

STATEMENT OF INTENT 2026 - 2029: ACT GOVERNMENT AND UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA REFRESH CIVIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT TO GROW THE REGION FOR GOOD, TOGETHER

Chief Minister's and Vice-Chancellor's shared socio-economic priorities supporting sustainable growth and development of Canberra and the regions and UC's renewal through stronger governance, transparency and accountability

Canberra has emerged as the knowledge capital of Australia, with the considerable strength of the Territory's tertiary education and innovation sectors contributing significantly to the region's rapid growth and development. The ACT Government is clear in its ambition to foster Canberra's knowledge economy, contributing to the development of a more inclusive, sustainable, future-ready Canberra.

Underpinning the positioning of Canberra as an education, research and innovation hub is the University of Canberra (UC), the only University established by Territory legislation with a clear remit to serve the needs and interests of the ACT people. UC is an anchor institution deeply embedded in its place, with an educational mission intrinsically tied to lifting the economic and social capital of our region. UC prioritises access and opportunity to education, addressing local skills need and workforce development, delivering applied research that benefits the local community, and contributing to the wellbeing, sustainability and cultural life of Canberra.

Through our joint priorities, and in regard to UC's distinctive role within the ACT higher education landscape, UC plays an important role as the premier higher education partner of the ACT Government. UC leads in the delivery of the Territory's tertiary education aspirations. We have a shared vision of success: a thriving tertiary education ecosystem that attracts the best talent, meets emerging skills and workforce needs, delivers investment back to the region, and positions the region for long-term socio-economic prosperity.

The ACT Government and the University, through the Chief Minister and Vice-Chancellor respectively, come together in this Statement of Intent to affirm our commitment to joint action and collaboration focused on the growth, governance and the development of Canberra as a knowledge city.

This Statement provides transparency and accountability to our shared work as we deliver on the priorities that matter to Canberra and Canberrans, and updates the previous Civic Partnership Agreement between the ACT Government and UC, providing a more direct line of accountability at the most senior level of leadership.



Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister
ACT Government



Professor the Honourable Bill Shorten
Vice-Chancellor and President
University of Canberra

OUR SHARED PRIORITIES AND KEY DELIVERABLES

Effective institutional governance

UC is committed to continual improvement of its corporate governance mechanisms and strengthened internal controls to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services and operational sustainability. The University works closely and transparently with the Territory and Federal governments, in keeping with obligations under the UC Act and national legislative requirements.

This includes an understanding of the amendments made to the Higher Education Standards Framework as part of the Federal Government's response to recommendations from the Expert Council on University Governance and the Senate *Inquiry into the Quality of governance at Australian Higher Education Providers*, and the related development of University Governance Principles that provide a clear benchmark for good governance across the higher education sector and set out contemporary expectations for accountability, integrity, transparency, effective decision-making and institutional stewardship.

UC is part of the first phase of higher education providers required to report to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency on its compliance with the new University Governance Principles, across eight key themes covering accountability, the inclusion of a diversity of perspectives, independence, transparency, trustworthiness, inclusiveness and responsiveness, sustainability, and responsibility.

As the Territory's only legislated higher education provider, UC stands alone in directly answering to the priorities and objectives of the ACT Government. To ensure ongoing confidence in UC's operational delivery, it is therefore critical for the ACT Government to not only have oversight of UC's compliance in meeting its obligations under the Act (and other relevant instruments), but also its response to any reforms at a whole-of-sector level.

Actions:

1. satisfy the ACT Government that it is working with students, staff, and their representatives to enhance governance structures and transparency at the University in the delivery of ongoing governance reform, which includes:
 - a. compliance with the University Governance Principles, any related reporting requirements, and any additional reforms at the whole-of-sector level, including:
 - i. compliance with any Remuneration Tribunal framework to determine the vice-chancellors' remuneration.
 - b. supporting elected representation on the UC Council to a minimum of 40 per cent.
 - c. commitment to a strong voice for staff and students on the UC Council, and
 - d. exploring the establishment of an Independent Student Union.
2. review the Annual Report framework and other institutional reporting mechanisms to enable greater visibility and transparency of UC performance, and
3. review and consolidate UC's statutes.

Knowledge-based economic growth and workforce capability

UC will prioritise the delivery of educational offerings in areas that match ACT workforce and public sector needs. This will include creating more streamlined pathways across the whole of tertiary education, positioning Canberra as a national sector leader in tertiary harmonisation.

