



ACT Government  
**BUDGET 2006-2007**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

No. 30

**\$1.7 MILLION TO HELP REDUCE STAFF INJURIES AND  
INCREASE PATIENT SAFETY**

The Manual Handling Program at The Canberra Hospital will be expanded through an allocation of \$1.241 million over four years, Minister for Health Katy Gallagher said today.

A further \$500,000 will be provided for equipment.

Ms Gallagher said the program was developed for The Canberra Hospital in 2004–05 with the aim of reducing manual handling injuries among staff and increasing patient safety.

“These funds were used to provide up-to-date equipment and education for staff in the latest techniques of manual handling,” she said.

“Based on the success to date, an expansion of the program is being developed within the clinical areas of TCH, non-clinical areas and implemented into Community Health.”

Ms Gallagher said that during the last 10 years patient manual handling had presented gradually increasing risks as patients had become more dependent, with greater numbers of co-morbidities.

“Another compounding factor is that the average weight of patients is rapidly increasing, while the average age of nurses and allied health staff is also increasing,” she said.

“To date, \$2.3 million has been invested in the program for equipment. These funds have been used to supply equipment and devices, which will reduce the manual handling risks for staff, as well as increasing patient safety.

“Research demonstrates that injuries may be reduced by between 65 per cent and 85 per cent with the use of manual handling devices. The expansion of this program is critical to ensuring continued improvements in patient safety and the occupational health and safety of staff.”

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**6 June 2006**

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