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\$20m allocated to grow ACT health workforce and support GPs

More than \$20 million over four years has been allocated in the 2009-10 ACT Budget for initiatives aimed at increasing the health workforce, and to provide support and incentives for GPs to come to the Canberra region, to train here, and to stay and practice in the region, ACT Health Minister, Katy Gallagher, said today.

“As part of the 2008 election campaign ACT Labor committed \$12.2 million over four years to support and grow our GP workforce,” Ms Gallagher said.

“Today’s budget allocation honours that commitment.”

Ms Gallagher said \$12.2 million had been allocated for initiatives including:

- \$1.3 million for 10 ANU Medical Graduate Scholarships to keep graduates working in Canberra as GPs;
- \$3.5 million to establish a Teaching Incentive Payments Scheme for general practitioners who support undergraduate clinical training;
- \$4 million for the establishment of a GP Development Fund which will provide one-off incentive payments to GP practices for initiatives that attract doctors to Canberra;
- \$1.9 million to establish a business-hours aged care GP locum service to provide care to people who cannot travel easily and to reduce pressure on GP practices, after-hours services and hospital emergency departments; and
- \$1.5 million for the establishment of rotations of four junior doctors into general practice to encourage them to consider general practice as their future area of specialisation.

“These initiatives aim to support the GP workforce and help address the current chronic shortage of GPs in the Canberra region,” Ms. Gallagher said.

The Minister was also pleased to announce that the 2009-10 Budget will deliver on an election commitment to provide \$8.2 million over four years to expand the roles of allied health professionals, as well as nursing, midwifery and medical roles.

“This funding will enable ACT Health to trial and evaluate new roles for Health Assistants in a number of service delivery areas and will provide the following:

- \$3.6 million for 15 new health professional support roles – six allied health and nine in other areas;
- \$1 million over four years for two new physiotherapy positions to be established in the emergency department and the orthopaedic surgery unit at The Canberra Hospital;
- \$2.3 million over four years to provide for nine new clinical training and development roles for enrolled nurses and allied health workers to support clinical training and supervision, and to set the foundation for extending the scope of practice for these health professionals;
- \$700,000 over four years for the expansion of the nursing and midwifery scholarship scheme; and
- \$600,000 for support for workforce development in other nations.

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