



ACT Government  
**2004-2005 BUDGET**

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**STANHOPE TO FUND ACT ABORIGINAL JUSTICE CENTRE  
A FIRST FOR AUSTRALIA**

The ACT Government will provide \$1.4 million over four years to establish Australia's first Aboriginal Justice Centre, Chief Minister and Attorney General, Jon Stanhope said today.

The Aboriginal Justice Centre will be a community-managed facility that will provide a coordinated approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice programs and services in the ACT and be a best practice model for the delivery of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the law and justice systems throughout Australia.

"The Aboriginal Justice Centre will be a major step towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Canberra Region," Mr Stanhope said.

"The proposed model for the Aboriginal Justice Centre is based on highly successful Justice Centres for Indigenous peoples in Canada, New Zealand and Arizona.

"There is much research demonstrating programs delivered within a community setting are more likely to succeed than those delivered through a government agency.

"The Aboriginal Justice Centre will bring together the following services:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Official Visitor;
- Aboriginal Interview Friends;
- Police Community Liaison Officers;
- The advocacy and advisory role of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee;
- Circle Sentencing;
- Aboriginal court days;
- Cultural awareness workshops for magistrates and court staff; and
- General advice on cultural and historical matters for Indigenous defenders;
- Other restorative justice initiatives to prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from committing crimes and re-offending; and
- Research, data collection and analysis.

"The Aboriginal Justice Centre will provide greater efficiency and effectiveness, and accessibility, in the delivery of law and justice programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT through a 'one-stop shop' for justice services.



“The Aboriginal Justice Centre will provide more effective linkages with community based programs which are extensions to the criminal justice system and which address the underlying causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offending and incarceration such as drug and alcohol detox services and rehabilitation programs, emergency housing and education.

“The Aboriginal Justice Centre will work to develop preventative measures in order to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are arrested and/or imprisoned.

“The Aboriginal Justice Centre will inform criminal justice and related agencies, in conjunction with the AJAC, on justice-related issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to advise on culturally appropriate approaches to address these issues.

“The Aboriginal Justice Centre will be the primary focus for all matters impacting on Aboriginal justice in the ACT, and, through the Board of Management, will be the primary source of advice to the Government on Aboriginal justice and related issues.

“My Government is committed to enabling the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to determine culturally appropriate measures within the overall system of government administration which better address their specific needs.

“The Aboriginal Justice Centre is a first for Australia and will be a great step forward for indigenous justice,” Mr Stanhope said.

The Chief Minister said the need for the Centre was more critical when one considered that, in recent years the ACT has had the highest arrest and incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander juveniles in Australia.

Recent data indicates that one in five juveniles (20%) in detention, and one in six adults (18%), is Aboriginal, although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people constitute less than one per cent of the total population of the ACT.

“We must do all we can to help correct the massive over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our criminal justice system and correctional facilities.

“This Centre, combined with other diversionary and crime reduction programs will help meet this goal,” said Mr Stanhope.

**Statement Ends**