

Supporting and strengthening our community



ACT Government

Embargoed until 1 May 2001

ACT Budget 2001-02

This year's Community Services budget will provide individuals and families with additional support, relief and opportunities to grow and develop.

The Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services, Michael Moore, said the 2001-02 budget initiatives illustrated the ACT Government's commitment to generating social capital and to caring for our community.

"These initiatives aim to build the capacity of members of the community to be self resilient, self reliant, more highly skilled and more socially responsible," he said.

"Supporting local communities and families and investing in caring communities are key themes of this year's budget."

Funding has been allocated to the following programs and initiatives:

Provision of Child Care Facilities

To increase the availability of child-care places the ACT Government has set aside \$4 million (\$950,000 in 2001-02, and \$3.05 million in 2002-03) for the establishment of a centre in Gunghalin, where demand for child-care facilities has increased.

The Government will provide the infrastructure for the centre, and the private or community based sector will manage and operate the child-care centre. The establishment of the centre will give young children a solid foundation for later learning and families will gain improved access to child-care services.

Provision of an additional child-care centre elsewhere in Canberra will also be considered, following further assessment of need.

Expansion of the Out of School Education Program

\$120,000 will be provided to further expand the Out of School Program. This program ensures that young people, who have left mainstream educational settings, will have the opportunity to re-engage in education in a non-threatening, flexible and informal environment. The program will provide access to textbooks, computers and other educational software.

Protecting Children program

This important program aims to strengthen measures for the protection of children, early intervention to prevent family breakdown, child abuse and neglect. \$351,000 has been allocated to fund the Protecting Children initiative for 2001-02. This funding will strengthen child protection services in the ACT, and recognises the importance of resilient children and families and demonstrates the ACT Government's commitment to helping those at risk in our community. The protecting children initiative aims to strengthen measures for the protection of children, early intervention to prevent family breakdown, child abuse and neglect.

Improved information systems for community organisations

\$100,000 will be provided for IT infrastructure improvements in the community organisation sector, providing for a flexible data collection and reporting system. (This amount will be depreciated over four years). The ACT Government will implement new technology to simplify ACT organisations' methods of reporting and streamlining data collection. The initiative will improve the community service providers' capacity to network and respond to client demand. It will assist the government to work in a much closer relationship with the sector and help community organisations to deliver services based upon sound data and research, reinforced by quantitative evidence.

Recreation Support Program for at-risk youth

The ACT Government has committed \$225,000 for 2001-02 and \$225,000 for 2002-03 to the Recreation Support Program for At-Risk Youth. This initiative is a community-based program that provides accessible sport, recreation, and support programs to at-risk youth. The program will work intensively with young people aged between 12 and 25 years, who are at-risk of homelessness, substance abuse, being victims of crime, or becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

Crisis Accommodation and Management

This initiative is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the ACT, with the Commonwealth contribution being \$838,000 per year. The ACT Government has committed approximately \$685,000 per year, which is in total \$1.52 million per year to crisis accommodation and management.

This initiative will enable the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) service providers to maintain quality service provision to members of the ACT community most at risk of homelessness. This service supports the government's commitment to the maintenance of high quality service provision to at risk members of the ACT Community.

Indigenous Youth Centre

An additional \$100,000 has been allocated to Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to further address the needs of indigenous young people in the community, and indigenous students who are at risk of performing poorly in the ACT education system.

This initiative, which will start after July 2001, will make available additional staff and education support resources so that Gugan Gulwan can provide greater support to a range of young people in need. These funds are in addition to assistance provided by the ACT Government in 2000-01 to enable Gugan Gulwan to re-establish the Youth Centre in Erindale in the Tuggeranong Valley.

Young Carers' Package

The ACT Government has committed \$125,000 in 2001-02 to the Young Carers' Package. The aim of this new initiative is to raise awareness of young carer issues with schools, professionals and community and government services. It will support young carers in their education by providing additional tuition and school materials as well as support in addressing their responsibilities. The package will also provide access to counselling, in-home practical support, and time out for young carers.

Youth Connection Family Support

The ACT Government Budget has allocated \$75,000 in 2001-02, for the Youth Connection Family Support project, to provide support to some of the most at-risk families in the ACT, through the provision of counselling and support services. This new program will provide a specialised family counselling service for 60 at-risk families, in order to maintain improvements in the level of resilience in these families. Youth Connection Family Support complements the existing Youth Connection program, which targets high school students who are at risk of leaving school early.

Learning for Life

\$100,000 has been allocated to expand the work of the "Learning for Life" program of the Smith Family. The program supports disadvantaged young people from primary school through to university to participate more fully in the education process and recreational activities. The Program provides financial assistance (scholarships) directly to low-income students or the student's family who show a commitment to their child's education. The program reinforces the value of life-long learning and provides information, advice and support to students and their families that will allow them to enhance their education and pursue their career goals.

Supporting Families with Adolescents

\$165,000 has been allocated in this Budget to further support families in the ACT, by means of a proactive, early intervention program for families with adolescent children who are experiencing family conflict and/or dealing with issues like substance abuse. The program, which will begin after 1 July 2001, will focus on young people aged 16 years and under, and will have the resources to intervene for families within 48 hours. Supporting Families with adolescents will include components of high intensity family mediation and counselling, and the capacity for ongoing follow-up to manage and strategically prevent the escalation of family crisis.

Griffin Centre Enhancement initiative

\$1.7million has been allocated to provide additional space for meeting, office and storage for a range of additional community organisations that serve the ACT community and wider region. The replacement Griffin Centre will be a significant improvement on the existing facility. The new facility will be a purpose built facility, able to respond to changing needs of users, have improved access (for disabled) and safety, retain proximity to public transport, other community groups and car parking.

Transport Concessions

The Government has allocated \$500,000 to provide those most in need in the ACT community with increased access to transport through new bus transport concessions and a taxi subsidy scheme. This initiative addresses a number of recommendations of the Report of the ACT Poverty Task Group. A key outcome expressed in the Report is the "... ability to participate in the community is enhanced by increased access to transport". Bus transport concessions are principally targeted at those most in need, and this initiative will extend the current transport concession eligibility to include Health Care Card Low Income holders.

Building Community Capacity

An additional of \$400,000 has been allocated to community sector agencies to enhance their ability to meet increased costs associated with delivering their service to family and community services clients.

Another \$600,000, through the Department of Health and Community Care, has been allocated to assist community agencies delivering services to health services clients.

"These initiatives respond to the Poverty Taskforce recommendations by increasing access for all Canberrans, including those on low incomes, to community resources," Mr Moore said.

"They will provide ACT indigenous and non-indigenous children, carers, students, youth, families and parents with more choice of, and better access to, services."

Statement ends

Media Contact:

Rachel Hill – 6205 0077, 0407 231 984
rachel.hill@act.gov.au