

Rehabilitating offenders in the ACT



ACT Government

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ACT Budget 2001-02

Health, Housing and Community Services Minister Michael Moore – who took on responsibility for Corrections in December 2000 – said today that the range of initiatives in the 2001-02 Budget demonstrated the Government's continued commitment to improving correctional services in the ACT.

"This Government is committed to implementing programs that offer our courts the widest possible range of sentencing options," Mr Moore said.

"We are dedicated to ensuring that offenders have every opportunity to rehabilitate themselves so they can return to their community as productive citizens."

"To achieve our objectives for corrective rehabilitation, we are expanding resources to ACT Corrective Services in a number of significant ways."

ACT Corrective Services will receive about \$3.671 million in additional funding from the 2001-02 Budget to introduce new initiatives and significantly boost current programs and facilities.

Belconnen Remand Centre

A major feature of this year's funding is aimed at improving services at the Belconnen Remand Centre. A total of \$900,000 in capital works has been allocated to build an additional section at the Centre that will provide up to 15 extra beds. An additional \$549,000 has been provided to manage increased remandee numbers and to staff the new area.

"The ACT has seen a significant rise in the number of people being remanded into custody.

"A major benefit of increasing BRC's capacity will be to reduce the need to use the Magistrates Court cells as a temporary remand facility or to send people to NSW for temporary remand," Mr Moore said.

"Enhancing services at BRC will ensure that all remandees have better access to rehabilitative support and health services while they are in custody. The Centre will be provided with in-house alcohol and drug programs, and an educational health program targeting at-risk behaviours," he said.

Home Detention

In addition to improved custodial services, \$354,000 has been allocated for the introduction of home detention in the ACT. Corrective Services has identified and trialed technology which allows offenders to be monitored at home through electronic monitoring equipment.

This involves fitting a small electronic device on the wrist or ankle of offenders, and installing a monitoring device in their home. If the offender is not within a specified range of the monitoring equipment, it will detect the absence and report it over a data link to a central monitoring service.

"To ensure the community is not placed at-risk, only offenders assessed as suitable, and not a threat to community safety, will be able to participate in this program," Mr Moore said.

Intervention programs to reduce recidivism

Corrective Services will receive \$1,484,000 for programs targeting repeat offenders.

Of this amount, \$80,000 has been provided to establish offender programs at the BRC and Periodic Detention Centre for people in custody and those sentenced to weekend detention. In addition, the Government has provided \$128,000 to employ two alcohol and drug case manager/counsellors at the BRC.

"Given that up to 70% of the remand population has drug and alcohol issues, the establishment of this service represents an excellent opportunity to reduce drug and alcohol related criminal behaviour," Mr Moore said.

A further, \$522,000 has been allocated to introduce a variety of programs to people who have been sentenced by the Court to community based orders. These programs include an adult sex offender program for offenders over 25 years of age, a violent offenders program (in addition to the current family violence program), and a cognitive skills program for women.

"This Government is committed to providing people on community based court orders, every opportunity to address their offending behaviour while they remain at liberty in the community," Mr Moore said.

He said that to ensure continued effective supervision of offenders completing community corrections orders, additional funding of \$322,000 has been provided to engage qualified and experienced staff members. Another \$65,000 will be provided to manage the increase in the number of young offenders being ordered to complete community service orders.

Youth Justice Services will receive \$350,000 in funding to introduce a supported accommodation option for young offenders. It is anticipated that a six-bed, cottage style accommodation will be used to accommodate young people for short to medium periods of time.

"We recognise that more young offenders are finding it difficult to access existing accommodation services due to their behaviour. This stable accommodation option will provide at-risk youth with emergency accommodation," Mr Moore said.

"It will also provide a non-custodial option for the ACT Courts which will, in turn, reduce the demand on Quamby Youth Detention Centre."

Meeting Specialist Needs

The Government has allocated \$384,000 as part of its commitment to best practice in the delivery of quality services and programs for its diverse client group.

Five positions will be identified for indigenous people, those from diverse cultural backgrounds and women who have specialised needs in the justice setting that are better catered for by specialised programs and structures.

"Employing staff to address these needs facilitates the Government's commitment to improved management of the issues facing these groups of offenders," Mr Moore said.

The ACT Prison Project

During 2000, the Government decided that a multi-faceted corrections facility - incorporating a men's prison, a women's prison and remand facilities - would be established at Symonston. Work is

progressing in regard to the operational, ownership and management options, including the most beneficial financing structure for the complex.

With crucial decisions yet to be finalised, financial details for the Symonston complex have not been included in the 2001-02 capital works program. Once the necessary financial assessments and decisions are complete, the project will either be included in the capital works program, or (if privately owned and financed) included as an operating expense for the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Statement ends

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