

A Guide to Getting Around in Canberra

Transport information for older ACT residents

This guide has been put together to help you find your way around the transport system in Canberra.

There is information about accessing buses, community transport, and taxi options, as well as suggestions about what to do if you're faced with giving up driving.

Where possible, we've listed the numbers you can ring (and places you can go) to get information in hard copy in case you don't use the internet.

If you need to know more, call Access Canberra on 13 22 81, the Seniors Information Line on 02 6282 3777 or ACTION on 13 17 10.

This brochure was developed by the Council on the Ageing (COTA ACT) with assistance from Territory and Municipal Services. COTA ACT is the peak organisation concerned with all issues related to ageing. We are an independent, non-party political and non-religious organisation. We offer a range of services and support options for older people in the ACT community.

Feedback is very welcome and can be directed to COTA ACT, by phone 02 6282 3777, mail to Hughes Community Centre, Wisdom St. Hughes, ACT, 2605 (PO Box 5566 Hughes ACT 2605) or email to policy@cotaact.org.au.

If you notice any errors, please let COTA know.

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GETTING AROUND BY BUS

ACTION is the main provider of bus services in Canberra. Information about ACTION services is available by:

- Checking the web site at www.action.act.gov.au.
- Ringing ACTION on 13 17 10.
- Information **in hard copy** is available at Bus Stations and MyWay Recharge Agents.

MyWay is a prepaid ticketing system for travel on ACTION buses. The smartcard technology enables money value and/or travel entitlements to be stored on the card. Dependent on your eligible concessions, your MyWay card can be purchased at a MyWay Recharge Agent or Access Canberra Shopfront. Before visiting, phone ACTION on 13 17 10 or www.transport.act.gov.au to find your nearest location.

ACTION services include:

- Weekday services
- Xpress/peak hour (the '700' series)
- Rapid (the '200' Red Rapid and the '300' Blue Rapid series)
- Weekend services (the '900' series)
- Public holiday services, run on the Sunday timetable apart from Christmas Day
- A holiday timetable over the Christmas and New Year period.
- *Be aware that weekend services may run hourly or less frequently and may not have the same number or route as your usual bus on weekdays. You may also need to use a different platform at bus stations. Check with ACTION if you are unsure.*

Planning your trip

Route maps and timetables are available from the ACTION website www.action.act.gov.au and Access Canberra Shopfronts. You can also call ACTION on 13 17 10.

ACTION's online **Transit Trip Planner** is a useful online tool for getting around by bus, including times, connections and how much walking is involved.

All bus stops in Canberra are now numbered with a four digit number. The routes servicing any stop, by stop number, can be looked up on the website or by calling ACTION.

You can also text the stop number to ACTION (0432 13 17 10) to get route and timetable information via mobile phone. For more information about this, see **NXTBUS**.

NXTBUS

ACTION has introduced a real time bus information system, **NXTBUS**. Buses are fitted with screens and audio systems that tell you where you are on the route, but you can also use NXTBUS to find out:

- which buses are passing your stop and when
- how far away (in minutes) your bus is right now
- whether the next bus is easy-access and/or fitted with bike racks
- what routes are departing your stop around a particular specified time

To find out more, call ACTION on 13 17 10.

How do I pay?

If you are under 60, you can get a MyWay card via the ACTION website, by calling 13 17 10 or from Access Canberra Shopfronts and MyWay Recharge agents (if you're 60 or over may be eligible for a MyWay/Seniors card – see below).

If you are under 70, you can pay on the bus with cash or by tagging your MyWay card on the scanning machine. Remember to scan when getting on and off the bus as this makes it significantly cheaper.

If you are 70 or over and live in the ACT, ACTION bus travel is FREE. However, you still need a MyWay/Seniors Card.

MyWay cards can be automatically topped up from your bank account, over the phone, online (<https://www.action.act.gov.au/fares>) or at a Access Canberra Shopfront or MyWay Recharge agent. For more information, ring or visit Access Canberra.

