



ACT Government

# Fostering an Innovative Community

Embargoed until 1 May

The 2001-2002 ACT Budget will build on and enhance Canberra's reputation as a centre for innovation, ACT Chief Minister Gary Humphries said.

"Innovation is about people generating and building upon new ideas and new technologies to produce new products, services and processes," Mr Humphries said.

"It is about making people's lives better through more and higher paid jobs, through better access to high quality goods and services and through achieving better social and environmental outcomes.

"Central to the make-up of an innovative society is the fostering and developing of a culture of innovation, a culture not only founded in science and technology, but in community services such as health and education, environment and the arts.

Mr Humphries said Canberra is a natural centre for innovation.

"Canberra's educational, social, cultural, economic and political environment is unique, and our many strengths and assets are the very ones needed to develop the businesses of the future. They provide the perfect foundation on which to build innovative and entrepreneurial industries," Mr Humphries said.

"But we need to do more to ensure Canberra's future as a centre for innovation, and our future as a community that is socially, environmentally and economically healthy.

"We are in the final stages of development of an innovation framework to address the full range of activities that contribute to innovation throughout the community, from basic education, developing skills, and encouraging creativity and ideas through to commercialisation."

Mr Humphries said the 2001-2002 Budget commits to a range of new initiatives to further build a culture of innovation, increase the rate of innovation in Canberra and develop skills to support the industries of the future.

"Some of these initiatives are educational programs to encourage innovation in our young people and to develop the skills needed in ACT industries. Others will encourage the ACT to become a leading business and research centre in the knowledge economy, a place that exploits new ideas and attracts progressive businesses and outstanding individuals," Mr Humphries said.

"The funding also includes initiatives to build innovation in arts, science and communications, to address the Digital Divide, and to better deliver government services."

**ACT Budget 2001-02**

Some of the initiatives in the budget that will build innovation include:

- \$500,000 to continue developing an **online virtual CIT campus** for delivery of CIT programs through the Internet. This initiative began in 2000-2001 with funding of \$250,000. It will enable students to access vocational education from their home or workplace.
- \$600,000 over four years for the development of **online curriculum** that will assist in the improvement of teaching quality through improved access to high quality curriculum materials.
- \$1.25 million a year for two years to **extend the 4-year IT school grants program** by 2 years. Schools receive funding towards IT, including hardware, software, networks and staff professional development. This will give them access to the Internet and national online curriculum resources.
- \$2.07m over four years, with \$500,000 in the first year, to establish a **school education technology centre of excellence**, building on the government's commitment to enhance the teaching and learning of IT in schools.
- \$600,000 will be provided over two years to support and develop the ACT's cutting edge **photonics industry**. Photonics, or the technology of light, has a broad range of applications, including high-speed communications, data storage, medical imaging systems and sensors.
- \$450,000 over three years to support a bid for a **Global Biodiversity Information Facility**, an OECD initiative that will create an international inter-operable network of biodiversity databases. The goal is to make the world's biodiversity data freely available. Australia is competing against the Netherlands, Denmark and Spain to secure this facility. Should Australia be successful, the facility will be located in the ACT.
- \$100,000 for the **Academy of Interactive Entertainment** to develop an incubator facility for multimedia developers at the NATSEM site. The Academy offers facilities for training, commercial business operations and business incubation services, enhancing development of this high growth industry. It will also assist new and existing ACT businesses to take advantage of business opportunities with access to highly trained graduates.
- \$150,000 over two years to support the recently established **Indigenous Business Chamber**.
- \$240,000 over four years for an innovative **Indigenous mentoring program** to support Indigenous people in their employment and leading to higher retention rates. The program will offer Indigenous people mentoring support in their workplace, based on methodology and evaluation from a pilot study conducted in 2001-2002.
- \$2.63 million over four years, with \$500,000 in the first year, for initiatives to **address the Digital Divide** in the ACT. The measures provided under the program will be subject to the findings of the Digital Divide Task Force.
- Expenditure of \$538,000 over four years, in addition to \$180,000 in capital funding, to **refocus information systems and technology in ACT courtrooms** and move towards a more modern environment.
- \$1.439 million over four years, with \$354,000 in 2001-2002, to establish **home detention** as an alternative to imprisonment. The program will have a positive effect on rehabilitative outcomes and could lead to less-costly sentencing options.
- Expenditure of \$7 million and another \$4 million in capital funding for **Canberra Connect's operations**, in particular for the establishment of a call centre to improve telephone services and for streamlining a wide range of business processes across the ACT Government so they can be delivered by Canberra Connect.

- \$50,000 for innovative strategies to enhance administration and improve efficiency and operation of the **ACT Public Service**.
- \$1.3 million over four years, with \$319,000 in the first year, for establishing a computer-based register of Territory legislation, which will be accessible free over the internet.
- \$1.5m in capital funding, a total of \$10.5m over four years, for an **integrated document management system** to provide a whole of government solution to record and document management. The program will assist participating agencies to meet the provisions of the Territory Records Bill, support better client services by improving electronic access to information, and allow economies of scale.
- \$1 million over four years for the development of a **festivals strategy** and for a **festivals development fund** to help ACT festivals become even more successful.
- \$300,000 over three years to provide some of the arts organisations receiving multi-year funding with opportunities to explore and develop innovative projects that will attract new audiences and showcase locally and nationally Canberra's capacity to be innovative through the arts.
- \$647,000 in capital funding to complete a database of **core geographic data on service and stormwater easements**. This will enable the community, development industry and government agencies to access critical development information electronically, which will greatly improve timeliness and accuracy.

The Chief Minister said the 2001-2002 ACT Budget reaffirms the ACT Government's commitment to making Canberra a centre of innovation.

"The initiatives in this budget will allow us to capitalise on our many advantages and to take significant step towards realising Canberra's economic and social development potential," Mr Humphries said.

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