



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

BUDGET PROVIDES IMPROVED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Minister for Youth and Family Services Bill Stefaniak said the 2000-01 ACT Budget allocates an extra \$50,000 funding to continue and strengthen the Government's commitment to children with autism and those suspected of having autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The Minister confirmed the ACT Budget includes a total of **\$3.1 million** for the provision of specialist services for students with autism.

Mr Stefaniak said that consistent with national and international trends there has been an increase in the incidence of autism spectrum disorder in the ACT in recent years.

The Minister said the ACT Government received 17 new referrals for assessment in 1989, with numbers growing to 57 in 1999. To date in 2000, there are 17 cases on the waiting list for assessment.

"My Department is committed to finding new and innovative ways to meet the increased demand for services arising from this increase," Mr Stefaniak said.

"Four autism specific learning units have been set up in primary schools across the ACT to provide the appropriate educational and development opportunities for children with ASD.

"Speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers and a psychologist from Child Health and Development Service work in partnership with the teachers in the these units and the families to provide a comprehensive management program for the children."

The Minister said his Department's Child Health And Development Service (CHADS) has redesigned and increased its services for children with autism, in response to increasing demands and the recommendations of the *Autism Working Party* in 1998.

These service changes in recent years have resulted in:

- A 50% increase in the number of places at the Hughes Autism Unit (from 12 to a maximum of 18).
- Implementation of a transition program at Hughes to facilitate inclusion of children in mainstream preschools.
- Implementation of a new model of service delivery for children with ASD in the CHADS early intervention education programs and the ASD specific learning units in primary schools from the commencement of the 2000 school year.

Mr Stefaniak said the additional \$50,000 included in the 2000-01 ACT Budget, together with the substantial commitment already made, will allow the ACT Government to offer a new model of service delivery which is consistent with current international best practice.

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