Concessions

You are entitled to concessional fares if you hold an ACT Seniors Card, a combined Seniors/MyWay card, or a Department of Social Services or Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card.

If you are an ACT resident, aged 60 or over, and work less than 20 hours (paid) a week, you can get a combined **Seniors/MyWay** card from any ACT library, Access Canberra Shopfront or the COTA ACT offices in the Hughes Community Centre.

What if I have a disability, vision impairment or mobility problem?

ACTION's fleet includes easy access buses (with ramps instead of steps) for people with reduced mobility. Accessible bus routes are marked with an orange wheelchair on the ACTION online timetables (or you can ring to find out when they service your stop).

- *Be aware that occasionally (because of unavoidable circumstances such as breakdowns) the accessible bus may not arrive as specified in the timetable. If you have a mobile phone, you can use NXTBUS to check the actual bus departure time.*

If you have a mobility issue, ask the driver to put down the ramp or lower the bus as needed. Unfortunately bus drivers are unable to help with shopping or equipment, because of work health and safety concerns.

If you regularly need a wheelchair-accessible bus on your route, you can contact ACTION to register your request and they will try to oblige.

Accessible buses are designed for mobility aids (such as walkers, scooters and wheelchairs). There are some limitations regarding size, weight and other specifications, so ring ACTION or check the ACTION website.

ACTION has a range of other services for people with impairments, including:

- ACTION publications available in an alternative format such as large print, braille or audio. Call 13 17 10 for assistance.
- Help with translating and interpreting if English is not your first language (call 13 14 50).
- A TTY typewriter service for the deaf or hearing impaired and a teletype service for the hearing impaired. Call the ACTION Customer Service Centre (02 6207 0494).
- Free bus passes for the vision-impaired and an attendant. Assistance dogs ARE allowed on ACTION buses.
- Bus hailing kits for the vision impaired. These consist of a clear plastic pouch with three slots for numbered inserts. These display the required route number to drivers. They have large, raised print and Braille. These are available from Vision Australia, Canberra Blind Society and Guide Dogs Australia, or call ACTION on 131710.
- *Seniors (as well as pregnant women and people with disabilities) have priority seating on buses, in specially marked seats at the front of the passenger area.*

For more info see www.action.act.gov.au/rider_Info/accessible_travel

What can the driver do to help?

A driver can let you know when your stop comes up, if you ask, and may also be able to help you with other bus-related advice. **Do not get up while the bus is moving.**

Transport Officers are available at major interchanges to help you with connections and give directions within the interchange.

HELP!

If you need help or information about buses, you can:

- call ACTION about routes, timetables, services and accessibility on 13 17 10
- ask your driver or staff members at a bus station
- visit the ACTION website at www.action.act.gov.au

Compliments and complaints

If you have concerns or compliments, let ACTION know, either via the web site (www.action.act.gov.au/About_ACTION/customer_service) or by calling 13 17 10.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

I can't catch the bus – what else is there?

The ACT's Regional Community Service Organisations (see below) provide flexible (usually door to door) transport for ACT residents who are eligible for Commonwealth-funded aged care services, or who are isolated, living with a disability, or have limited access to other transport options. This is not available if you live in an aged care facility or retirement village which has its own transport.

Transport is available for both medical and social purposes, but high demand and limited resources mean that services sometimes prioritise medical transport (visits to hospital, doctors) ahead of social transport needs. Transport is provided by paid drivers and by volunteers, often driving their own cars.

Many of the Regional Community Service Organisations organise social outings on a regular basis, as well as offering a range of other support services. You can ring up and ask what is available – trips are enjoyable and a good way to make new friends.

How do I access community transport?

To use community transport, you need to register with the Regional Community Service Organisation in your area. If you are over 65, you will need to contact MyAgedCare on 1800 200 422 for an assessment first. Once assessed and registered, you can ring one of the following to make a booking:

Belconnen Community Services	02 6278 8124
Communities@Work (Gungahlin, Tuggeranong)	02 6126 9090
Northside Community Service	02 6247 5757
Community Services #1 (formerly Southside Community Service)	02 6126 4780
Woden Community Services	02 6181 2828

Who is eligible?

