

## **2. SHAPING CANBERRA'S FUTURE**

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### **Building Our City - Building Our Community**

#### **Our vision**

The ACT Government has a vision of building our city and our community as strong, confident and prosperous asserting our place in the country's affairs as the national capital.

The Government's vision is of building a community as a whole that:

- is inclusive of all Canberrans;
- is prosperous, progressive, skilled and creative;
- is cohesive, fair, tolerant and optimistic;
- is committed to protecting the vulnerable and supporting those in need; and
- gives its children every chance to realise their potential.

The Government's vision is underpinned by the concept of sustainability – to provide for people, protect our place and create prosperity, now and in the future.

#### **What we stand for**

The Government has committed itself to an agenda that:

- is open, honest, measured and responsible;
- addresses participation and engagement for all, including the most disadvantaged;
- establishes equal access;
- provides effective, efficient and committed services;
- is financially responsible;
- frames sustainable economic growth; and
- plans and builds a sustainable future.

## **How we will achieve good government**

The Government wants the highest possible degree of community participation in decision making in order to achieve equitable outcomes for all members of the ACT community. The Government will focus on community needs and delivering better services by:

- leading;
- listening;
- seeking agreement;
- respecting and cooperating; and
- honouring its commitments.

## **Priorities**

### *Sustainability*

The Government will adopt a balanced approach in meeting economic, social and environmental goals. We will preserve those things Canberrans love about the Territory:

- the well-being of our citizens;
- the capacity of our economy and institutions to support our community; and
- the breadth and health of our natural environment and the benefits it provides.

The outcomes of the Government will be:

- the integration of social, environmental and economic factors in decision-making;
- recognition that a strong and productive economy builds upon, and is supported by, a healthy environment and a healthy society;
- ensuring equity within and between generations; and
- valuing and protecting ecological integrity and biodiversity.

We will do this by:

- taking a whole-of-government approach;
- using resources prudently;
- implementing the precautionary principle where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage;
- empowering people;
- engaging the community and supporting a high level of social interaction;
- focusing where risks are highest and where the ACT has a capacity to influence;
- promoting a strong regional identity;

- taking all costs and benefits into account;
- believing in our ability to create a sustainable future; and
- understanding our place in a globalised world.

The management of water is a key sustainability issue as it underpins economic, social and environmental objectives. A comprehensive water strategy will be completed this year which will:

- ensure economic well being by securing a long term reliable water supply;
- will support business and industry development and have implications for the growth of Canberra and the region's population;
- protect and enhance water quality and environmental values; and
- protect and enhance the recreational and amenity value of ACT waterways and contribute to maintaining public health through the supply of safe, potable water.

### *Economic Growth*

Canberra is a place where business can flourish. The Government will continue to actively foster a diversity of economic activity and development, maintaining a leadership role. The release of a discussion paper *Building Canberra's Economy* in March 2003 has sought community views on challenges and opportunities for the ACT region. These views will inform the completion of the Economic White Paper. The outcomes of the Government will be:

- an economic climate where creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship flourish;
- growth in the diversity of economic enterprises;
- greater opportunities for meaningful employment and for individuals to achieve a good standard of living;
- support for maintaining wages, working conditions and benefits and increasing productivity;
- support for centres of excellence, emerging enterprises and infrastructure projects to foster economic activity;
- reduced dependence on government activity; and
- facilitation of regional and international economic opportunities.

### *Education and Training*

Education is of strategic importance to Canberra and a key investment in our future. A well-educated community is the basis of what makes Canberra socially and economically healthy. The outcomes of the Government will be:

- an innovative education and training system that is participative, inclusive, and supports life long learning;

- a quality government school system with skilled teachers and high standards of student achievement;
- improved participation, retention and outcomes for Indigenous students and those at risk; and
- resilient and optimistic children and young people who receive family, community and Government assistance and support.

### *Health, Disability and Housing*

Quality public health and disability services delivery is essential. The Government will focus on prevention, and fostering a proactive and integrated approach to services. We will address the care of those with greatest need, providing support to those who may lack the confidence to seek help.

