



# ACT Government

## 2003-2004 BUDGET

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### GREATER SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS OFFENDERS

The 2003-04 Budget will provide greater support for Indigenous offenders and enhance their prospects of successful rehabilitation, Chief Minister and Attorney General, Jon Stanhope, said today.

The Budget contains \$146,000 over four years for the engagement of an Indigenous Official Visitor to help ACT Indigenous offenders.

The Indigenous Official Visitor will assist ACT Indigenous offenders detained in ACT facilities such as the Belconnen Remand Centre and Quamby Juvenile Detention Centre.

Discussions will be held with NSW correctional authorities to extend the scheme to NSW and facilitate enhanced access by the Indigenous Official Visitor to ACT Indigenous offenders held in NSW prisons. This will help Indigenous prisoners maintain stronger links with the ACT indigenous community and will help ensure that their specific concerns are addressed.

“Sadly, members of our Indigenous population are over-represented in our detention facilities and interstate prisons.

“Through the Aboriginal Justice Strategic Plan, and in partnership with the Indigenous community and relevant agencies, we are examining and implementing strategies to address the causes of crime and reduce the need for detention.

“For Indigenous offenders already in custody, however, it is important we ensure our correctional facilities and programs are conducted in a culturally appropriate manner.

“It is also important for the welfare of Indigenous offenders that they have ready access to an official with a sound understanding of cultural issues.

“The Indigenous Official Visitor will regularly visit Indigenous offenders in ACT facilities and will examine services and facilities to ensure they appropriate to the welfare of Indigenous adults and youth.

“The Indigenous Official Visitor will also receive and inquire into complaints by detainees about their treatment.

“While we already have Official Visitors within our detention system, there is some evidence that Indigenous detainees are reluctant to seek the support of non-Indigenous officials.

“The engagement of an Indigenous Official Visitor will allow Indigenous offenders to more openly discuss their concerns and will also improve our capacity to meet the needs of Indigenous detainees.

Media Release



“This is an important social equity issue, and will also enhance the prospects of successful rehabilitation for Indigenous offender,” said Mr Stanhope.

The proposal for the creation of an Indigenous Official Visitor was a specific recommendation by the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee and is contained in the Aboriginal Justice Strategic Plan.

**Statement ends.**