Call the service in your local area for advice on what transport assistance they can offer you, taking into account your individual circumstances as well as local resources. Belconnen Community Services offers a whole-of-Canberra service.

How much does it cost?

Some services ask for a gold coin donation, while others might require a small fee.

How far ahead do I have to book?

Some services require a 2-3 week booking notice but some only need to be booked at least two days before the planned trip.

Other options

The ACT Government's Community Transport Coordination Centre provides a flexible bus service to seniors 70 years and above, people with a disability and indigenous residents. The service is free and operates in all areas of Canberra except Gungahlin and the inner North. The service provides transport to the major shopping centres, hospitals and doctors' surgeries. The service picks up passengers from home five days a week from 9.30am - 1.30pm. Bookings may be made by calling 6205 3555, with 24 hours notice.

Some organisations that provide home support to older people also provide transport for any purpose privately on a fee-for-service basis. These include:

- Just Better Care - call 02 6280 4070. Rates are \$1.10 per kilometre.
- IRT Home Care – call 02 6233 8236. Rates are \$50 plus the cost of fuel. One weeks' notice is required for bookings.
- Kincare – call 1300 733 510. Rates are \$35 per 30 minutes plus \$1.20 per km. 48 hours' notice is required for bookings.
- Australian Health Call Group – call 6251 4599. Rates are \$1.03 per km. 48 hours' notice is required for bookings.

- *Tip: The availability of community transport is limited by provider resources, so pick-up and drop-off times may not exactly suit your schedule. To solve this, you could consider using a taxi for one part of your trip, OR check if transport is available to the bus station (and use an ACTION bus for the rest of your trip).*

TAXI SERVICES

I need a wheelchair-accessible taxi (WAT)

- To book a wheelchair-accessible taxi, ring the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) Centralised **Booking Service, 13WATS (13 92 87)**.

Taxi services available in Canberra

Canberra Elite

- Phone: 13 22 27 or SMS your name, pickup address and time to be collected to 0417 672 773.
- You can ask at the time of booking to be sent an SMS on your mobile phone to advise that a taxi has been despatched, and when it is about to arrive (usually, about 1 km from your point of departure).
- The service uses an automated voice-recognition system.

Cabxpress

- Phone: 02 6181 2700 for standard bookings
- A real person (rather than a voice recognition system) will take your booking.

Silver Service

- Phone: 13 31 00
- This premium service advertises accredited silver standards (including enhanced driver training), and guaranteed delivery times for bookings. The rates are the same as for other taxi services, but an additional booking fee applies.
- A real person (rather than a voice recognition system) will take your booking.

Cost

Taxis can be an expensive form of transport – but there are a few ways to reduce the cost.

If you share your taxi with one or more other people, the cost per person should be reduced (check with your taxi company at time of booking).

Only pay the driver the **metered fare** at the end of the hiring. The only additional charge you can be asked to pay is a \$3 airport toll for journeys starting at the airport.

Taxi Subsidy Scheme

The **ACT Government Taxi Subsidy Scheme** provides a discount for permanent residents of the ACT who, due to a severe activity limitation, can't use public transport. Depending on the extent of your mobility limitation, you may receive either a 50% or 75% subsidy. The Scheme only applies the discount on fares up to a certain amount. If your fare is more than this amount, the additional cost won't be discounted.

You can find information and application forms on the ACT Government Assistance website at www.assistance.act.gov.au/child/transport_and_registration/taxi_subsidy_scheme

or call 02 6205 1012. The form has to be filled in by an authorised medical practitioner.

What can you expect from a Canberra taxi driver?

Canberra's taxi drivers are required by law to meet certain standards (under the *ACT Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Regulations 2002*). These include treating you with respect, courtesy and providing reasonable assistance with luggage (up to a certain weight).

Drivers are not allowed to refuse a hiring except under limited conditions (for instance if the passenger is drunk, dirty, doesn't have the taxi fare, or wants to go outside the ACT taxi region). If a driver does refuse passage, you can report the incident (see below).

