



ACT Government

Promoting innovative schools in Canberra





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The ACT Government has given a strong commitment to innovation in ACT education as part of the 2001-2002 Budget.

Innovation is one of the key themes of the ACT Budget and Education Minister Bill Stefaniak said there was no better way to invest in innovation than through the Territory's schools and their teachers and students.

As part of improving access to the fast moving information technology industry the Government will channel \$2.4 million into IT projects in Government schools for 2001-02.

The initiatives include:

-  Creating an IT Centre of Excellence
-  Establishing a Virtual Campus at Canberra Institute of Technology
-  Developing Online Curriculum; and
-  IT School Grants

Mr Stefaniak said that the *IT Centre of Excellence* would play a huge role in developing the capacity of schools in the area of information technology.

"This initiative establishes a school education technology centre of excellence, which builds on the Government's commitment to enhance the teaching and learning of information technology in schools.

"The Government has allocated \$500,000 in 2001-02 for this particular project with \$511,000 in 2002-03, \$523,000 in 2003-04 and \$535,000 in 2004-05.

"The centre will have a strong hands-on focus for both teachers and students and act as a demonstration school of the future.

"The centre will promote partnerships with business, provide leadership and expertise in the use of IT in teaching, establish demonstrations and evaluations of emerging technologies for teachers and students as well as provide modern facilities for teacher IT professional development.

"This initiative is part of a strategy to build on the Government's information technology investment in government schooling and further enhance the teaching and learning of information technology in schools," he said.

The ***CIT Virtual Campus*** is designed to deliver CIT programs through the Internet, linked to the take up of the broadband cable across Canberra.

The CIT Virtual Campus will enable ACT learners to access vocational education from their home or workplaces.

The Act 2001-02 budget has allowed for \$500,000 to fund the development of the CIT virtual campus. The total cost of the initiative is \$750,000 with \$250,000 being provided in 2000/01.

Mr Stefaniak said that the CIT Virtual Campus would provide the Canberra population with access to a complete learning system through the Internet, utilising a wide range of electronic media.

"This initiative will enable the Institute to expand its on-line business to complement other initiatives of the ACT Government.

"The funding allocated for this project cements the ACT Government's commitment to becoming a clever city, based on its use of information and communication technology," he said.

The CIT will work closely with the Department of Education and Community Services to ensure that the Virtual Campus complements other educational initiatives in the ACT. It is anticipated that the CIT Virtual Campus will be completed by 30 June 2002.

The ***On-line Curriculum*** initiative is consistent with the ACT Government's promotion of Canberra as a clever capital and builds on the Government's Social Capital objectives. It will also enhance Information Communication Technology within schools.

The ACT will work collaboratively to develop Online Curriculum through a joint Federal and State/Territory governments' project over the next five years.

An additional \$600,000 over four years with \$150,000 being provided in the first year has been allocated by the Government to support the national on-line curriculum materials project. Other components of this initiative are funded from existing department resources

"Priority areas include innovation, enterprise and creativity, languages other than English, literacy, numeracy, mathematics, science and studies of Australia.

"On-line Curriculum will assist the improvement of teacher quality through better access to high quality curriculum materials," he said.

The ***IT School Grants*** initiative will extend the four year IT School Grants program by two years.

The 2001-2002 ACT Government Budget has set aside \$1.25 million, per year for the next two years to continue funding this initiative.

Schools will receive between \$10,000 and \$30,000 per annum, depending on enrolments, as a contribution towards school expenditure for any information technology purpose such as

acquiring and maintaining hardware, acquiring software, installing networks and undertaking staff professional development.

Mr Stefaniak said that the funding allocation would allow government schools to provide and maintain their IT facilities that give them access to the Internet and national on-line curriculum resources.

"IT School Grants enable schools to continue the integration of IT into teaching and learning. They also promote access and equity of IT learning outcomes for children who would not necessarily have access to IT facilities.

"The continuance of this initiative supports this Government's priority of enhancing IT in schools and ensuring that achievements in this regard are not hampered nor overshadowed by infrastructure problems," he said.

In addition to these budget initiatives the Government has also announced that the Department of Education and Community Services and TransACT have reached agreement to have all government schools connected to TransACT's broadband network by the end of 2003.

TransACT will connect ACT Government Schools to its network ensuring that schools will have access to the latest in broadband technology without having to negotiate individual connections.

TransACT has agreed that non-government schools will be offered the same concessional connection arrangement.

The Minister said that the additional money allocated in the Budget to create more innovative schools in Canberra covered a wide range of commitment and policy.

"These initiatives show the Government's commitment to: provide a quality education, innovation, information technology skilling, enhance opportunities for students and address the IT skills shortage in the ACT.

"All of these initiatives build on the Government's Social Capital objectives by maximising opportunities for children and young people through improved IT services to schools and CIT, and therefore improving educational opportunities.

"These innovation commitments also complement the Government's target of having 95% of Year 10 government school students IT competent by the end of 2001 through ICT testing.

"This Government is committed to improving the standard of teaching quality in the Territory with teachers being given much greater access to professional development than ever before and ensuring that students are given every opportunity to excel," Mr Stefaniak said.

Statement ends

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