



ACT Government  
**2004-2005 BUDGET**

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**EQUIPMENT IMPROVES HEALTH AND SAFETY  
OF CARERS AND PATIENTS**

The ACT Government has provided \$1.553 million in the 2004-05 ACT Budget to introduce a new program that will improve the working conditions for ACT Health staff, help to enhance the recovery of patients and potentially reduce insurance costs for ACT taxpayers.

Health Minister Simon Corbell said the Budget funding would provide for ACT Health staff's continuing education and training in best practice manual handling techniques such as lifting and moving, as well as new equipment that would make their jobs easier.

"The purchase of equipment as part of the manual handling program is expected to improve the working conditions of health staff by reducing the potential of back and body stress injuries that can be caused when caring for patients," said Mr Corbell. "Patients' recovery will also be boosted by the equipment available to use and the high level of care provided by staff."

Some of the equipment to be purchased includes electric beds, electric bed movers, patient lifters, patient recliner chairs, shower chairs and walking frames. Floor surfaces will also be upgraded.

Body stress injuries related to staff manual handling incidents cost ACT Health \$3.07 million in the premium year 2002–2003. Mr Corbell said in some cases it meant that qualified health professionals could no longer work in the field. He said the number of injuries was expected to continue because of an ageing nursing workforce and an increase in patients' disability, obesity and severity of their condition.

"The Government is addressing this risk by introducing the manual handling program and encouraging additional people to enter the workforce with attractive, competitive wages and working conditions. We are aiming to reduce claim numbers by 10 per cent in 2005–2006, which will assist in lowering workers' compensation premiums and this will save ACT taxpayers money in the long-term."

The manual handling program will contribute to meeting the ACT Government's injury prevention targets, announced in February 2004. The targets, to be met by 2012, are:

- to reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 per cent;
- eliminate all fatalities due to workplace injury;
- reduce the average time lost rate by 40 per cent; and
- reduce the average time taken for rehabilitation by 90 per cent.

**Statement Ends.**

