



## ACT Government

# 2003-2004 BUDGET

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### **BUDGET BUILDS ON SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS**

The 2003-04 ACT Budget delivers on the Government's commitment to build a sustainable Canberra, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said today.

“When ‘People Place Prosperity: a policy for sustainability in the ACT’ was launched in March, my Government committed itself to bringing together social, economic and environmental policies and programs in a coordinated way.

“Sustainability is about taking an integrated approach to protecting and enhancing those things we value most about the ACT — the well-being of our citizens, the ability of our economy and institutions to support our community, and the health of our environment,” Mr Stanhope said.

The highest possible level of participation of all members of our community is important to the lives of individuals and to creating a sustainable society. Mr Stanhope said initiatives designed to build social sustainability included \$3.9 million to be spent over the next four years to address the unmet needs of people with disabilities, and a further \$2.3 million which will enhance allied health services to young people and adults with disabilities.

“The budget has a strong focus on helping the more disadvantaged members of our community to overcome poverty and other barriers that may stop them from reaching their full potential,” Mr Stanhope said.

“The budget provides funding of \$13.3 million over the next four years to address the problem of homelessness. We will address not only its symptoms but its causes.”

Budget initiatives designed to build a more sustainable community focused on education, health, disability and disadvantage.

“The budget includes a further \$7.4 million for education which, together with the extra \$19.6 million boost to education in the 2002-03 Budget, represents a tremendous investment in Canberra's community and, ultimately, our economy,” Mr Stanhope said.

“Physical and mental health is fundamental to a sustainable community. Our approach to health services in this budget has been designed to maintain the good health enjoyed by most Canberrans, address gaps in services and improve our community care systems.”

The 2003-04 Budget was also a significant investment in the ACT's natural environment, addressing a number of issues of real concern.

Media Release



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“The budget includes \$300,000 to improve the quality of air in the ACT, through a subsidy scheme which will encourage Canberrans to replace polluting wood heaters with cleaner forms of heating. This program will benefit the health of Canberrans as well as improving our environment,” Mr Stanhope said.

“We are making a major investment, of \$1.671 million over four years, to protect and restore our grassy woodlands.

“\$1.671m has been allocated over four years to incorporate grassy woodlands into Canberra Nature Park, restoring woodlands in habitats previously cleared of trees, and enhancing the conservation value of remnant woodlands in rural areas.

“The budget also includes \$750,000 to be spent over four years to review the *Environment Protection Act 1997* and develop a Water Resources Strategy, to ensure that one of our most valuable resources is being managed in a sustainable way. The Strategy will support Canberra’s economic and social well-being by securing a long term reliable water supply and will protect and enhance water quality and environmental values.

“In this budget we’ve increased the water abstraction charge, which reflects a view widely-held by experts that the current price of water doesn’t reflect its true value, and that a key mechanism for encouraging a reduction in water use is to put a proper price on it.”

Mr Stanhope said the Government’s commitment to sustainability was also demonstrated by the budget initiatives relating to the economy and business development.

“The budget focuses on building a more sustainable, diverse economy, by supporting small and micro-businesses, smart technologies, tourism and the export of education and training,” Mr Stanhope said.

“We will establish a new Council of Education Export, which will receive \$150,000 a year for the next for years to establish Canberra as the preferred location for international students.

“Education and training is one of the ACT’s key strengths, and one we are keen to build on. Although it already generates more than \$110 million each year in export revenue, there is potential for substantial growth.”

Mr Stanhope said transport was a major focus of the Government’s move towards sustainability, and continued the work that was begun in the 2002-03 ACT Budget.

“Healthy cities have very good transport systems, as transport impacts on all aspects of community life, not to mention the environment and the economy,” Mr Stanhope said.

“We will never be able to stop people driving their cars — and nor do we necessarily want to — but what we need to do is strike a balance between people driving their own cars and those who are carpooling, using public transport, cycling and walking.

“The budget sets aside \$2.5 million for 11 projects which will help strike that balance, by reducing travel times on buses and making them more accessible, making bus interchanges more user-friendly and improving Canberra’s network of cycling and walking paths.”

Other projects included the implementation of an innovative, door-to-door feeder service for users of public transport late at night, the expansion of bus services to Gungahlin and the development of a travel database, which will inform future transport planning.

Another initiative was introduction of on-street pay parking in the Barton office precinct.

“A veritable flood of cars pours into Barton every day, and it’s an area that is very well-serviced by buses. The introduction of pay parking will bring arrangements in Barton into line with other major centres in Canberra, and will encourage a wider use of public transport,” Mr Stanhope said

“The budget allocates significant funds to begin implementing the Canberra Spatial Plan, our vision for the future growth and development of the ACT, in the next financial year. This plan will be completed in late 2003.

“Once the Canberra Spatial Plan is completed, we’ll begin implementing it straight away — it won’t be sitting on a shelf gathering dust. The budget allocates \$420,000 to investigate the best possible use of land and identify the real priorities for construction.

“The budget also delivers on my Government’s land release program. We will release land for approximately 2400 homes, and redevelopment will provide about 1000 more. The program will meet demand in a sustainable way and provide stability and flexibility to the market.

“The land release program will be managed by the new ACT Land Development Agency, which will be established on 1 July 2003.

“The ACT Government is taking the lead in the move towards sustainability, but we can’t get there through Government edict — we need the support of the ACT community.

“The move towards sustainability is a long-term goal. This budget begins that journey by helping to build a community, environment and economy that is sustainable.”

**Statement ends.**