Ministry of Social Development & Innovation
Cayman Islands Government

Finance Committee Statement
Hon. Isaac Rankine, Minister for Social Development & Innovation
November 17, 2025

Thank you, Mister Chairman.

Esteemed colleagues of Parliament, and all Caymanians joining us across these Islands — good afternoon.

Honourable Members of Finance Committee, as Minister for Social Development & Innovation I am proud to present the 2026–27 Budget for my Ministry. We are at a pivotal moment in our national journey: a time when rapid population growth, global uncertainty, and the rising cost of living demand that we match compassion with innovation, and fiscal prudence with courage and clarity.

Mister Chairman, this Budget is not simply a ledger of numbers. It is a statement of who we are as a country and what we value — our children, our families, our older persons, our workers, and the systems that support them. It advances our Government's Broad Outcomes, in particular Health and Social Development (Outcome 4), Public Services (Outcome 6), Good Governance and Public Safety (Outcome 7), and, additionally through our Innovation agenda, the Economy (Outcome 3).

Our Government, the **National Coalition For Caymanians — the NCFC** — has pledged to govern with integrity, foresight, and financial discipline. We are committed to being responsible problem-solvers: cleaning up inherited messes, addressing issues that have been building for decades, and ensuring that every dollar is spent where it is needed most and where it will have the greatest impact for Caymanians. We take seriously our duty to uphold good governance and to ensure value for money, but we are equally committed to investing where it truly matters — in our people, our communities, and the systems that protect them.

Mister Chairman, for many Caymanian families the cost of living is not an abstract concept; it is a daily struggle. This Budget forms part of the NCFC's wider commitment to address cost of living on multiple fronts. While we work as a whole Government to reduce the underlying cost of living, the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation plays a distinct and complementary role: we **invest in and empower our people**, not through handouts, but through **hand-ups** — support that stabilizes, protects, and equips Caymanians to stand strong in a changing economy.

The Ministry of Social Development and Innovation is responsible for **strengthening the social fabric of the Cayman Islands by delivering inclusive, people-focused services and advancing digital transformation across government.** We work to enhance quality of life by ensuring that individuals and families have access to the support, resources, and tools they need — while modernizing government services through secure, innovative technologies that improve delivery, accountability, and long-term resilience.

In short, our mandate is both social and digital: to protect people and to modernize the systems that serve them. In a Cayman that is growing faster, becoming more complex, and facing new global risks, **social development and innovation are not optional extras**. They are essential to our present stability and our future success. Improving the lives of Caymanians is not a "nice to have"; it is necessary if our country is to remain strong, fair, and resilient in the years to come.

Social Development: Quality Care for Children, Families, and Older Persons

Mister Chairman, when we speak about social development, we are speaking about real lives: the child who needs protection, the family that needs support, the older person who deserves dignity and safety.

Through our Social Development Programmes and Services, the Ministry will deliver between **15,000 and 20,000 intervention services** per year through the Department of Children and Family Services, and support approximately **1,500 to 2,000 households** via the Department of Financial Assistance. But the true measure is not the number of cases; it is the quality of care and the outcomes for those we serve. That is why child safeguarding investigations that come to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) are actioned within 24 hours of referral, why services are delivered in accordance with 100% of departmental guidelines and professional practice standards, and why all work is facilitated and supervised by qualified staff.

Let me be clear, despite common misconceptions financial assistance remains reserved for Caymanians and those caring for Caymanian dependents. The system has been revamped with clearer mandates, strengthened legislation, and better technology — including service platforms like Zendesk — to ensure that assistance is targeted, transparent, and timely. We provide support as a bridge, not a destination: **hand-ups, not handouts**, so that Caymanians in difficulty can recover, rebuild, and move forward.

Children are at the centre of this Budget and at the heart of Broad Outcome 4, Health and Social Development. The 2026–27 period will see the continued implementation of the **Children (Amendment) Act, 2024** and the **Adoption Act, 2024**, both passed in December 2024. These Acts

modernise our standards in line with international best practice through various provisions - including those for the **Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons**, streamline maintenance and residential care frameworks, and align Cayman with the HHCH 1993 **Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions**. Regulations development is underway and commencement is expected during this budget cycle.