Safety, Complaints and Compliments

In general, taxis in Canberra are very safe. However, there are some ways to feel more secure when using taxis, or if you wish to make a complaint:

- Every taxi **MUST** have the taxi driver's photo and number clearly displayed on the dashboard. You can note the number of the driver and make a complaint later.
- Try to remember as much information as you can - for example, the taxi number and the date and time of the hiring - as this will help in following up your complaint.
- *Tip: Some taxi drivers offer their phone number so that people can ring them directly to book a trip. If you find a driver you like, this can be very convenient – but be aware that there may be risks in being 'off the system'.*
- Taxis booked by phone or internet will have a record of your booking with the taxi company. This will make complaints easier to follow up. To make a complaint, contact the taxi network that undertook the hiring OR call the Office of Regulatory Services, Public Transport Regulation on 6205 4585 (email taxiservices@act.gov.au). They can follow up complaints on your behalf. It is possible to remain anonymous.

UBER

In addition to taxis, you now have the option of booking with Uber in Canberra. Uber is a smartphone application that enables you to book a ride with a driver in their own personal vehicle. It is often, but not always, much cheaper than a taxi, and can also accommodate people with disabilities (Uber X).

To use Uber, you need a smartphone and a credit card (no cash accepted). At time of publication Uber does not accept taxi subsidy scheme cards. If you want to try Uber but don't know how, you can visit the Uber site at www.help.uber.com/ or call COTA ACT for referral to our Tech Volunteer.

DRIVING

Disability parking

If you have a disability which makes it difficult for you to walk from your car to a destination, you may be eligible to get a disability parking permit. To apply, or to check your eligibility, you can go online at www.rego.act.gov.au/parking/special-parking-permits/australian-disability-parking-permits or call Access Canberra on 13 22 81. Applications must be assessed by a medical practitioner or specialist eye doctor.

Transitioning from Driving

There may come a time when you want to minimise your driving, drive only during the day or within your local area, or even consider stopping driving altogether. Sometimes you can be forced to stop driving unexpectedly – for instance, you might get sick, have a crash, or be advised to give up your driving licence.

If you are unsure about your driving ability, consider getting an assessment of your driving skills from a trained assessor, or booking a few sessions with an accredited Older Driver Refresher Trainer. You can book with the NRMA Safer Driving School on 1300 696 762 or online at www.nrmasaferdriving.com.au. To find out about other help that may be available, call COTA on 6282 3777.

It is hard at any age to be objective about your own driving ability. If there are problems, your assessor or GP might be able to work out how to address them so you can keep driving. Think about what you would do if you couldn't drive, now, while you still can. Investigate your options and learn to use public transport BEFORE you need to stop driving.

Minimising driving

If you want to drive less, consider using buses and your car in combination. You could drive to the local shops or bus stop, leave the car parked, and catch a bus to your destination. Or you could use ACTION's Park and Ride facilities (and pay less for parking).

Resources

The **ACT Older Driver's Handbook** is automatically sent out to people when they turn 70, but you can request a copy from COTA ACT on 02 6282 3777 or ACT Motor Registries. The web site www.seniorsmovingsafely.org.au has a range of resources available to download.

Park and Ride

To save time and parking fees, you can park at one of the free Park and Ride locations designated by the ACT Government and then catch a bus to your final destination. Only some of these locations require a permit (for more information, see https://www.transport.act.gov.au/catch_a_bus/park_and_ride or call MyWay on 6207 7711).

OTHER WAYS OF GETTING AROUND

Walking

When moving house it is worth thinking about the walking distances to the local shops and bus stops. The Walkscore website at www.walkscore.com/AU-ACT/Canberra gives information about how walkable and accessible different neighbourhoods are. If the condition of footpaths, or obstructions, make it hard to get around in your area, you can contact Fix My Street (call Access Canberra on 13 22 81).

If you want to walk for fitness or pleasure, there are many walking groups in the ACT including Walking for Pleasure (1300 799 719), the Heart Foundation (phone 1300 362 787), CanWalk (www.canwalk.org.au) - or pick up a brochure from COTA ACT (02 6282 3777).

