



ACT Government

2003-2004 BUDGET

BUDGET SUPPORTS ACT AGED COMMUNITY

The 2003-04 ACT Budget recognises the trends of an ageing Canberra population and progresses priorities for the aged community in the areas of accessibility and community participation, mental health and elder abuse, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said.

“The number of people in the ACT aged 50 and over is forecast to increase from 76,000 today, to over 128,000 in the next 15 years. There is expected to be an increase in the people aged 60 and over from 37,600 today to 75,900 by 2016,” Mr Stanhope said.

“The Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, which I established as an election commitment, has provided early advice on areas of concern including transport accessibility and community participation, electricity rebates and health.

“We are addressing these priorities through the ongoing work of the Office for Ageing, and through initiatives in the 2003-04 Budget.

“Transport accessibility is important for our ageing citizens as it allows them to be self-sufficient participants in the community. This budget provides \$661,000 over the next four years to pay a \$7.50 lift fee per ride to taxi drivers to cover the cost associated with loading and unloading wheel chaired customers. Dialogue with the Ministerial Advisory Council has confirmed this will be of significant benefit to older citizens.

“The 2003-04 budget also sets out \$160,000 for replacing the Public Library Service’s mobile library with two smaller specialist vehicles, designed to be particularly accessible for older people and those with a disability.

“The Ministerial Advisory Council has raised a need for additional support services to help frail older people to remain in their homes. These people and their carers will benefit from an additional \$2.8 million over the next four years for the Home and Community Care Program.

“These support services include transport, domestic support, personal care and social support. These services are essential, especially when our population of those over 65 years in the ACT is expected to triple between 1998 and 2051.

“We will continue to expand the older persons’ mental health service with \$330,000 being provided in 2003-04, as I promised last year. The program provides a comprehensive community based aged psychiatry service. This is in addition to an extra \$1.45 million being directed in the 2003-04 Budget to general mental health services for the Canberra community.”

Mr Stanhope said this budget addresses some very concerning social issues.

Media Release



AUSTRALIAN
LABOR
PARTY

“Studies show that almost five per cent of older people are abused in some way. The 2003-04 Budget directs \$411,000 over four years for addressing elder abuse, which takes place in old people’s homes, in health facilities and in the family home,” he said.

“The funding will support a new telephone hotline for reporting elder abuse and for providing an information service. We will also develop a set of comprehensive training materials for professionals who come into contact with older people, and undertake a community awareness campaign to educate professionals and the broader community about elder abuse symptoms and prevention.”

These actions respond to the recommendations of the Assembly Standing Committee on Health and Community Care Inquiry on Elder Abuse.

The Chief Minister pointed out that a specific initiative in the budget protected older people from higher electricity bills.

“We have provided \$1.014 million to increase the electricity rebate for pensioners by a projected 4.7 per cent. This four year support should prevent any net rise in pensioners’ electricity bills when full retail electricity contestability is introduced next financial year.

Mr Stanhope said that ongoing recurrent funding in government agencies would support other work designed to assist Canberra’s ageing.

“The Economic White Paper, to be completed by the end of this year, will look at the effect of an ageing population on the future economic development of the ACT and, in particular, the ways in which older people can continue to contribute to economic development,” he said.

“We will also be implementing the ACT Actively Ageing Framework, which aims to develop a coordinated approach encouraging physical activity for older Canberrans, as there are significant health benefits flowing from a physically active ageing community.”

Statement Ends