



ACT Government

Improving quality of life for Canberra's Indigenous people

Embargoed until 1 May 2001

The 2001-2002 ACT Budget contains an important package of initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, allowing them greater opportunities to be self-reliant and preserve their culture, ACT Chief Minister and Community Affairs Minister Gary Humphries said.

"This budget provides practical support to Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, while at the same time putting funding towards developing a greater understanding of the needs of these communities," Mr Humphries said.

Mr Humphries said one of the key commitments in the 2001-02 Budget for Indigenous peoples was funding of \$618,000 over four years, including \$150,000 in 2001-02, to support the **joint management of Namadgi National Park**.

"The Government's offer to the Native Title Claimants of a cooperative management arrangement for the Park is an important good-will gesture to the Canberra's Indigenous community," Mr Humphries said.

"The offer takes into account the social and economic aspirations of local Aboriginal people that the park remains focussed on the conservation of natural values.

"It will generate a greater community recognition of both pre-European and contemporary Aboriginal cultural issues in the region, and provide increased employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people.

Mr Humphries said the Budget also commits the Government to a range of initiatives designed to enhance the employment and social opportunities for Canberra's Indigenous communities.

"The budget allocates \$100,000 for developing a **demographic profile** of the ACT's Indigenous and multicultural communities.

"This will ensure the government has reliable and consistent data to better tailor its services," Mr Humphries said.

"We have already established a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit to provide a specific point of access to these communities and play a strong whole of government role in the development of Indigenous policies.

"The ACT Government has already taken a whole of government approach to Indigenous policy through the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Framework** and associated strategic policies addressing areas such as education and training, housing, employment, justice and health.

ACT Budget 2001-02

"The 2001-2002 Budget places a particular focus on health and employment.

\$240,000 will be provided over four years for an innovative **Indigenous mentoring program**, a key recommendation of the Government's Indigenous Employment Strategy.

"The program will offer Indigenous people mentoring support in their workplace, building on a pilot study conducted in 2001-2002. The program will provide mentoring services for 15 Indigenous participants in at least 5 different industries a year. It will address the higher unemployment rate for Indigenous people, and support individual workers in the workplace, leading to higher retention rates.

"We are also providing \$150,000 over two years to support the recently established **Indigenous Business Chamber** which offers information, networking opportunities, marketing, employment and training support to Indigenous small businesses. The Business Chamber is another key recommendation of the Indigenous Employment Strategy."

Another \$415,000 over four years will go towards enhancing the **Gugan Gulwan Indigenous Youth Centre**. The funding will provide additional staff and educational resources to help build the youth centre's capacity to address the needs of young Indigenous people, especially those at risk of poor performance in the education system.

"The program will assist Indigenous students and other young people opportunities to perform better at school, make the transition from school to work, and access culturally appropriate support and recreation services," Mr Humphries said.

Health Minister Michael Moore said \$1.036 million over four years, with \$250,000 in the first year, will **enhance health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**, including outreach and case management services.

"In addition, a four year \$2.107m sexual health program, part of which will provide funding for a sexual assault service to the Indigenous community, and the establishment of a sexual health outreach worker," Mr Moore said.

"A \$351,000 early intervention initiative **for Protecting Children**, will provide an increased level of support to the Indigenous community."

Mr Moore said another \$770,000 will be provided over four years, with \$186,000 in the first year, for **Indigenous mental health workers**.

"This program will provide improved access to more culturally aware and responsible mental health services through additional Indigenous health workers and additional training for all ACT mental health staff. The program will support the Indigenous Regional Health Plan, which seeks to build on the Government's efforts to be more culturally aware and responsible to the mental health needs and spiritual well-being of the Indigenous community," Mr Moore said.

The Government was also committing \$1.575m over four years, with \$384,000 in the first year, to engage staff to meet specialised needs of Indigenous, Vietnamese and women in the

corrections system. A designated Indigenous policy officer will be established in the Community Corrections Unit, and an Indigenous liaison officer at Belconnen Remand Centre.

The Chief Minister said the initiatives in the 2001-2002 Budget will lead to better services to the Indigenous communities and a better understanding of their needs, which will result in greater quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

Statement ends

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