Cycling

Over 80% of ACTION buses are equipped with bike racks to combine bus and bike travel. The ACT Government also provides free bike cages, bike lockers and bike rails at bike and ride locations so you can lock your bike up and continue by bus. To find out more, call Access Canberra on 13 22 81, or check the Bike and Ride map at https://www.transport.act.gov.au/cycle_or_walk/bike_and_ride.

There are also electric bikes on the market, which can make cycling much more appealing. Pedal Power ACT (6248 7995) can provide advice and suggestions. They also have courses for older cyclists.

Mobility aids and scooters

You can drive a scooter anywhere a pedestrian is allowed to go (not on busy roads!). If they meet certain specifications, you can also take them on an accessible bus. Some smaller scooters can travel in a large Wheelchair Accessible Taxi, although you have to transfer to a seat. You can find a wide range of other mobility aids at Canberra's Independent Living Centre at 24 Parkinson Street Weston (6205 1900).

And if you're stuck at home?

If you have access to the internet, you can shop online at the major supermarkets and have your groceries delivered to your door. Some local supermarkets provide free delivery. Online pharmacies will also deliver. Some medical practitioners provide home visits, and CALMS (1300 422 567) or the (privately operated) National Home Doctor Service on 13 74 25 (13 SICK) provide after-hours visits.

HOW, WHERE, WHY?

Even with all the information, it can be hard getting where you want to go in Canberra using public transport. And even when you know HOW to go, you might still be left wondering WHERE to go.

Here are some suggestions about how you could combine public transport methods to get around more easily, and why you might want to make the effort.

The bus takes too long and the taxi costs too much!

Try combining the two. For instance you could get a taxi from your home to a bus interchange, then catch one of the frequent buses between interchanges.

- *Tip: it can be easier to get a taxi if you book, as it's sometimes hard to find one at an interchange (and drivers will sometimes not accept passengers for short trips, although this is not legal).* It's best to pick up a booked taxi somewhere other than a taxi rank, to minimise confusion.

I want to go out at night – but what if I miss the last bus home?

Catch a bus to your destination and book a taxi with your friends to get home. If people share a taxi and are dropped off at several locations, this is considered a multi hire and each passenger is required to pay what is on the meter at their destination. However, the fare rate for this type of hiring is lower than a single fare.

I'd like to go out – but I don't have anyone to go with

There are many organisations in Canberra that bring over-50s together for social and educational activities. A list is available from COTA ACT, or you can check the ACT Government's list at www.seniors.act.gov.au (Recreation and Clubs).

The National Companion Card Scheme enables eligible people with lifelong disability to bring a companion to events or activities (with an affiliated organisation) without having to pay for a second ticket. For more information about this, visit <http://www.companioncard.gov.au/>.

Canberra social clubs and associations

If you are looking for something to do – but you don't have your own transport – try any of the Regional Community Services organisations (see the section on Community Transport) or associations such as Senior Citizens Clubs (there's one in most town centres), Probus, Mens Sheds, or the University of the Third Age (U3A). Some of these organisations can help with transport to events and activities.

Many Canberra social clubs organise group trips for members. If you'd like to get out with a group, you can look one up on the Community Services Directorates' ACT Seniors Directory web site www.communityservices.act.gov.au/wac/ageing/ACT_Seniors_Directory or call COTA ACT for a brochure.

Travelling Interstate?

Buses

Murrays and Greyhound Pioneer run bus services to Sydney and other locations interstate. They offer concessional fares to people with a Seniors Card, and may offer other discounts.

- Murrays, at www.murrays.com.au, phone 13 22 51
- Greyhound Pioneer, at www.greyhound.com.au, phone 1300 GREYHOUND

Deane's Buslines connect Civic & Woden with Queanbeyan. For more information about routes and timetables, visit www.deanestransitgroup.com.au/ or call 6299 3722.

Qcity Transit also connects Canberra and Queanbeyan. For more information, visit www.qcitytransit.com.au or call 6299 3722.