We will continue to support and strengthen our vital partners, including:

- The **Children and Youth Services (CAYS) Foundation**, which manages Frances Bodden Children's Home, Bonaventure Children's Home and Phoenix House will receive approximately **$4.35 million** per year. CAYS provides 24-hour, trauma-informed residential care for boys and girls aged 12 to 18, using care plans, risk management plans, and structured programmes to help young people heal and reintegrate safely into families and communities.
- The **National Children's Voluntary Organisation (NCVO)**, which provides foster care for children who cannot be placed in private homes, offering up to 10 placements in line with DCFS policies, and operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Rehoboth Ministries**, which delivers weekly after-school care and full-day holiday camps in George Town and through this budget cycle is expected to expand offerings to North Side, keeping children safe, engaged, and supported while parents work.
- Programmes such as the **Alex Panton Foundation**, which provide mental health support for children and young adults up to the age of 30. The Alex Panton Foundation's Financial Assistance Programme, supported with **$100,000 in 2026 and $150,000 in 2027**, ensures that when insurance has been exhausted, young people can still receive the therapeutic support they need.

Government's role, to strengthen this network of care, ensures that resources reach those who need them most, and close the gaps that leave children and families vulnerable. That is why we also support foster parents through stipends and programming, easing financial burdens and providing stability.

At the other end of the life course, older persons remain a central focus of this Budget and our legislative agenda. Our older population has grown by **27 percent between 2021 and 2023**, and more than **4,000 people** are expected to reach age sixty-five within the next five years. We are acting now to prepare for this demographic reality.

We are maintaining and enhancing funding for **The Pines Retirement Home**, with an annual allocation of roughly **$2.7 million**, to provide continuous residential nursing care for older

persons in need of residential care. Services are delivered by licensed professionals under the oversight of a multidisciplinary team and in full compliance with policy and procedure standards.

Meals on Wheels will continue to deliver between **55,000 and 80,000 nutritious meals** annually to older persons in need, supported by **$500,000** each year. For many seniors, that meal is more than nutrition; it is companionship, connection, and reassurance that their country has not forgotten them.

The **Council of Older Persons**, now under our Ministry, will be resourced to drive implementation of the **Older Persons Policy 2016–2035** and, once commenced, the **Older Persons (Amendment) Act, 2024**. These frameworks will strengthen safeguards against neglect and abuse, guide the development of age-friendly communities, and ensure that the voices of older persons shape policy and practice.

We will also progress reforms to the **Disabilities (Solomon Webster) Act, 2016**, to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society.

During this budget cycle the Ministry intends to also strengthen legislation such as the **Domestic Violence Act (2021 Revision)** and the **Youth Justice Act (2021 Revision)**, so that our laws reflect modern realities, protect those at risk, and support rehabilitation.

Mister Chairman, when we invest in social development, we are not creating dependency; we are building capacity. We are giving Caymanians the tools and support they need to withstand the pressures of cost of living, to stay safe, and to build better futures for their families. That is why, under NCFC leadership, **we are willing to spend where it matters — on the people and programmes that strengthen our social fabric and our long-term resilience.**

Gender Affairs: Equality and Respect for All

Mr. Chairman, the wellbeing of our islands depends on fairness — fairness in opportunity, fairness in treatment, and fairness in the way we protect and respect one another.

In 2025, this Honourable House passed the **Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (ASHA)** — a landmark piece of legislation that affirms our national commitment to safety and dignity in workplaces and institutions. This Act creates a clear framework to ensure that instances of sexual harassment can be handled swiftly, fairly, and sensitively.

Mr. Chairman, while ASHA represents a major step forward, we are clear-eyed: **equality is not achieved by legislation alone**. It requires cultural change — a shift in how we treat one another, how we speak to one another, and how we stand up for what is right.

Our Gender Affairs function continues to lead this work across government by advancing gender mainstreaming, reviewing policies, and integrating gender considerations into planning, budgeting, and programme delivery. This ensures that government decision-making reflects the realities, experiences, and needs of both men and women — whether in economic opportunity, health, education, safety, or leadership.

