



Response to the ANUSA Welfare Officer's Cost Of Living Report 2025

February 2026

This document sets out the University's response to the recommendations of the 2025 Cost of Living Report prepared by the ANU Welfare Officer in 2025. We would like to start by thanking the student leaders within ANUSA for producing this report with associated recommendations, and those students who participated in the survey.

There is a cost-of-living crisis within Australia, and as has been noted through this report and various others across the sector, students are far from immune to the challenges rises in costs present. This issue is a key social policy issue in Australia, for students as well as staff and the broader community. It is one that is recognised at the highest levels of government as evidenced by the recent 2025-26 Cost of Living Budget Statement from the ACT Government and inclusion in advice to Ministers by the Expert Council on University Governance. While the University continues to engage in services and support to address these challenges, this report assists us with continuing to understand the experience of students within our community to support the review of said services and consideration of future works.

There were several recommendations outlined in the report which we address below. Some of this work will be considered as part of the Basic Needs Working Group which is set to commence in 2026 with a remit to increase students' awareness of both University and community-based support and implement a whole-of-university approach to understanding and supporting basic needs to increase collaboration, minimise duplication and deliver programs to meet basic needs.

2025 Cost of Living Report recommendations

Housing and rent pressures

Report recommendations	ANU response
ANU to justify rental increases to occupants.	<p>ANU undertakes an annual review of the weekly accommodation tariffs. This annual reassessment of all room types can result in increases or decreases across the portfolio. In all cases, weekly tariffs are independently assessed by an external valuer to ensure they are no more than 75 per cent of market value.</p> <p>Costs for utilities such as water, gas, electricity and internet are reviewed annually. No margin is sought on these services, with any increases reflecting the general increase in utilities as observed across the wider ACT (and national) community.</p> <p>Costs related to legislative obligations on the University such as the National Code (such as 24/7 staffing) have been absorbed by the University and not passed onto students.</p> <p>The University provides a confidential brief (due to commercial in confidence requirements) to the</p>

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	ANUSA President each year. This brief outlines the detailed considerations made in setting the coming year's residential tariffs.
Expand affordable on-campus accommodation priced at \$250 or lower.	<p>The University aims to provide as many affordable on-campus options as possible. Consideration could be given to modelling some residences being priced at a lower rate (\$250 or lower) but this may impact the pricing of more expensive offerings. This relates to the ability to retain GST free status as each individual residence must be valued at below the 75 per cent market threshold.</p> <p>The University has arranged for several rental rebate schemes to be actioned in 2026. The University will continue to assess options such as additional accommodation bursaries and welcome student feedback on constructive ways to ease this cost-of-living pressure.</p>
Partner with the ACT Government on student housing.	While ANU is not in a position to directly partner with the ACT Government and community to provide student housing, we agree this is an important issue that we should engage on and will explore further. This engagement would be best undertaken in collaboration with the other Canberra-based universities and will allow us to build on our existing strong relationship with ACT Government. We anticipate that the Government will be open to hearing ANUSA views and recommendations as higher education is a priority for them with ACT being a knowledge-based economy with key government and educational services, including a focus on international education.
Increase financial assistance for housing on and off campus.	The University currently provides a number of different scholarships to students in the form of stipends. This allows the student the agency to determine how to allocate the funding to what is putting pressure on their financial situation rather than the University assuming how the high cost of living is impacting them as an individual. The University agrees that scholarships need to be more generous which is why there has recently been an increase to the minimum value for any ANU Scholarships from \$5,000 to \$9,000 per annum per student. The University continues to explore how financial awards and assistance provided through various mechanisms can assist to reduce pressure on students struggling with the cost of living.

Healthcare access and services

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Urgently increase GP services on campus to ensure access to bulk-billed healthcare.	<p>ANU Medical Centre is fully bulk-billed for students. GP services have increased significantly in 2025 with the return of a former GP 3.5 days per week and the commencement of two doctors offering an additional three days per week. A locum provides appointments during peak times. Two Nurse Practitioners have commenced in the Medical Centre offering 5 days.</p> <p>The Academic Portfolio Change Proposal includes additional Nurse Practitioner hours.</p> <p>When fully staffed, the model provides for 2.6 FTE Nurse Practitioners undertaking clinical work, with a further 0.4 FTE allocated to clinic management and staff supervision. GP headcount is 1.3 FTE with additional locum support at peak times.</p> <p>At present, there is limited publicly available information that would allow us to undertake direct benchmarking against other local providers.</p>
Improve medical support for international students.	All international students have full access to the Centre. The International Health Coverage ensures that services are free. This occurs because Medicare and OHSC provide a partial rebate, and ANU currently meets the remaining gap through SSAF funding. This arrangement has been important in ensuring we remain competitive and able to attract and retain doctors within the Centre. There is potential to expand our service provision, but this would require an increase in the SSAF contribution. If the funding gap was passed on to students, we would no longer be able to offer the service for free, which may affect accessibility and uptake.
Improve communication regarding off-campus health services.	The website contains information on all bulk billing services in the ACT.

