



ACT Government

2004-2005 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

FUNDING FOR ACT'S HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE

The ACT Government has provided more than one million to boost the ACT Human Rights Office to implement the historic ACT Human Rights Act, Chief Minister and Attorney General, Jon Stanhope, said today.

Mr Stanhope said the Government had provided an additional \$1 million of funding to the Human Rights Office over the next four years to enable the Office to expand its public education function in human rights.

The funding will also provide sufficient resources to the Human Rights Commissioner to review ACT legislation and advise the Government on any issues concerning compliance of ACT law with the Human Rights Act.

"This funding is crucial for the people of the ACT to understand and implement the ACT Human Rights Act in our everyday lives," Mr Stanhope said.

"The ACT recently created history by being the first Australian jurisdiction to pass a Human Rights Act, but our responsibilities in relation to human rights extend well beyond the passage of legislation.

"One of the priorities identified in my Government's *Social Plan* was to build a human rights culture within the ACT community, and this is something that can only be achieved through the appropriate balance of education, legislation and guidance.

"My recent visit to the United Kingdom highlighted the importance of both community education and legislative scrutiny and this Budget provides the necessary funding to help us fulfil these two critical roles.

"In the ACT, the Human Rights Office already plays an important role in educating the public about discrimination.

"This Office, and the position of Human Rights Commissioner, have now been identified as having important roles in the implementation of the Human Rights Act and the goals articulated in the Social Plan.

"We currently have an opportunity to facilitate the creation of a human rights culture in the ACT and my Government will ensure the Human Rights Office has the resources to help us undertake this vital and enduring task," Mr Stanhope said.

The Chief Minister acknowledged the dedication and achievements of outgoing Discrimination Commissioner, Rosemary Follett, and thanked her for the contribution she has made to the position of over the last seven years, and welcomed the new Human Rights Commissioner, Helen Watchirs, to the position.

Statement Ends.

