



# ACT Government

## 2002-2003 BUDGET

---

### **IMPROVED SERVICES HEALTH, HOUSING AND EDUCATION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE**

The ACT Government will improve services to Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a range of budget initiatives in 2002-03, and will take a stronger whole of government approach to service delivery and monitoring.

"Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are some of the most disadvantaged people in our community," Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said.

"Past policies have resulted in many systemic socio-economic disadvantages, and we must acknowledge this and address current injustices and inequities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"We are committed to addressing underlying issues of disadvantage. This budget will address our priority areas of education, health, family violence and housing, with \$770,000 in new money in 2002-03.

The Chief Minister said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students sometimes have more specialised needs that require targeted assistance.

"As promised in the lead-up to the election, part of the previous government's \$27 million free school bus funds will be used to improve educational programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students," he said.

"For example, we have allocated \$787,000 over four years to enhance the skilled staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to improve home-school liaison. The program will address the gap between learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students, and improve the learning outcomes and retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the mainstream education system.

"In the area of health, illicit drug use and alcohol are major health challenges for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT. We are addressing this serious issue by allocating \$709,000 over four years towards helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with alcohol and other drug problems. The initiative provides for trialing some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific drug and alcohol beds in an existing service."

The Chief Minister said family violence is another issue of real concern in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, as shown by the Barbara Flick report.

---

*Released: 25 June 2002*

*Inquiries: Greg Friedewald 6205 0434 or 0408 680 471*

Media Release



“We are allocating around \$430,000 over four years for addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence. The funding will allow us to examine and implement a model to break the cycle of violence and provide alternative options for people who may commit violence. We will use and build on the experience of successful models in other parts of Australia to reduce the incidence of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families,” he said.

“This is consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and will provide an alternative to incarceration.”

The Chief Minister said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families often have specific needs in terms of housing, and that the Government is committed to developing culturally appropriate housing options for them in the ACT.

“\$1.4 million is being allocated over four years to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing to provide better access and wider housing choices.”

For the first time the budget also commits ongoing funding for the operations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre, with \$120,000 in 2002-03. The centre is due to open in the next few months. The funding will be managed by a community-controlled organisation, ensuring the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community can control the management of cultural activities.

Mr Stanhope also said that a new ACT Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will be established in the Chief Minister’s Department.

“This is not just a name change. The new office will take a stronger whole of government strategic approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy development,” he said.

“This whole of government strategic approach to addressing needs will deliver the best outcomes for Canberra’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Office will address the lack of monitoring and reporting on delivery of services and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples right across government.”

The Chief Minister said the Government is committed to working in consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to determine key priorities and set policy objectives and be key contributors to the decisions that affect their community.

“For this reason, we will establish a short-term working group to work with the new Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, comprising representatives of the Government’s four key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultative and advisory groups as well as government executives at the most senior levels,” he said.

“Through the delivery of these initiatives and the creation of the new Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, we will be taking the first steps in partnership with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards improving the quality of life for these most disadvantaged members of our community,” Mr Stanhope concluded.

**Statement ends 25 June 2002**