



Minister for Education
with responsibility for:
Schooling
Vocational Training
Children's Youth and Family Services
Sport and Recreation

Bill Stefaniak MLA

Australian Capital Territory

Budget 2000-01
Department of Education
& Community Services

ACT SCHOOLS – THE CENTRE OF THE CANBERRA COMMUNITY

The ACT Government has announced a major initiative as part of the 2000-01 Budget, to strengthen the links between schools and the community.

Education, Youth and Community Services Minister Bill Stefaniak said the "***Schools as Communities***" project will focus on families and children, particularly those at risk, and increase positive parent and community participation in schools.

The initiative will link families with health, community and education services. It will include initiatives to address the needs of children at risk, including the provision of breakfast, and before and after school programs.

The project was prepared in consultation with Mission Australia – a charitable organisation that has been involved in progressing discussions about social capital in Australia.

"This exciting pilot program to be run in yet to be selected school clusters, will strengthen links between local communities and their schools," Mr Stefaniak said.

"The goal is that schools will become centres in their communities, from which access can be gained to health, community and education services.

"This will be an example of how local communities can be supported through strong partnerships between government, community and schools.

"The government will be entering partnerships with non-government service providers, to work alongside government services in these school settings. This will deliver better opportunities for local children and families."

Mr Stefaniak said the 2000-01 ACT Budget included funding of \$700,000 for the *Schools as Communities* project, as part of the Government's broader \$3.5 million ***Canberra: Building a Social Capital*** initiative.

"International research indicates that schools are the frontline location for the early identification of children at risk of poor life outcomes including crime, mental health and academic failure," Mr Stefaniak said.

"This initiative will improve outcomes for children and families through better case co-ordination and use of existing community resources.

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"The \$700,000 funding for **"Schools as Communities"** will enable my Department to introduce a package of new programs to fill a number of the identified gaps in existing services and provide a complementary mix of strategies to meet the needs of families and communities."

It is envisaged that new initiatives, in collaboration with non-Government service providers, will include an extension to the Barnardos "Kid's Friends" mentoring program; the family support *Families and Schools Together* program in primary and high schools and intensive work with high risk families and young people.

Funding has also been identified for a partnership proposal to the Commonwealth Government for a home visiting "Good Beginnings" program to operate in a local ACT community.

"This is a really exciting initiative, that confirms the ACT Government's commitment to strengthening Canberra families.

"It is only through the Government's good financial management over recent years, that we can now afford to give so much more back to the community. The **"Schools as Communities"** initiative demonstrates our priority lies with fostering a strong, caring community."

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Media contact: Craig Allen

(02) 6205 0292 – office (0412) 487 504 – mobile

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