



# ACT Government

## 2004-2005 BUDGET

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUILDING A SAFER COMMUNITY

The 2004-2005 Budget provides more fire fighters, ambulance paramedics and operational support staff, and long term funding to ensure they are better equipped, better trained and more strategically deployed to meet the needs of the ACT community.

Police and Emergency Services Minister Bill Wood said the Government is increasing the Emergency Services Bureau budget by \$9.2 million to \$44.8 million annually.

“This 26% increase over current funding is the beginning of ongoing renewal of our capacity to respond to events that threaten our community,” Mr Wood said.

“We are investing in more effective organisations, more and better trained people, and proven technical solutions in a manner that builds on the recommendations of the McLeod Report.

“The Budget increase enables the establishment and ongoing operation of a new, independent Emergency Services Authority with broad powers to protect and preserve life, property and the environment in the ACT.

“The funding will enable the Authority to respond to the outcomes of the McLeod Report and allows for such specific initiatives as:

- \$500 000 to enhance rural fire service management (in addition to funding for operational equipment received in the second appropriation);
- \$290 000 to provide improved Geographical Information Systems and better assessment of bushfire risks at Canberra’s urban edge; and
- \$400 000 to improve strategic planning capabilities for large-scale initiatives stemming from major disasters such as bushfires, floods or terrorist activity.

“The Budget supports the creation of a new Joint Emergency Services Training Academy to ensure a high and consistent capability level across the services. Additional capital funds will be used to complete the feasibility study and forward design of the Academy.

“The Budget provides funds for additional front line staff to meet the needs of residents on a daily basis, including:

- 36 new fire fighter positions to support the ACT Fire Brigade’s capability to deal with hazardous materials and Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) threats and ensure service continuity while reducing the need for overtime. This initiative is linked to CBR response arrangements between the Commonwealth, States and Territories.
- 19 new positions in the ACT Ambulance Service to improve response capability and reduce the need for overtime within the current service



“The Budget also takes into account the important role of local residents in protecting their community.

“An additional \$420 000 will be invested to more than double the size of the ACT Fire Brigade’s *Community Fire Unit* program.

“Funding for 20 additional units (up from the current 8 units) will enable local residents to become partners in defending their properties and those of their neighbours in the event that fire authorities are delayed or deployed elsewhere.

“An additional \$130 000 has been allocated to support the management of the community fire unit program.

“The 2004-2005 Budget demonstrates the Stanhope Government’s commitment to increasing the number and range of resources available to protect and assist our community,” Mr Wood said.

**Statement Ends.**