



ACT Government

Housing Budget highlights links to community services

Embargoed until 1 May 2001

Public housing clients stand to benefit from a number of initiatives contained in this year's Budget, the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services, Michael Moore, said today.

"It is incumbent on all governments to provide affordable and appropriate housing assistance for those residents who require it," he said.

"Housing is a basic need – it provides stability, it offers the freedom to pursue education and employment opportunities, and allows people to fully participate in and contribute to the community.

"To assist public housing tenants to achieve these aims we have included in the Budget a number of new initiatives, in addition to funding currently provided under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement."

Under the 1999-2003 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, \$127 million is being provided to fund a continuum of accommodation responses for people on low incomes. These range from high-support crisis accommodation through to transitional accommodation and entirely independent living.

Housing assistance is currently provided to about 12,000 households in public and community housing. Funding for supported crisis and emergency accommodation is also provided through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

"In addition to the big ticket items such as the community linkages, property upgrades and crisis accommodation initiatives offered in the Budget, there is further funding designed to assist those on low incomes with a range of accommodation assistance issues," Mr Moore said.

Housing Budget initiatives for 2001-02 include the following:

Services to public housing tenants

A new scheme will be implemented to **link public housing residents to employment programs and living skills courses** in areas such as parenting, family and training opportunities. The funding - worth \$2.07 million over four years - will also provide residents with better access to clinical services such as community nursing and mental health, support and advocacy agencies, pastoral care and other services provided by community based organisations.

Short Term Crisis Accommodation

\$240,000 in 2001-02 (\$1.152 million over four years) will be allocated to provide a safe overnight environment for **people at risk of homelessness for a range of reasons or who are intoxicated**. The program will enable intoxicated people to sober up safely as an alternative to being placed in police custody and offers overnight accommodation and a brief intervention to access other health and social services for individuals at risk of homelessness.

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This initiative is in addition to \$685,000 that will be provided in 2001-02 for crisis accommodation under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

Assisting young people at risk

Funding of \$220,000 is made available in the Budget for a new project to **assist young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**, in response to recommendations from the Youth Housing Task Force.

The initiative, targeted at young people aged between 16 and 25, will provide funding for youth housing workers. Their aim will be to improve access for young people to medium to long-term accommodation and to provide ongoing support to sustain them in that accommodation.

This will be achieved through brokerage, liaison and coordinated case management with existing youth, health, housing and community service providers. The youth housing workers will be managed by a community based organisation.

Single Home Share Scheme

Alternative accommodation options for young people on low incomes who want to share with others are to be provided through the new **Single Home Share Scheme** funded at \$30,000 in this budget. As a pilot project, the scheme will offer up to 25 properties in the first year to a mix of community housing programs, and will fill a gap in current medium to long-term housing options for young people. Improving young peoples' links with youth services to enhance their community participation is an important aspect of the Scheme.

Community sector collaboration

Up to \$140,000 will be made available for three community organisations to collaborate and consult with the sector on a range of housing assistance issues. The recipients of the funding are Canberra Community Housing Organisations of the ACT, ACT Shelter and the ACT Council of Social Services.

New focus for Ministerial advice

The Minister's Housing Advisory Committee will be refocussed to provide the Government with more strategic advice on a range of housing issues. The new committee will undertake a stronger advisory role with revised terms of reference, a new membership, and responsibility for issuing progress reports and a work agenda. The revised terms of reference and membership will be announced shortly.

\$36 million invested in Capital

As part of its property management role, ACT Housing manages the Territory's public housing assets. In 2001-02, \$36 million will be provided under ACT Housing's capital program. This will be used for the **acquisition and upgrade of properties** generally as well as the provision of a further 50 accessible units (200 accessible units will be provided over the three years from 2001-2004). It will also contribute to the rejuvenation or replacement of ageing public housing stock including multi-unit developments and the provision of purpose-built properties for people with disabilities.

Total facilities management for repairs and maintenance

In addition, ACT Housing will spend **\$20.9 million** on repairs and maintenance to its 11,380 properties. ACT Housing's combined capital and recurrent maintenance expenditure provides significant support to the ACT's building and construction industry.

Statement ends

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