



ACT Government
2004-2005 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

BUSINESS A WINNER IN 2004-05 BUDGET

The Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism Ted Quinlan has announced new funding of \$14.4 million in the ACT Budget over the next four years for a range of new measures and program commitments identified in the Economic White Paper – the Government's long-term economic development strategy.

"The Economic White Paper and the 2004-05 Budget recognise that economic growth in Canberra requires a dynamic business environment that supports and encourages innovation and capitalises upon the competitive advantage embodied in our people, companies and institutions," Mr Quinlan said.

The Budget announcements include:

- \$14.2 million committed to the Knowledge Fund over the next four years, of which \$8 million is new expenditure. The Knowledge Fund has to date leveraged \$18m in business investment and created over 400 new jobs.
- An additional \$2 million over the next four years for the Export Growth Program. The Program will expand options for ACT businesses to grow their offshore commercial activities, increase profits and job growth.
- \$1.2 million over four years to establish an Office of Film, Television and Digital Media, to be known as *screenACTion*, which will provide production liaison and industry development initiatives.
- An additional \$1 million will be provided to the Business Acceleration Program over four years. Since the Program commenced in 2002, \$434,000 has been provided to 91 businesses with an anticipated growth in employment of approximately 140 jobs.
- The Small Business Employment Ready Program will be funded for a further four years. The Program offers a free service to educate non-employing business operators on how to overcome any perceived barriers to taking on their first and subsequent employees.
- An additional \$600,000 over four years has been allocated to the Industry Capability Network. Currently 384 ACT businesses have registered on the Industry Capability Network database.
- \$600,000 over four years will go towards a new mentoring program for technology-based businesses.

This significant injection of funding for these new and revamped programs is in addition to \$60 million in new investment recently announced to assist ACT businesses:

- \$40 million towards an upgrade of the existing National Convention Centre;
- \$10 million to establish a Commercialisation Fund that will be used to attract patent investment capital and commercialisation skills to the ACT; and
- a grant of \$10 million to the University of Canberra to support the construction of new facilities for the School of Health Sciences.

The *Economic White Paper* and the *Canberra Plan* have also committed the Government to making the ACT the most small business friendly location in Australia. A key initiative designed to support this commitment is the establishment of the Office of the Small Business Commissioner. The Government has instructed BusinessACT to develop a suitable model to establish the ACT Office of the Small Business Commissioner, but within the overall resource allocation for business and economic development. It is anticipated that the necessary administrative and legislative framework to set up the Office of Small Business Commissioner will be completed towards the end of 2004.

Mr Quinlan said the Government has also asked BusinessACT to focus its efforts on the nine priority industry sectors identified in the *Economic White Paper*.

- ICT;
- Biotechnology;
- Defence;
- Public Administration;
- Sports Science and Administration;
- Environment Management;
- Space Science;
- Creative Industries; and
- Education

“The *Economic White Paper* is about creating a highly productive and competitive regional economy and recognising that growth, properly managed, is the foundation of superior social and community outcomes,” he said.

“This Budget has funded a comprehensive suite of business support programs and initiatives that over time will deliver sustainable economic growth and support the social and environmental objectives of the *Canberra Plan*.”

Statement Ends.