An Airport Express runs from West Row in Civic to the airport and costs \$10 one way. For timetable and other information, call 1300 368 897. Some ACTION services currently run close to the airport (call ACTION on 13 17 10).

- *Tip: if booking online, your Seniors Card number is the nine digit number on your Seniors/MyWay Card.*

Trains

Train services to Sydney leave from Kingston Railway Station. Seniors Card holders (including ACT Seniors) and pensioners can travel on the train for half the ordinary adult fare. For more information, call Trainlink on 13 22 32 or visit www.nswtrainlink.info

- With a Country Pensioner Excursion ticket, you can travel in regional and rural NSW and the ACT for \$2.50 one way, subject to conditions. ACT pensioners are also entitled to four free travel vouchers per year – more information from Trainlink at www.nswtrainlink.info
- *Tip: Trainlink also offer a Meet and Assist service. If you need some help on the train or at a station (eg Central in Sydney) you should ask about this service when you book your ticket. Travellers' Aid (03 9654 2600) may also be able to help if you're in Melbourne.*
- Seniors travelling to NSW can now apply for the Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal card if they hold a valid ACT Seniors Card. This will cap fares at \$2.50 per day for buses, trains, ferries and light rail throughout much of NSW. Complete the application form

at www.opal.com.au or call 13 67 25 (13 OPAL). You will need to apply two weeks prior to travel and provide a copy of your Seniors Card.

Planes

Canberra Airport serves Canberra, Queanbeyan and the surrounding regional area of south-eastern NSW. It is located 8km and a 15 minute drive from the city and is serviced by taxis, buses (Airport Express), car rentals and Chauffeur Drive (www.qantas.com/travel/airlines/airport-guide-canberra/global/en#transport). If you need special assistance for travelling visit www.canberraairport.com.au/travellers/info-for-travellers/special-assistance/ or call 6275 2226 in advance.

USEFUL NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

ACTION

Phone 13 17 10 Web site www.action.act.gov.au

Access Canberra

Staff will be able to answer queries, make a referral or put you through to the right person in the ACT Government. Check the web site www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/ or call 13 22 81 (they can also tell you the location of shopfronts).

MyWay

Phone 02 6207 7711 Web site www.transport.act.gov.au/catch_a_bus/myway

Council on the Ageing (COTA ACT) Seniors Information Line:

Phone 02 6282 3777 (business hours Monday to Friday).

Seniors Information Online

See the website at www.seniors.act.gov.au

CONTACT Canberra (formerly the Citizens' Advice Bureau)

Staff can provide information and referrals on a wide range of services and concerns. See the website at www.contactcanberra.org.au or call 02 6248 7988.

Community Transport and Community Services

Staff will be able to refer you to a range of community services including transport and home and community care support. You will find a list of contacts under the Community Transport section in this booklet.

MyAgedCare

Phone 1800 200 422 or see the website at www.myagedcare.gov.au.

Taxis

For a list of taxi companies and numbers, see the TAXI section in this booklet. For the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Centralised Booking Service, call 13WATS (13 92 87).

Incidents and complaints: call the Office of Regulatory Services (Public Transport Regulation) on 02 6205 4585 or email taxiservices@act.gov.au.

ACT TAXI Subsidy Scheme: 02 6205 1012

Seniors Moving Safely

This is a useful website about road safety for older people, at www.seniorsmovingsafely.org.au.

Service Stations Providing Driveway Service

Need someone to fill up your car for you? The Access City Hotline has a list of service stations where staff will (sometimes or always) provide driveway service for people with disabilities (call 02 6257 3077).

National Toilet Map

You can find a map showing the location of all Canberra's public toilets at www.toiletmap.gov.au.

Street Smart Seniors

COTA ACT runs a road safety peer education program for older drivers and pedestrians. Contact the Community Education Manager at COTA ACT for further information on 02 6282 3777.

Canberra Airport

For special assistance go to www.canberraairport.com.au/travellers/info-for-travellers/special-assistance/ or call 02 6275 2226 in advance.