



BUDGET 2008 - 2009 READY FOR THE FUTURE MEDIA RELEASE

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\$37.4 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

The ACT Government is ensuring that our community sector is ready for the future with a \$37.4 million investment over the next four years, Minister for Disability and Community Services Katy Gallagher MLA said today.

“The centrepiece is a \$24.6 million investment over two years in community facilities across the Territory,” Ms Gallagher said.

“This will involve the refurbishment of a range of existing facilities to be made available for use by community groups as part of the ACT Government’s program of investing in the community.”

“This funding will enable the transformation of suburban precincts providing three community hubs at a cost of more than \$14.2 million; six neighbourhood halls and the refurbishment of Noah’s Ark at Rivett costing \$8 million; as well as a number of new community parks at a cost of \$2.4 million.”

“The ACT Government’s commitment is to build a strong, resilient and inclusive community. An investment in the community is an investment in the future,” Ms Gallagher said.

“In building on the success of the ACT Government’s previous investments in the successful Child and Family Centre model, the 2008-2009 budget will allocate \$250,000 for the forward design of a third centre in the West Belconnen area.”

“In addition to this, \$845,000 over four years will be provided for enhanced services in West Belconnen to facilitate access for disadvantaged families and children experiencing issues of poor educational attainment and child development, poor health, family breakdown and poor parenting and domestic violence,” Ms Gallagher said.

The ACT Government is committed to providing increased support to the community sector through the 2008-2009 Budget.

“This year, the Government will be working towards implementing a new long-service-leave statutory scheme for the community sector so that employees who move from organisation to organisation will be able to accumulate long-service leave.

“Seed funding of \$650,000 a year, commencing from 2009-10, will be provided for this initiative which will give community sector workers similar entitlements to other workers, provide attraction and retention incentives, and importantly, reward workers for their commitment to the community sector.

“This commitment is in response to requests by community organisations for such a scheme,” Ms. Gallagher said.

“The 2008-09 Budget also provides \$2.8 million over four years for the maintenance and refurbishment of a number of community centres and facilities in Canberra, including \$1 million for the upgrade to heating and cooling systems at Belconnen Community Centre and \$352,000 for the fit-out of Forde Community Centre. This funding will ensure that our quality community facilities remain viable for the future.”

“In addition to this extra support for non-government organisations, a further \$1 million will be provided to support the viability and capacity building of community organisations through the community inclusion fund.”

“The Community Inclusion Board will receive \$450,000 in 2008-09 which will enable it to provide advice to the ACT Government on the economic and social participation of disadvantaged groups in the ACT.

“The ACT Government is committed to supporting all members of our community and is currently reviewing the ACT Concession Program. The results from the review will be implemented in the near future. Meanwhile the Budget will provide funding to increase the level of assistance for all people on low incomes for fixed water supply charges.

“This concession is currently provided to Centrelink pension concession card holders, Commonwealth Department for Veterans Affairs pension concession card and gold card holders. From 1 July 2008, the ACT Government will be extending this rebate to all health care card holders, at a cost of approximately \$1.8 million over four years.

“To ensure the integrity of our community sector, and to protect those Canberrans who receive care, the ACT Government will be providing \$4.118 million over four years for criminal record and background checks of the individuals, organisations and volunteers who work with vulnerable Canberrans”, Ms Gallagher said.

Statement ends

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