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Budget funds health services to meet continuing growth in demand

The ACT Government is responding to growing demand for health services, allocating \$54 million over four years to health services in the 2009-10 Budget.

ACT Health Minister, Katy Gallagher, said the funding will respond to increasing demand for critical care and acute care services in our public hospitals, as well as elective surgery, the health needs of older Canberrans, and emergency transport for critically ill patients.

“The level of demand for health services for critically ill people continues to grow and intensive care capacity is integral to the performance of our public hospitals,” Ms Gallagher said.

The Minister said the Budget funds the following initiatives:

- **\$10.5 million** over four years to provide an additional two intensive care beds at Canberra Hospital;
- **\$25.5 million** over four years to meet current and emerging demand for acute care services, including the establishment of a 16-bed Surgical Assessment and Planning Unit at Canberra Hospital, and an additional 25 hospital ‘bed equivalents’ through home based care;
- **\$8.4 million** in recurrent funding over four years to meet growing demand for surgery;
- **\$5.4 million** over four years to enhance our medical retrieval services which provide emergency transport for critically ill patients in the ACT and surrounding region; and
- **\$4.2 million** over four years to meet the growing demands for health services by older Canberrans.

“The 16-bed Surgical Assessment and Planning Unit at Canberra Hospital will help provide quicker transfer of surgical patients from the emergency department to specialist surgical care, helping to address access block,” Ms Gallagher said.

“The Budget will also deliver on the Government’s commitment to increase access to high level health services within the home, where appropriate, by adding up to 25 hospital ‘bed equivalents’ through home based care.

“These services will increase the capacity of our hospitals, as well as provide access to new types of care.

“The growth funding for surgery builds on the \$49 million already provided over the past six years to increase access to surgery which has led to record levels of surgery and a significant reduction in the number of people waiting for operations,” Ms Gallagher said.

“The funding will enable our public hospitals to commission additional operating theatre capacity which is being built as part of stage two of the Commonwealth’s elective surgery waiting list reduction plan.

“The funding for medical retrieval services, which includes helicopter transport of critically ill people, will allow ACT Health and the ACT Ambulance Service to build on the service currently provided and will enable the service to respond to increasing demand.”

Ms Gallagher said the funding allocation for older Canberrans will enable the Aged Care and Rehabilitation Service to continue to meet the increasing demand for services as our population ages.

“This initiative is the first stage of the 2008 election commitment to provide a total of \$10.3 million over the four years to 2012–2013 to meet the growth in demand.

“Health will remain a top priority for this Government and we will continue to invest in the community,” Ms Gallagher said.

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