Access to safe affordable housing is a right of everyone in the community. Provision of affordable housing is a significant way in which we can address social disadvantage.

The outcomes of the Government's programs will be:

- accessible health services through hospitals and the community;
- responsive programs and services for people within the community particularly the Indigenous community, older persons, those with mental illness, substance abuse, disabilities and respite care needs;
- efficient and effective delivery of health, disability, housing and community services;
- collaborative medical research;
- accessible, safe and affordable housing; and
- community involvement in health, disability and housing issues.

Services for people with a disability are undergoing major reforms. A key aspect is the active participation of consumers, carers and non-government service providers in determining the new directions, through the Disability Reform Group's work in 2002-03. Similar participatory processes are now underway for implementation and monitoring of the reforms.

### *Planning*

A strategic, integrated vision for the city is needed for a sustainable Canberra. The Government has consulted with Canberrans through the Your Canberra Your Say process in late 2002 and will continue to collaborate with Canberrans to develop a shared vision for an attractive city through the finalisation of the Canberra Spatial Plan. The outcomes of the Government will be:

- sustainable redevelopment within inner Canberra, particularly in the centre and on transport corridors;
- balanced land supply and use;

- sustainable transport systems;
- quality municipal services;
- quality redevelopment design; and
- establishment of an independent planning authority from July 2003.

### *Community Engagement and Safety*

Community engagement and safety are major concerns of the Government and all Canberrans. The Government will promote Canberra as a safe place to live and work. The outcomes of the Government will be:

- a vibrant, diverse, safe and just community with high rates of community participation;
- the engagement of young people, women, older people and those from Indigenous and multicultural backgrounds in decision making;
- increased police capacity and responsiveness;
- a criminal justice system based on human rights principles which protects the community, supports victims, treats accused persons justly and provides offenders with the opportunity for rehabilitation and reintegration; and
- a strategic approach to addressing the impacts of drugs on the community.

### *Public Service Capacity*

Traditional public service values need to underpin the ACT Public Service. The Government will revitalise the Public Service, giving it the respect and confidence to undertake its vital role. The outcomes of the Government will be:

- a skilled, innovative, experienced and fairly remunerated Public Service;
- governance and accountability frameworks;
- improved accountability in budgeting and reporting; and
- evidence based, target specific policy development.

### *New Priority – Bushfire Recovery*

On 18 January 2003, the ACT experienced a fire disaster, unprecedented in its history, and of a scale ranking it as one of Australia's worst single day natural disasters. The devastation tragically included the deaths of four people and many others who were injured, in some cases very badly, as well as the loss of some 500 properties, including homes, businesses, community and educational facilities, rural properties, stock, ACT Government facilities and assets, wildlife, equestrian and other sporting facilities and family pets. Many other properties were damaged.

The Government and its departments and agencies, together with many thousands of people across the ACT – community, church and business and individual citizens, responded immediately to the crisis to meet the needs of those affected by the fires. It was an

extraordinary response that demonstrated clearly both Canberra's depth of community spirit and the more general attitude of compassion and commitment that Australians share in a crisis.

Achieving the longer-term recovery of the ACT and its community is a new major priority for the ACT Government. This longer-term recovery effort is well underway. The task involves support for affected individuals and families, and extensive rebuilding and restoration. The aim is more than a simple return to the pre-bushfire situation. The goal is to ensure a Canberra that is more secure and revitalised, and, having learnt the lessons which have come out of such a major disaster, captures and builds upon the community spirit, cohesiveness and pride which the response to the fires triggered.

### **Delivering our Priorities and the Canberra Plan**

In October 2001, the Government made a commitment to Canberrans to develop a strategic framework that would guide the long-term development of the ACT. Development of the framework now known as the Canberra Plan is well underway.

The Canberra Plan is underpinned by the ACT Government's commitment to sustainability.

The Canberra Plan will comprise three components: a Canberra Social Plan, a Canberra Spatial Plan and an Economic White Paper. Together they will provide an overarching and integrated perspective to deliver opportunities for all Canberrans, now and in the future.