We will come together to develop a shared vision for the post-secondary educational environment that is centred around the learner experience and better meets emerging and future skills and industry need. We will achieve this through exploration of dual sector establishment; more streamlined recognition of prior learning and experience; expansion of microcredentials, short courses and executive education; and better integration of work-integrated learning into the UC curriculum. This directly supports the ACT Government's mission for continued knowledge-based economic growth and Canberra's attractiveness as a place to live, work, study, invest and do business.

Actions

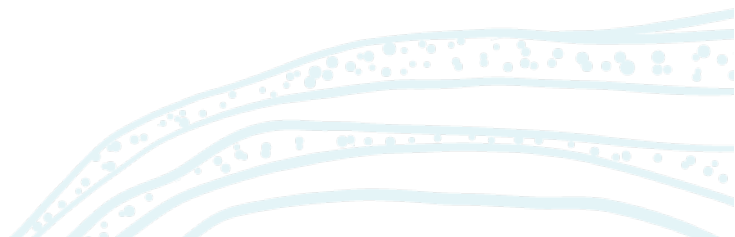
1. establish a joint working group with ACT Government, industry, and professional bodies.
2. align priority courses and disciplines to ACT skills gaps, reporting through to the working group.
3. expand ACT public sector placements and develop clear graduate pipelines, and
4. develop executive training and professional education offerings for ACT Government Directorates.

Civic leadership, public policy and community engagement

UC is the university "for Canberra", contributing to thought leadership, evidence-based policy, public debate and community engagement that benefits our place. This aligns with the ACT Government's focus on connected, adaptive and opportunity-rich economic development. UC will leverage the teaching, research and policy expertise of its people, as well as its physical and digital resources, to contribute to sound policy development and decision making and leadership of the Territory.

Actions:

1. work together to foster connections between the Canberra community, local business, and industry, ACT Government and the tertiary sector.
2. create regular policy forums with government, industry, and community, and
3. build mechanisms for public input into campus and major university plans.



Health, wellbeing and inclusive participation

UC contributes to the health and wellbeing of our local population through the delivery of education and training that supplies the critical workforces underpinning the ACT economy, namely teaching, healthcare, building and construction and public services. It also provides essential services, such as early childhood education and healthcare, direct to the local community. Much research across areas spanning allied health, education, community services, sports sciences, environmental sciences and communications, is linked to addressing the critical issues and wicked problems facing our populace.

This activity maps closely with the ACT Government's objectives under the ACT Wellbeing Framework. In this way, UC supports ACT Government's broader ambition for Canberra to remain inclusive, sustainable and full of opportunity as it grows.

Actions:

1. co-design research and education activity with ACT Government and community partners.
2. collaborate with ACT Government and the community to identify the emerging challenges and needs of our growing community across health, education, and other sectors, and
3. pursue research and commercial partnerships in healthy ageing, sustainability and climate resilience, emerging technologies, and education services.

Sustainability, infrastructure and campus as civic asset

UC's broad ambition for the development of its physical campuses is to ensure greater integration of our teaching and research facilities with community infrastructure, industry hubs, essential services and residential accommodation. Campuses should be open and accessible, a reflection of the needs of the community in which they operate. With a shared focus on breaking the silos between vocational, higher education, industry and government, so should the UC campus be a space where all members of our community feel a sense of connection and place. UC's focus on green campus development, net zero procurement and sustainable infrastructure is also directly aligned with the ACT Government's mission for a climate-ready city leading Australia's net zero future.

Actions:

1. align campus development initiatives with ACT sustainability and infrastructure priorities.
2. use campus development to improve public access, cultural life, health, sport, and community participation, and
3. progress the development of campus infrastructure and facilities to be used as regional assets.

Global profile, social and cultural economy

UC's ambitions to expand international education, TNE, research collaborations and student mobility complement the ACT Government's aim to improve Canberra's global profile and support Brand CBR. Together we will work to ensure that Canberra remains an attractive destination for study, investment, business and talent.

Actions:

1. leverage UC's reputation to strengthen Canberra's educational brand.
2. develop targeted global education partnerships that export Canberra's talent and resources to the world, and
3. partner in major cultural, innovation and community events.

Implementation

The existing Civic Engagement Joint Working Group will be reconstituted to oversee the actions delivered under this Statement of Intent.

