



ACT Government

BUDGET 2006-2007

MEDIA RELEASE

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FURTHER SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The ACT Government has allocated \$949,000 in funding in the 2006-07 Budget to support Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Over the next four years, \$556,000 has been allocated to streamline the delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at risk. The funding will provide culturally appropriate early intervention and better support children making the transition to school, and from primary school to high school. A further \$393,000 has been allocated from 2007-08 over three years as preliminary and preparatory funding for the establishment of a new Indigenous elected body for the ACT.

Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said he was proud of the Government's record in relation to Indigenous issues, but acutely conscious that there remained areas of great and entrenched disadvantage.

"The ACT is delivering better living conditions overall for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than anywhere else in Australia, but there is still much more that needs to be done and the expectations of this community cannot be ignored, even at a time of serious budgetary constraint," Mr Stanhope said.

"With funding of \$556,000 in the Budget over the next four years, the ACT Government will provide an integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery across health, education and family support services for at-risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Our aim is to improve outcomes for these families, particularly in regards to easing the critical transitional periods in the lives of their children – the start of schooling and the transition from primary to high school."

Mr Stanhope said the Government was pleased to be able to put on the table preliminary funding of \$393,000 towards the establishment of a new Indigenous elected body to represent the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

"After the demise of ATSIC, the ACT Government consulted the community on the need for a representative voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," he said. "An elected body, with the capacity to make real decisions, was the clear preference emerging from that consultation."

Indigenous Canberrans will continue to benefit from recurrent funding from previous Budgets for initiatives such as:

- culturally appropriate support and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families;
- the employment of an Indigenous Liaison Officer to coordinate the Ngambra Circle Sentencing Court, as well as the operational costs of conducting the court;

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- the establishment of Indigenous traineeships within Environment ACT - supporting the Government's ongoing commitment to joint management of Namadgi National Park;
- the expansion of special Koori preschool programs to five sites across Canberra;
- Indigenous student support aimed at assisting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in Canberra to reach their full potential;
- Indigenous foster care, in recognition that there is a need for stable and adequate out of home care for these children and young people;
- A community-managed Aboriginal Justice Centre;
- An Aboriginal Midwifery Program based at Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Centre;
- A new hearing health program for Indigenous infants and children, including a comprehensive school-based screening service;
- Two outreach workers employed to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are experiencing problems related to drugs and alcohol; and
- An Indigenous-managed family support service in north Canberra.

Mr Stanhope said these initiatives were helping address the imbalance which still saw many Indigenous Canberrans lead less healthy, less wealthy and less educated lives than their non-indigenous peers.

"All these programs will help turn around the continuing disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people in our community," Mr Stanhope said.