This work also aligns with our Christian values as a people — values of **respect, compassion, and justice**. As we are reminded, every human being is worthy of dignity and protection.

Mr. Chairman, through ASHA, ongoing gender policy work, public education, and continued engagement with civil society, we are building a Cayman that leads by example — a country where fairness is not only preached, but actively practiced.

Innovation: Digital Government, My eID, and Cyber Security

The second pillar of our Ministry's mandate — innovation — is about transforming how Government serves the people of the Cayman Islands. It is about embracing technology as a tool to deliver faster, safer, and more accessible public services, while upholding good governance, accountability, and financial prudence.

Through our **Digital Services, Policy Advice and Strategy** output group, the Ministry will invest approximately **$37.2 million in 2026** and **$39.2 million in 2027** to support the Ministry itself, the Computer Services Department (CSD), the Cyber Security Unit (CSU), and the Department of eGovernment. These investments directly support Broad Outcomes 3 (Economy), 6 (Public Services), and 7 (Good Governance and Public Safety).

The **Computer Services Department** is the digital backbone of government's IT Infrastructure. It supports more than **3,500 users**, safeguards the intake of over **$800 million** in government revenue through custom built systems. CSD also maintains 99–99.9% of service availability for critical systems and networks. CSD will also lead the implementation of the Artificial Intelligence Policy which will start in earnest in Q1 of 2026, with the vision to responsibly harness AI to strengthen economic resilience, improve public sector productivity, and unlock new opportunities for innovation and inclusive growth—all the while upholding transparency, ethics, and public trust. The Implementation includes good governance guardrails and processes for the

approved use of AI-enabled tools that streamline workflows, reduce manual effort, and strengthen collaboration. This budget funding also includes support for a number of security enhancement initiatives that are necessary for the mature management of the enterprise.

Mr. Chairman, transitioning to eServices, beyond the work that eGov has done with the Department of Comms on the revamp of Gov.ky. One of the most visible and transformative achievements under our innovation portfolio is the **My eID Digital Identity Programme**. Over the budget cycle, we expect to issue between **3,000 and 5,000 cards per year**, to Caymanians, work permit holders and permanent residents. The My eID card will provide secure proof of a person's identity, age, nationality, and immigration status to both young and old and will allow residents to authenticate online for government services. This baseline will lead to future practices such as a parent applying for school grants, or a senior renewing a licence, all online without queueing or duplicating paperwork. Through the My eID Portal, individuals will be able to manage their own information in the register and see who has accessed it, thereby strengthening privacy and trust.

Internally, my eID will allow government departments to verify data securely, accept digitally signed documents, and process requests faster, reducing the need for citizens to carry their own files from one counter to another. This is how innovation supports social development: by making it easier and more dignified for Caymanians to receive the services they are entitled to. The Department has also produced an eID App that allow qualified digital signatures to be applied to PDF documents in seconds through mobile phones, and standard PCs and Mac computers.

We are also advancing a whole-of-government approach to **Cyber Security**. Cyber security has now been recognised as a formal national priority within the **Enterprise Risk Management Framework**, underscoring that safeguarding our digital infrastructure is a government-wide responsibility. Our Ministry is proud to lead this critical strategic initiative. The **Cyber Security Unit** provides continuous monitoring of government systems, coordinates incident response, supports ministries and departments in understanding their risk profiles, and ensures that new systems meet the highest information security standards. As the threat landscape intensifies across the region, this work protects not only revenue and systems, but also the privacy and safety of families, children, seniors, and those most at risk in our communities.

Cyber security cannot be the work of government alone; it is a shared responsibility that underpins our reputation as a stable, well-regulated and trustworthy jurisdiction. It is rooted in partnership and public-private collaboration with regulators, utilities, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society.

Many of the professionals in the Information Technology space, leading this work are Caymanians, developed through internships, retraining, and deliberate investment in nationally relevant digital skills. As we adopt artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, these home-grown experts will form the backbone of a secure digital Cayman.

