be identified.

Work in relation to better understanding the needs of population groups at risk of multiple layers of discrimination will focus initially on the development of our understanding of the life circumstances and challenges of these groups of women. It will examine the challenges faced and what options there are to effectively support women. Work will then focus on the implementation of targeted measures with a subsequent period of analysis of the success of these measures in order to further develop understandings and define future directions.

Canberra is fortunate to have a number of non-government organisations and tertiary educational institutions which conduct research in relation to issues of gender and the wellbeing of women living in Canberra. The ACT Government will work closely with these organisations throughout the life of the plan to better understand and address the needs of Canberra women.

This plan sets out a course of action which will not only establish what new initiatives are needed, but will also actively identify and strengthen measures currently being done by government and our community and business partners to effectively advance gender equality and the wellbeing of ACT women.

PRIORITY AREAS

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health and wellbeing is significantly impacted, if not determined, by access to resources outside a narrowly conceived health system. Education, employment and income, safe and affordable housing all contribute, with research consistently showing that areas of low socioeconomic position have the worst health outcomes, and the highest rates of avoidable death.

As women tend to be concentrated in lower wage positions or industries and are more likely to be in unpaid caring roles, the health burden of these social determinants is even greater for women. In addition, women are more exposed to marginalisation and discrimination, and more likely to be socially isolated or victims of past trauma. All are common barriers to women accessing the necessary resources to ensure good health and wellbeing.

In turn, health issues, and manifestations of health issues, are impacted by gender. A gender lens must therefore be applied to health care services in the ACT to differentiate between requirements for health related matters for males, females and those of diverse gender identities, and to ensure that affordable and accessible gender and culturally-sensitive health services are provided across the ACT.

There is a need for services and initiatives which respond to the different requirements of women and men and recognise that some health issues are particularly influential for women's wellbeing, including contraception and reproductive health, maternity care and birthing options, and the profound impact of past or current trauma and violence.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

We know that low income earners are particularly vulnerable to housing stress, with women therefore being especially vulnerable. Gender inequality factors such as attitudes towards gender roles and caring, violence against women and the gender pay gap all contribute to women's vulnerability to housing crisis.

There is a need for support for women to access sustainable housing to be responsive to the particular needs of women. Women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, those who have experienced violence, older women, and women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds may have specific housing needs and support that is sensitive to the range of challenges faced, including the need to provide trauma informed responses in the area of housing support.

SAFETY

The ACT Government is committed to putting in place measures to reduce the incidence of violence against women and girls and to ensure that they feel safe in their homes and communities.

This ongoing commitment will be addressed through the whole of government Safer Families Reforms which will result in transformation to the way our community works together to address family and domestic violence. This work adds and provides a significant boost to work currently underway through the Second Implementation Plan of the *ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017* and to ACT's contribution to the implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

The safety of women and girls in the ACT is related to gender equality. Women are less likely to experience violence when women's economic, social and political rights are adequately protected. Work under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* across all priority areas will contribute to the significant investment the ACT Government has made towards Safer Families by addressing the gender related causes of domestic and family violence.

Safety and perceptions of safety in public places are key to women's equal and full participation. There is a requirement for all areas of government to consider how to ensure women feel safe. In areas such as urban planning, public transport, and institutions such as university campuses, women's safety considerations are key.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

The ACT has the second lowest pay gap compared with other jurisdictions. However, at November 2015, ACT women working full-time ordinary hours each week earned on average \$1209, compared with ACT men, who earned \$1536 each week¹. Women tend to reach retirement age with significantly less superannuation and tend to have lower levels of life savings and home ownership.

Women who face discrimination and disadvantage as a result of a range of factors such as disability, being subject to violence and caring responsibilities have an increased risk of financial hardship.

Actions to be identified to improve ACT women's economic security will ensure the ACT Government continues to take action to work across government and with our non-government, community and business partners to identify measures to be taken to enhance women's economic security, particularly for groups of women who face disadvantage. This work will include enhancing opportunities for women within the ACT Public Service (ACTPS).

To make progress on women's economic security it is vital to examine what can be done across the lifespan. This includes consideration of factors such as girl's access to education and measures to facilitate girls to excel in subjects including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Other factors to be considered across the lifespan include: the need for flexible work options; women's increased likelihood of having a combination of low savings and minimal superannuation; the need for improved financial planning and literacy skills; and the ongoing need for supported pathways to employment for women who face particular challenges resulting from intersectionality.

LEADERSHIP

It is essential that women are able to take up leadership roles in order to influence decisions which affect their lives and to ensure women are able to realise their full potential.

The ACTPS, as an employer ensures measures are taken to promote gender equality within the ACTPS. Women make up 65 per cent of the ACTPS workforce. There has been a 4 per cent increase of women in senior executive roles over the last four years with 42 per cent of senior executive positions being held by women.

However, more men than women continue to take up leadership positions across decision making bodies and in public and private sector executive roles and there is still work to be done to enable women to take up leadership opportunities. While it is helpful to provide developmental opportunities for women to increase their capacity for leadership it is also important to address systemic and cultural barriers, including addressing gender-based discrimination.

Leadership empowers women and girls to have a voice and influence their community.

It is vital that decision making bodies are reflective of the communities they represent and that women with a range of life experiences and backgrounds are able to take up leadership positions. This includes women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, LGBTIQ women, women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and women who have experienced factors such as violence and living in poverty.

