



# ACT Government

## 2003-2004 BUDGET

### ACT BUDGET SUPPORTS BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

The 2003-2004 ACT budget will continue the Government's support of residents of fire-affected properties, rural lessees, the community and businesses in the ACT.

"The focus of recovery efforts to date has been on assisting those people affected by the bushfires, restoring essential services and infrastructure, ensuring public safety, clearing blocks, providing public information, establishing partnerships with the community, salvaging forests, and commencing the planning for the longer term aspects of the recovery," Mr Stanhope said.

"The Government's strategy has been to respond to the needs of the bushfire recovery as quickly and comprehensively as possible. In total, the Government expects to have spent \$29.694 million by the end of June, with total bushfire recovery funding to the end of 2006-07 expected to exceed \$52.5 million.

"Our aim is to achieve much more than a simple return to the pre-bushfire situation. We want to ensure that Canberra is more secure and revitalised, and is able to capture and build on upon the community spirit, cohesiveness and pride shown by Canberra's response to this disaster.

"Our Government intends to continue this momentum through bushfire recovery initiatives which in total will exceed \$17 million in the 2003-2004 ACT budget.

Mr Stanhope said that his Government will provide \$2 million in 2003-04 to enable the Recovery Centre in Lyons to maintain its high level of support and information services to residents affected by the bushfires, supported by \$300,000 for the Department of Health and Community Care to provide additional counselling services.

"We will provide \$4.6 million over three years (\$2.7 million in 2003-04) for the replacement of street and parkland trees and for the repair and replacement of other urban landscape assets, such as shrub beds, screen plantings, sportsgrounds, line marking, street signs, bridge rails, bus shelters and street furniture; and for the replacement of damaged gutters and footpaths," Mr Stanhope said.

"The environmental impact of the fires is being addressed through a number of measures including:

- the restoration and rehabilitation of fire suppression trails and walking trails in national parks (\$2 million over three years, \$700,000 in 2003-04);
- weed suppression in areas damaged by the bushfires (\$1.1 million over three years);
- conservation, restoration and construction along the Murrumbidgee River corridor (\$300,000 over two years); and
- a review of heritage places affected by the fires, including Aboriginal places (\$200,000)."



Media Release

Mr Stanhope said that the reduction of bushfire risk is another important priority. The Government will spend \$1 million over three years (\$500,000 in 2003-04) for fire fuel management works in areas of the Canberra Nature Park in areas adjoining residential areas; and an additional \$600,000 in 2003-04 for the removal of burnt pines and casuarinas adjacent to Duffy and along the Murrumbidgee, as well as the hazard cleanup of groups of pines across Canberra.

“The January bushfires, combined with the drought have had a great impact on the rural areas of the ACT. To assist in the recovery of these areas we will provide \$150,000 in 2003-04 for the continuation of rural assistance program including funding for weed suppression, soil stabilisation and tree seedlings. In addition, \$189,000 per annum is being provided to fund the interest subsidy for the business bushfire assistance package which assists both rural leaseholders and city-based businesses,” Mr Stanhope said.

Mr Stanhope said over 80 ACT Housing properties were destroyed by the fires, including more than 50 in rural areas. \$8.8 million is being provided over 2002-03 and 2003-04 to fund the land component of replacements for these rural properties. The cost of the replacement of the houses themselves will be met by through insurance.

“To be fully effective, the recovery needs to address emotional and psychological aspects as well all the practical measures. To assist in this aspect of the recovery the Government is providing \$200,000 over three years to extend the free plant issue scheme to residents whose houses or gardens were destroyed by the bushfires. This recognises the importance of gardens to the people of Canberra and will help re-establish our standing as a beautiful garden city.

“The creation of an appropriate bushfire memorial may form a key part of the recovery process. We have set aside \$185,000 for the construction of a memorial, which will be discussed and developed in consultation with the affected communities. The memorial could help establish a focal point for the commemoration of the losses from the fire, and most particularly serve as a memorial to those who lost their lives during the fires,” Mr Stanhope said.

The work of the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce and its Secretariat will continue into 2003-04 at a cost of \$1.6 million to ensure that the recovery program continues to be well coordinated and fully consultative. Work also will continue to complete the study into non-urban bushfire affected areas and the Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January Bushfires at a total cost of \$350,000; while \$1.5 million will be provided to meet the cost of the coronial inquiry.

“These budget initiatives will assist our community to recover from the bushfires as quickly as possible, help prevent or reduce the future incidence of bushfires in the ACT, and contribute further to our efforts to achieve a sustainable environment for the ACT.

“They continue the already outstanding response to the bushfires from the community, the business sector, community organisation and Government agencies,” Mr Stanhope said.  
**Statement ends.**