



ACT Government

BUDGET 2006-2007

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$32 MILLION FOR FUTURE GROWTH OF HEALTH SERVICES

The ACT Budget has allocated more than \$32 million to enable health care in the Territory to grow to meet demands, Minister for Health Katy Gallagher said today.

The initiatives include:

- \$5 million to provide additional critical care bed capacity;
- \$2.2 million for additional cancer care specialist staff and service;
- \$6.0 million to address the growing need for essential hospital and community based aged care services;
- \$2 million for community-based health care to predominantly older people and those with chronic disease;
- \$12 million to enhance acute bed capacity in the ACT;
- \$5.0 million to increase the number of specialist mental health providers and to provide supported accommodation for young people.

“These funds will go towards increasing the capacity of our public hospitals to treat the critically ill, directly addressing the growing need for cancer and aged care services, and providing community-based health services,” Ms Gallagher said.

“As our population ages there is a growing demand on these services and we, as a Government, must ensure that our services are funded to grow to meet those demands.”

“The 2006-07 Budget commits \$12m over four years to enhance acute bed capacity in the ACT and builds on the 2005-06 Budget commitment of 20 extra beds, which are already in place.”

“The proposal will provide additional acute care capacity across the ACT public hospital and health care system to meet growing demand. There will be specific emphasis on supporting the objectives of the Access Improvement Program (AIP) which commenced in 2005-06 aimed at reducing Emergency Department (ED) access block, reduce acute bed occupancy in hospitals, reduce cancelled elective surgery, and focus on the special needs of older Canberrans who need access to hospital and community care in a timely manner.”

“This new capacity will enable up to an additional 20 beds worth of capacity to be commissioned at peak times though out the years. This capacity will be in the form of additional beds, or equivalent non hospital capacity.”

Ms Gallagher said \$5 million had been allocated to provide additional critical care bed capacity across the ACT public hospital and health care system.

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“The additional capacity will be a combination of ED intensive care unit (ICU) and high dependency unit (HDU) staff and beds. This will allow the rapid transfer of critically ill patients to a critical care environment following assessment via the emergency departments, significant trauma and significant life threatening surgery,” she said.

“This capacity will build on current initiatives aimed at reducing ED access block, improving ED waiting times, and reducing the cancellation rate of elective surgery. The ACT’s public hospitals will work as a critical care network to ensure that critically ill patients receive timely access to acute care, irrespective of where they live in the ACT.”

Ms Gallagher said the demand for cancer diagnosis, treatment and supportive care is increasing in the ACT and surrounding region in line with national trends.

“Capital Region Cancer Services will receive increases in annual funding to keep pace with developments in diagnostic testing, and advances in treatments and supportive care to people and their families who are living with a diagnosis of cancer,” she said.

“To this end, the Budget has provided \$2.2 million over four years for the employment of additional specialist staff, enhanced access to high cost pharmaceutical treatments, medical oncology and ongoing care options for persons with cancer.

“On top of this ACT Health will move ahead with the commissioning of a third linear accelerator for radiation oncology treatment. This will reduce the need for ACT patients to travel interstate to receive essential cancer care. Over four years, an additional \$10.6m will be spent to support the operation of an additional linear accelerator, which should be fully commissioned by 2008. This will lead to dramatic improvements in support for our patients.”

Ms Gallagher said the Budget had provided \$6.0 million over four years to provide a range of initiatives, all of which directly address the growing need for essential hospital and community based aged care services.

“This funding will enable expansion of acute care for older patients admitted to The Canberra Hospital. The increasing acuity and level of care required for older Canberrans accessing our hospital services will be matched with additional funding,” she said.

“Our priority is to minimise hospital inpatient time for older persons, by directly increasing bed availability. This will allow more rapid access to specialised rehabilitation and acute aged care programs for patients requiring care from the community, residential care and other acute care units, including the emergency departments.

“This Budget’s funding for care for the elderly will also allow a greater proportion of aged care and rehabilitation programs to be provided wholly or partly on an outpatient, community or outreach basis. This is good for older people, and reduces the pressure on hospital beds.

“This funding builds on and complements the ACT Government’s previous budget commitments to the new 60 Sub and Non Acute Service at Calvary, which will be fully commissioned by December 2006.”

Ms Gallagher said community-based health care was one of the most important elements in a health care system.

She said the budget had also allocated \$1.9 million over four years in growth funding to support the provision of community-based services, predominantly to older people and those with chronic disease within the ACT community.

“This will provide enhanced community-based health services which will better support timely discharge from ACT hospitals. The funding will also reduce wait times for community based services and reduce unplanned admissions and readmissions to hospitals,” Ms Gallagher said.

“This new funding will promote innovative management of chronic disease and will reduce hospital admissions for high-risk patients. It focuses on self-management in partnership with health professionals. It will keep people healthier in their own homes, and reduce the pressure on public hospital beds,” Ms. Gallagher concluded.