



ACT Government

2002-2003 BUDGET

BUDGET 2002-03 - BUSINESS PROGRAMS

Funding in the 2002-03 Budget for the ACT's business programs reflects a stronger focus on the knowledge based economy through the Government's Knowledge Fund and on supporting the vital small business sector in Canberra.

Business Minister Ted Quinlan said existing business programs had been assessed and restructured to ensure they met the needs of all levels of the ACT business community, and to ensure they maximise employment growth in areas where the ACT has a strategic, competitive or natural advantage.

"New targeted business programs have been developed to fill identified gaps, and in some cases this has meant replacing existing programs such as the New Futures in Small Business program and the Small Business Growth program," Mr Quinlan said.

"The New Futures in Small Business Program was established at a time when there were major redundancies in the public and private sectors. When you combine this with the decline in numbers of participants by half of the peak reached in 1998-99, it is clear that there is a greatly reduced level of need in the business community for this program."

Mr Quinlan said the budget also had a strong emphasis on supporting the small business sector through the Small Business Employment Ready Program.

"The Small Business Employment Ready Program, a commitment made by the Labor Party during the election, will see up to \$500,000 over two years, \$250,000 in the first year, go to supporting small businesses in their development stages and help them deal with the myriad of challenges they face when taking on employees.

"The aim of this program is to create 250 jobs each in businesses that have not previously employed staff.

The Government continues to focus on developing and supporting the ACT's knowledge based economy with the inclusion of \$6 million to the Knowledge Fund in 2002-03.

"This Fund, which we committed to in the last election, will deliver assistance through three modes – commercialisation grants, proof of concept grants and equity investment - all designed to address the range of barriers to business growth. In addition Knowledge Fund will support High Tech start up businesses looking to develop their management skills.

"The Knowledge Fund will also support the commercialisation activities of the ICT Centre of Excellence. The Knowledge Fund will be a dependable source of capital for the ideas emanating from the Centre and will help commercialise those good ideas," Mr Quinlan said.

Media Release



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The ICT Centre of Excellence will receive a \$20 million ACT Government contribution in this budget towards establishing a node in the ACT, of which \$10 million will be through the provision of land.

The Budget will also see the ACT Government's biggest and most comprehensive website, the 3000-document Business Gateway website, receive a substantial upgrade, with \$461,000 allocated for 2002-03 to improve the consistency and efficiency of the supply of information to the business community.

"The upgrade includes the purchase of a locally developed content management system called *Meta*WizDom*, used in many other ACT Government websites," Mr Quinlan said.

Statement ends 25 June 2002