Transport and parking

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ANU and ACT Government to provide expanded public transport to ANU campus hubs.	Campus Environment will continue engagement with ACT Government and Transport Canberra on bus availability, noting the University will be introducing a campus bus in 2026, which will link up with all major transport routes across the ACT.
ANU to review and reconsider parking fee increases.	An extensive benchmarking exercise was completed in 2024 to ensure parking rates aligned with that of the broader community. Student resident permit rates were reduced in 2026 from \$7.19/day (\$2,624.35 p.a) to \$4.90/day (\$1,786.93

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	p.a). All other permit rates were frozen for 2026 with the traditional CPI increases not applied.
Increase designated parking for students.	Parking availability has dramatically improved in 2025. 2026 will see further data collection of parking availability to inform future decision making around current supply of parking, introduction of the campus bus will allow students to easily traverse to all parts of the campus.
Reintroduce a campus shuttle service.	Campus Environment has commenced a trial bus on campus which commenced in February 2026, this has been put in place to service our community and provide stronger links from the campus to public transport and ease of access to traverse campus, there will be no cost to this service for users

Food security and grocery costs

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ANU to provide funding to food pantry services to service up to 200 to 300 students a week.	<p>Following on from conversations with ANUSA to understand funding requirements, student utilisation and demographics, and potential options to effectively support the pantry, the University will provide \$30,000 to the Union Pantry for 2026 from external funding dedicated to supporting the health and wellbeing of international students. Conversations will continue on other potential supports required or opportunities to contribute.</p> <p>Additionally, collaboration will continue between ANUSA and Community Connect to support students with high levels of food insecurity engage with the service. The eligibility criteria for Community Connect is that the student is experiencing a high-level of food insecurity. This service is not intended to serve all students, but to complement the existing services on campus to provide more to students with significantly less. By collaborating with the ANUSA Union Pantry, there is an opportunity for students with high levels of need to be identified and directed into Community Connect for additional supports.</p>
Subsidise on-campus food options.	<p>This will be explored as a potential option with on-campus vendors to examine whether there is a potential to subsidise a select number of meals to achieve this price point, or incentives for vendors to provide set meals at a reduced price point.</p> <p>Work will also be done to map where on campus there are microwaves, spaces to eat, and other requirements to support students bringing food from home more easily.</p>

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	Additionally, work will be done to increase the visibility of the various food support services, low-cost meals, and activities which specifically seek to include meals for students to increase student awareness and use.

General

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ANU and ANUSA to make submissions to government to lower the age of independence for Youth Allowance and Abstudy payments.	The University notes and acknowledges the view of ANUSA on this matter. As this is a policy matter for Government, we recommend that ANUSA convey their views directly with the relevant Minister.
More concessions to working students.	The University looks forward to working with ANUSA on policy changes that can more openly acknowledge the balance between study, work and personal life. The Teaching and Learning Strategy will be refreshed in 2026 and there will be opportunities to further discuss how to deliver teaching to students.
Enhance cultural safety and accessibility and expanded support for equity groups.	The Student Equity team within Inclusive and Respectful Communities has a remit to support equity groups, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This is delivered through the First Year Experience, First Generation, and Basic Needs Support programs, with Basic Needs Support providing both in kind and financial assistance. The service experienced a fourfold increase in demand in 2025 compared to 2024. In response, the team has strengthened its digital capabilities to ensure continuity and accessibility of support. We recognise the impact of cost-of-living pressures and funding changes at the federal level and are actively exploring additional funding sources to sustain and enhance this vital support. We are committed to genuine participation and respectful engagement with students, sharing agency and holding space for authentic listening, to better understand their experiences and priorities. These insights will inform and guide improvements to the Basic Needs Support program into the next year, with a focus on enhancing cultural safety, accessibility, responsiveness and the overall quality of support for equity students.
Invest further in campus community services.	The university is making significant investments to better support student wellbeing and success. This includes increasing staffing across key areas such as counselling, case management, accessibility, intake, and the medical centre, ensuring students have timely access to care and guidance. In addition to expanding teams, the

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	<p>university is implementing improved service delivery models that prioritise access, early intervention, and holistic and collaborative support. These enhancements reflect the university's ongoing commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and responsive campus environment for all students.</p>
<p>Audit the impact of university financial decisions on students.</p>	<p>The University completed a commuter survey in Q4 2025, out of that survey 85% of respondents directly raised the parking rate increases as a reason for choosing alternate methods of travelling to the University. In terms of permit usage, as of 31 October 2025 active student surface permits were down by 66% from the same time in 2024, resident permits were down by 28%.</p> <p>Survey data (such as the ANU Welcome Survey) shows that international students report higher concern about cost of living compared to domestic students. Financial assistance from the accommodation bursary has been expanded over recent years to include both international and domestic students.</p>
<p>Strengthen student consultation.</p>	<p>As part of the annual tariff-setting process for on-campus student accommodation, the Heads of Residence discuss with student leaders what changes students are seeking related to pricing within individual residences. Pricing-related comments in the annual residential survey, other surveys (such as the ANU Welcome Survey) and market insights are also taken into consideration.</p>
<p>Integrate and consider the cost of living into ANU's strategy.</p>	<p>Agreed to include in key ANU strategic documents. The current Student Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2024-2026 includes addressing basic needs broadly within the student community and will continue to be present in similar plans. This is something we invite ANUSA to also pursue through the ANU 2026 strategic planning exercises.</p>