Mr. Chairman, along this trajectory the Government is facilitating the necessary work of the Private sector led Digital Transformation Strategy Task Force that is taking a deep dive into the future of tech in the Cayman Islands. They are primarily interested in how the Government will support the private sector in the adoption of AI and other emerging technologies locally. They are interested in comprehending what are the clear needs of legislation in the fields such as Cyber Security or Artificial Intelligence. And lastly, they expect that government will equip the public sector workforce with the awareness and skills to use technology effectively and responsibly and to be able to scale services.

Innovation, in this Budget, is not about chasing trends. It is about building a secure, efficient, and citizen-centred State that supports our economy, strengthens trust, and multiplies the impact of every dollar spent on social development.

Alongside this, we are implementing tools that improve productivity and collaboration across the Civil Service, and we will launch the first overarching **AI policy** for government. This policy will guide responsible use of AI, ensuring that while we gain efficiency and better analysis, we also protect sensitive Government data from being fed into external models. The aim is simple: let machines handle the repetitive tasks, so that civil servants can spend more time on what matters — serving our people, solving real problems, and delivering on the Broad Outcomes.

Integrating Social Development and Innovation, with Fiscal Discipline

Mister Chairman, the real power of this Ministry lies in the way **social development and innovation work together**.

Enhanced digital systems in the Department of Children and Family Services mean that child protection cases are processed more quickly and consistently, and data can be used to identify emerging risks in communities before they escalate. Secure digital identity shortens verification for financial assistance and reduces fraud, ensuring that support reaches the Caymanians who genuinely need it. Cyber security protects sensitive data for foster children, older persons, survivors of domestic violence, and persons with disabilities, upholding confidentiality and trust.

We are, in effect, **modernising the way we care, at the same time as we modernise the way we govern**.

Under the leadership of the NCFC, these investments are being made with careful attention to fiscal discipline. Social Development and Innovation together make up more than a third of the operational budget, clearly signalling that this Government is people-centred and future-focused. Yet every initiative — from the **$22.85 million** allocated to social development programmes, to the **$37.18 million** for digital services, to the hundreds of thousands supporting CAYS, The Pines, Meals on Wheels, the Crisis Centre, Hope for Today, and the Alex Panton Foundation — is grounded in evidence, clear outputs, and strict quality standards.
We are not spending for the sake of appearing generous. We are **investing for the sake of impact** — ensuring that the Cayman Islands delivers not only more services, but **better** services, with greater fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Closing: A Promise to Cayman's People
Honourable Members, the 2026–27 Budget for the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation is more than a document. It is a declaration of our priorities and our identity as a country.

It says that Cayman's success will not be measured by profits alone, but by the wellbeing of its people. It says that progress is not only about roads, buildings, and markets, but also about inclusion, dignity, and trust.

From children to seniors, from persons with disabilities to Caymanians in recovery and transition, this Budget affirms that **every Caymanian deserves opportunity, security, and respect.** It reflects an NCFC Government that listens, that innovates, and that acts with both compassion and discipline — cleaning up what has been neglected in the past, while building resilient systems for the future.

As Minister for Social Development and Innovation, standing alongside my Parliamentary Secretary and supported by our Chief Officer, deputy chief officers, directors and frontline staff, I am deeply proud of the work being done across this Ministry. They are the ones turning policy into progress and budgets into better lives.

Through evidence-based policy, prudent financial management, and a relentless focus on people and progress, we are laying the foundations for a **stronger, fairer, and more resilient Cayman Islands** — a Cayman that is caring, capable, and connected.

The work we do today ensures that our Islands will not only keep pace with a changing world but continue to shine as a beacon of stability, equity, and innovation in the Caribbean and beyond. Let us move forward with determination and unity — as one Government, under the National Coalition For Caymanians — ensuring that this Budget translates not only into outputs on paper, but into real, positive outcomes that Caymanians can feel, see, and live. May we be guided by compassion, strengthened by innovation, and united by our love for these Islands and their people.

Thank you, Mister Chairman, and may God bless our people and these beautiful Cayman Islands.