INTERSECTIONALITY

It is vital we better understand what can be done to effectively assist women who face intersecting factors of discrimination to achieve positive outcomes which are influential to their economic security, social inclusion, safety and wellbeing and which in turn promote positive outcomes for their children and for the community as a whole.

Importantly, positive outcomes in one area can improve outcomes in other areas, for example women gaining access to employment can reduce women's vulnerability to violence and homelessness as well as provide a range of health and wellbeing benefits.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015), *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, Nov 2015*, available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@nsf/DetailsPage/6302.0Nov%202015?OpenDocument>

SINGLE PARENT WOMEN

Lone mother families represent 12.9 per cent of families in the ACT, whilst lone father families represent 2.3 per cent of families in the ACT. These families tend to face significant financial stress. Forty per cent of the Salvation Army's emergency assistance clients were recently found to be single parents with two or more children².

Living under sustained financial stress can have serious impacts for women and their children, including reduced access to safe and secure housing. It can lead to stigmatisation and to poor health outcomes, including in the area of mental health.

Women provide the majority of informal care to family members and friends in need of care. Across Australia, women account for 92 per cent of primary carers for children with disabilities and 70 per cent of primary carers for parents.

Single parent women who are carers can face substantial financial stress, difficulty accessing affordable and appropriate housing and can be at heightened risk of poor physical and mental health outcomes.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITY

Women with disability play a valuable role in the social and economic life of our city. However, women with disability continue to face discrimination and exclusion in employment, education, in leadership and in social spheres. Making improvements to reduce attitudinal and structural barriers to the full participation of women with disability is vital to ensure all women are afforded their full human rights.

Violence against women with disability can go undetected, unreported or investigated and there can be particular barriers to accessing crisis accommodation and other supports. While it is not yet possible to adequately quantify the level of violence against women, there is evidence to suggest that up to 90 per cent of women with intellectual disability experience sexual assault at some time during their lives.

The forms of discrimination and disadvantage women with disability face are multiple and can have a compounding effect. Women with disability who face additional barriers require special consideration to effectively prevent them from exclusion and vulnerability to a range of disadvantages including poverty and violence. For example, a refugee woman with a disability may face discrimination on account of her gender, her disability and her ethnicity.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play an intricate role in their family and community and are an integral part of the ACT community.

Overcoming the disadvantage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face requires holistic support to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to reach their potential. This support must allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls to have full access to education, health, employment, leadership roles and to be able to live free from violence.

Work in this area will be undertaken in close consultation with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

OLDER WOMEN

More older people want to work into their 60s and 70s and we know as a community this is beneficial for their wellbeing and the nation's economic growth. However currently, only one in three Australians over the age of 55 are taking part in the workforce.

Discrimination in the workforce, as well as limited opportunities to enter the workforce can reduce older women's access to employment, reducing older women's options regarding their career aspirations and their overall living and family arrangements.

It is recognised that there is an increasing number of older ACT women facing homelessness later in life. Factors contributing to this may include the death of a spouse, divorce or separation and the fact that women tend to retire with significantly less superannuation and life savings. Women subjected to abuse may be particularly vulnerable to homelessness later in life.

² The Salvation Army (2015), *National Economic and Social Impact Survey, 2015*

WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE

While the *ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017* has been developed to address violence against women, there is a need to develop a better understanding of the impact of violence across the lifespan. Factors such as the longer term impact of trauma for women and the risk of women and families entering a cycle of poverty require closer examination to know how to mitigate the long-term invasive impact of violence.

WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Migrant and refugee women can be disadvantaged as a result of factors including financial hardship, lack of adequately targeted support and difficulties relating to a new language, culture and laws.

These factors can lead to difficulty accessing available supports, limiting options to build connections and natural support networks in the community and reduced access to employment and education.

Migrant and refugee women are at heightened risk of domestic violence and of not being able to access the support required to address domestic violence. Difficulties include cultural and language barriers to being able to report abuse and access to culturally appropriate accommodation.

The experiences of migrant and refugee women are highly diverse and include the need to consider women in multiple situations, including the challenges faced by international students. While women who migrate to Australia as skilled migrants often are able to secure employment and the benefits this bring, these women and their children can still face a range of challenges.

MEASURING PROGRESS

ACT Women's Plan 2016-26 Action Plans will identify specific outcomes. Progress towards achieving these outcomes will be tracked throughout the life of the plan. These outcomes will include measurable targets wherever possible.

REPORTING FRAMEWORK

To achieve progress it is essential that all areas of government be held accountable for implementing actions that are shown over time to be effective in progressing gender equality and enhanced outcomes for ACT women.

Annually, in the lead up to the International Women's Day, each ACT Directorate will be required to report on their progress against action items outlined in the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26*.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The ACT Government is committed to working actively to achieve gender equality. Every woman and girl living in the ACT should be able to reach their potential and to participate, contribute to and gain from all our city has to offer.

Under the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-26* all ACT Government Directorates will be engaged to develop three year action plans to identify meaningful, effective actions to address the overarching priority to advance gender equality in the ACT. This includes a commitment to ensure gender is considered in the development of policies and programs.

Progress under the plan will be tracked through measurable targets. All ACT Government Directorates will be held accountable for their progress against targets, with outcomes being reported through the annual International Women's Day Statement tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

ACT Government Directorates will engage the community sector, the private sector and the community as a whole to build commitment across the ACT to advance gender equality.

Ongoing commitment and strong leadership is required to achieve gender equality in our community. Together as a whole community over the next ten years we commit to actively working towards achieving our goal of making gender equality a reality.



