



ACT Government

2004-2005 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

ACT BUDGET OFFERS GREATER SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

The 2004-05 ACT Budget delivers the broadest range of new initiatives to assist the ACT's Indigenous community since the beginning of self-government Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said today.

The Chief Minister said this Budget demonstrates the Government's ongoing determination to develop and fund innovative and effective programs to support Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

"While Canberra is generally regarded as a privileged community there are groups, such as our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who require extra government assistance. My Government continues to work together with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to identify the areas of greatest need and these are reflected in an array of budget initiatives announced today."

The Chief Minister said more than \$7.7 million had been committed over the next four years to specific programs aimed at tackling ongoing issues which leave Canberra's indigenous people as amongst the most disadvantaged in our community. He said the Government's *Canberra Plan* and *Social Plan* strongly focussed on helping those in our society who were in greatest need.

Mr Stanhope said the 2004-05 Budget initiatives strongly focused on improving Indigenous education, health and employment opportunities.

"We will provide \$685,000 over four years towards Indigenous employment opportunities by establishing Indigenous traineeships within Environment ACT. This will support the Government's ongoing commitment to joint management of Namadgi National Park," Mr Stanhope said.

"The Budget also allocates \$868,000 over four years to expand special Koori preschool programs to five sites across Canberra. This early childhood initiative will enhance literacy, numeracy, social and emotional development of indigenous children from birth to six years of age.

"In addition, we have allocated \$1.65 million over the next four years for Indigenous student support aimed at assisting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in Canberra to reach their full potential and \$453,000 over four years towards Indigenous foster care, in recognition that there is a need for stable and adequate out of home care for these children and young people.

"We have set aside \$1.42 million over four years for a community-managed Aboriginal Justice Centre. This will be a best practice model for the delivery of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in law and justice systems throughout Australia.

"Health remains a priority for my Government and community based antenatal and postnatal care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their babies through the Aboriginal Midwifery Program



based at Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Centre has been funded for four years at a cost of \$793,000.

“We have also allocated \$830,000 over four years to conduct a new hearing health program for Indigenous infants and children, including a comprehensive school-based screening service. The project will also result in the development and provision of appropriate treatment including referral for surgical intervention where required.

“Two outreach workers will be employed from a \$582,000 Budget allocation for four years to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are experiencing problems related to drugs and alcohol. This program will be located within the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.

“An Indigenous-managed family support service in north Canberra, ‘Jumby Mulla’ will be administered through the Billabong Aboriginal Corporation following a Budget allocation of \$312,000 over four years. In addition, the Budget provides \$100,000 for a feasibility study to assess the viability of an ACT Bush Healing Farm to develop culturally appropriate prevention, education, rehabilitation and outreach programs designed to address drug and alcohol abuse within Canberra’s Indigenous community.”

Mr Stanhope said he was pleased that in the next 12 months work would take place to recognise the influential Ngunnawal warrior Onyong.

“Onyong lived in the area that is now Namadgi National Park in the mid-19th century. Aboriginal people today are proud of the strength and courage shown by Onyong as he watched the European colonists enter his country. He met a tragic and untimely death, and was buried on a hill above Tharwa in about 1856. New interpretive panels and plaques will appropriately recognise Onyong’s important contribution to this region.”

Mr Stanhope said the Budget aimed to address the imbalance which still sees many Indigenous Canberrans less healthy, less wealthy and poorer educated than other ACT residents.

Recurrent funding for other Budget initiatives which are expected to benefit Canberra’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders include:

- \$1million for the implementation of the ACT Human Rights Act;
- \$1.37 million towards suicide prevention initiatives;
- \$1.87 million for the support of Youth Justice Clients; and
- \$2.66 million to provide increased support for Youth at Risk.

“After 12 years of planning and negotiation, I am delighted that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre is now open at Yarramundi Reach, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Australia’s first people,” Mr Stanhope said.

“In recognition of cultural differences, the Ngambra Circle Sentencing Court is now operational on a six-month trial basis. This initiative of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee is much closer to traditional ways of dealing with conflict and doing justice and I look forward to the results from the trial. I recently signed the ACT Shared Responsibility Agreement, an historic document which takes a partnership approach towards dealing with Indigenous disadvantage locally,” said Mr Stanhope.

“I am proud that the 2004-2005 Budget continues to recognise the importance of our Indigenous community and I look forward to working both with the community and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to deliver programs and initiatives that will support families, children and young people at risk.”