



Australian Capital Territory

BUILDING ON OUR QUALITY OF LIFE – **EMPHASIS OF URBAN SERVICES** **BUDGET**

Improving our city and building on our quality of life are the emphasis of the Urban Services 2000-01 budget, ACT Urban Services Minister Brendan Smyth announced.

Overall, the department will receive a total of \$297.5 million in government funding to deliver municipal, environmental, planning, housing and transport services Canberrans want and deserve.

“This budget contains projects that will have major social outcomes for Canberrans, with significant initiatives to tackle traffic congestion and safety, upgrade public housing, making our shopping centres better for business and shoppers, looking after our environment and improving the look of Canberra,” Mr Smyth said.

“Many of these projects are either the biggest of their kind ever undertaken in the ACT since self-government, or are building on Canberra initiatives that already lead the country. Then there is the equally important task of the general day to day maintenance of our beautiful city, which again this year will receive priority.

“Over the past few years the Urban Services budget has focussed on getting better value for money and better value for services. It has been a hard slog but worthwhile and now we can reap the benefits. Being prudent with the purse strings and delivering services better has allowed us to redirect those funds back into the community, in areas where we can concentrate on building on our quality of life.

“If you want to do away with traffic queues, catch a bus or cycle around this city, live in better quality public housing, improve our environment or have the little things attended to make our city look better – then this budget will be important to you.”

Key initiatives include:

- ◆ \$130 million in a five-year program to make major improvements to Canberra’s road network, reducing traffic congestion and improving safety. It is a ground-breaking comprehensive package, being the largest budget allocation for road improvements in the ACT Legislative Assembly’s history. All projects will be completed within 5 years, except Athllon Drive which will begin during this period and be completed in 2006/7.
- ◆ \$60 million over the next ten years to improve ACT Housing’s major flats in the biggest refurbishment program in the history of public housing in Canberra. This major reform package will be funded from ACT Housing’s Capital Works Program and will involve most of the 25 flat complexes, which each contain more than 40 housing units.



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- ◆ \$1.9 million to address looking after the region. It includes continuing with our successful Streetsmart program which focuses on improving the appearance of our city (bringing the total to \$3.05 million spent on Streetsmart in the past two years); the introduction of Lakesmart, a similar program to improve the quality and amenity of Canberra's urban lakes and surrounding parklands; and improvements to playgrounds and footpaths.
- ◆ \$730,000 per annum for Social Capital initiatives to build partnerships between government, business and residents. It involves developing networks and promoting the use of information technology to bring the community together to improve their health and well being and work together on shared goals.
- ◆ \$1.61 million to preserve and improve our beautiful environment, through important initiatives such as weed control, returning land back to its native bush state, upgrading the energy performance of public housing, building on the ground-breaking greenhouse strategy of where the ACT is the country leader, and trialing an organic waste recycling system in line with our No Waste by 2010 strategy, another project where we lead Australia.
- ◆ \$5.75 million to be spent on improving shopping precincts to benefit both local businesses and shoppers. These projects include *Our City* initiatives to further enhance the heart of our city and major upgrades to suburban centres
- ◆ \$8.208 million supplementary funding to ensure ACTION can continue to provide a quality bus service for Canberrans which meets the demands of the public, including scheduled route services, school bus services and special needs transport. It brings the total of funding for ACTION to about \$46.2 million.
- ◆ \$5.3 million package for cycling route improvements over the next four years, with \$460,000 to be spent in 2000-01, including completing the Lake Tuggeranong bike path, which is a major commuter and recreational route.

“In order to be able to maintain quality services in future years the department will need to continue to be prudent managers, ensuring taxpayers get the best value for money and delivery of services. Benchmarking and market testing opportunities when the cost of changing providers ensures a value for money outcome will continue to be pursued.

“In 2000-01, the department forecasts it will reduce the workforce by about 80 people through resignations and voluntary redundancies. Staff positions will continue to be reviewed to ensure we have the right people in the right jobs. We need to continue to develop a skills mix to provide better services to Canberrans. We must continually update and keep up with changes in our society to strive for a public sector that will meet the needs of tomorrow.”

Statement ends / 23 May 2000

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