



Australian Capital Territory

## **\$60M PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ACT HOUSING'S MAJOR FLATS**

ACT Urban Services Minister Brendan Smyth today announced that the ACT Government plans to spend \$60 million over the next ten years upgrading ACT Housing's major flat complexes.

Mr Smyth said the program to revitalise the larger multi-unit properties is further proof of the ACT Government's determination to improve Canberra's ageing public housing stock, and follows an exhaustive review by an independent church-based consultant.

"This is the biggest refurbishment program in the history of public housing in the ACT," Mr Smyth said.

"The program will result in huge improvements to most of the 25 complexes, each containing more than 40 housing units.

"This is a \$60 million vote of confidence in the future of public housing in Canberra, and will be funded from ACT Housing's ongoing capital works budget.

"The program will start immediately with preventative maintenance for safety and security reasons at Bega Court, Reid; Allawah Court, Braddon; and Jerilderie Court, Reid.

"The first two complexes to receive major upgrades over the next 18-months will be Gowrie Court, Narrabundah, and Stuart Flats, Griffith.

"Work on the other complexes will be staggered over the following years, and the program will be subject to regular internal reviews to ensure that it is achieving the desired outcomes.

"The independent review found that while our big flats have 'a number of important positive and unique attributes', many have not been upgraded since they were built more than forty years ago.

"It therefore recommended the sale of Mawson Gardens, Mawson, because the units there are in poor condition and cannot be upgraded cost-effectively, as well as vacant land at Condamine Court, Turner. The proceeds from the sales will contribute to the refurbishment program.

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“In addition, the Government accepts the review’s recommendation to develop a master plan and call for expressions of interest for the redevelopment of the Red Hill Flats, at Discovery Street and Cygnet Crescent.

“The review said the Red Hill townhouses are in ‘poor condition’ and under-utilise the land available, and suggested that the redeveloped complex may include a mix of public and private sector housing.

“ACT Housing will be meeting tomorrow with tenants at Mawson Gardens and the Red Hill Flats.

“It is understandable that some tenants may be concerned about the sale or redevelopment of their homes, but this is unavoidable because the units are in poor condition and are beyond economic repair.

“Every tenant will be able to choose from a range of alternatives according to their eligibility, and ACT Housing will follow the highly successful tenant relocation model used at MacPherson and Lachlan Courts.

“As was the case at MacPherson and Lachlan Courts, any initial concerns will quickly be assuaged when tenants realise that they will be offered more comfortable homes in far better condition than they those they have at present.

“The good news is that the reviewers found that on the whole ACT Housing’s major flats are structurally sound, and that many are well-located and blend in with their local neighbourhoods.

“It’s worth noting also that the reviewers said that although there are justifiable concerns about anti-social behaviour and criminal activity, the rate of reports is low compared with other States and overseas,” Mr Smyth said

The review was undertaken by Ecumenical Housing Inc from Melbourne, and the Canberra consultant, Property Concept and Management Pty Ltd.

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Statement ends / Tuesday 23 May 2000

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