

Early Intervention – a brighter future for our kids and our community



ACT Government

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ACT Budget 2001-02

The ACT Government has made early intervention into our community's most pressing problems a key focus in framing the 2001-02 Budget.

Early intervention is about helping people at risk and addressing the social and health problems of children.

It is also about preventing problems from developing into more complex and more expensive challenges for individuals and the community.

Health Minister Michael Moore said: "Money spent now on early diagnosis in health, education, community services and justice is all about investing in a healthier society for the ACT."

Mr Moore pointed to the Government's **\$1 million investment in 2001-02 in dental services** as a classic example of this approach.

"If we as a society help people by providing more dental care, we prevent much greater health problems, and much more public expense, into the future."

Education Minister Bill Stefaniak cited the decision to **bring class sizes for kindergarten and years 1 and 2 of primary school down to 21** as another vital early intervention measure.

"Research shows that early intervention increases the developmental and educational gains for a child, improves the functioning of the family and reaps long-term benefits for the community.

"By lowering class sizes we are providing our young students with maximum readiness and reducing the chances that they may have to learn a particular skill at a later time when that may cause frustration, embarrassment or even social isolation.

"This measure has been praised by the Australian Education Union as the most important education initiative since self-government and it represents a significant investment in the quality of our kids education."

Chief Minister Gary Humphries said that the Cabinet had spent many hours weighing up social challenges which would benefit from this approach.

"It reflects the character of our Government that we take an intelligent and compassionate approach. No secure society should allow health problems and social challenges to fester under its noses," Mr Humphries said.

The Government's **early intervention initiatives**, include the following for this financial year:

- Lower Early Childhood Class Sizes for Primary schools (\$1,468,000)

The lower early childhood class sizes for government primary schools initiative provides additional teachers to enable the reduction of kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 class sizes in government schools to a maximum of 21 students.

The reduction in class sizes will occur progressively over the period from 2002 – 2004. This initiative will support better educational outcomes for lower primary students, particularly those with a range of

challenging life circumstances. Smaller class sizes mean teachers can focus more on assisting young children attain foundation skills in literacy and numeracy. It will also enhance the capacity of teachers to focus on individual needs of students.

- Short Term Crisis Accommodation (\$240,000)

The program will provide overnight accommodation and a brief intervention to access other health and social services for individuals at risk of homelessness and enable intoxicated people to sober up safely as an alternative to being placed in police custody.

- Intervention Programs to Reduce Recidivism (\$1,484,000)

This initiative aims to reduce risk factors and to strengthen positive attributes for people. The attributes targeted are those that have an impact on crime prevention and the social and economic circumstances of the individual. The initiatives include programs for Custodial Facilities (\$80,000), Alcohol and Drug Services at Belconnen Remand Centre (\$128,000), Interventions for Adult Offenders on Community Based Orders (\$522,000), Risk Management of Offenders on Community Based Orders (\$322,000), Community Service Orders position (\$65,000) and Supported Accommodation for Young Offenders (\$350,000).

- Dental Waiting List Reduction (\$1,000,000 in 2001-02, \$500,000 ongoing)

This initiative will reduce waiting times for elective dental restorative treatment or for dentures and additional dental restorative treatment for clients of the Dental Health Program. The program will add up to an additional 950 clients in 2001-02 and ensure an ongoing reduction in the waiting times for the first appointment. It will also support access to elective dental treatment within a reasonable time for the vulnerable members of the community.

- Health Promotion Strategies (\$400,000)

This program will support delivery of better health outcomes for the community through integrated and coordinated health promotion activity. The initial \$400,000 in 2001-02 and the subsequent \$2.690million over the four year period will build a comprehensive Health Promotion Strategic Framework encompassing health promotion and disease prevention approaches.

- National Disease Control Effort (\$398,000)

This initiative aims to maintain national public health standards through the implementation of the new food safety regulations. The program will provide proactive strategies to enhance food safety in the ACT through the provision of education and support to businesses on this area of change. The initiative will also support improved air quality monitoring with better equipment, analysis and feedback for the public as part of the new national standards for air quality monitoring. It will also support implementation of a range of national strategies and actions targeting disease control in the areas of environmental health and communicable diseases.

- Protecting Children Program (\$351,000)

This initiative aims to strengthen measures for the protection of children, early intervention to prevent family breakdown, child abuse and neglect. The program will raise the level of child protection through improved child protection decision making, provide support to children leaving foster care, provide an increased level of support to the Indigenous community and strengthen the capacity of families general to keep their families safe.

- Community Linkages in Housing (\$500,000)

This initiative provides for a service 'broker' to link residents of public housing to a range of services and organisations. These include employment program/opportunities, living skills, clinical services, support and advocacy services and pastoral services provided by local churches and other community

based organisations. A number of social and community benefits are expected from the initiative including: safer living environments, more sustainable tenancies, greater stability in families and communities, increased social connection between residents and decreased poverty amongst public housing tenants.

- Support for Students at Risk (\$206,000)

The Support for Students at Risk Program has been established to support students at risk of not achieving satisfactory education and training outcomes. The program is designed to strengthen partnerships with agencies, schools and community groups to improve transitions between education, employment and training activities for young people.

- Public Methadone Clinic - Additional Funding (\$261,000)

This initiative allocates additional funding for the Public Methadone Program. This will provide the ACT with the ability to cope with demand for public methadone places as well as new pharmaceutical drug treatments as they become available. This will include the possible establishment of a satellite clinic on the northside of Canberra. The Program will support opioid dependent people and enable them to access methadone and other pharmaceutical treatments such as bupremorphine through the public clinic.

- Disability Service Improvement Scheme (\$250,000)

This initiative will provide independent advice on client satisfaction and quality of services provided to people with a disability. The program encompasses both the Government and non-government disability services sector and incorporates independent audits of disability service outlets against the National Disability Service Standards.

- Indigenous Health Services Enhancements (\$250,000)

This initiative provides funding to enhance indigenous health services including outreach and case management workers. This funding is an acknowledgment of the difficulty that indigenous people face in accessing mainstream services. The program will provide links with existing services for indigenous people in the ACT and will progress the priorities identified in the 'Regional Health Plan'.

- Parenting Services in Gungahlin (\$220,000)

This initiative will support young families living in the Gungahlin area. It provides for extra clinical space in Gungahlin, as well as enhancing child health services through co-location and partnerships with other services.

- Recreational Support Program for At-Risk Youth (\$225,000)

This initiative is a community-based program that provides accessible sport, recreation, and support programs to at-risk youth. The program will work intensively with young people aged between 12 and 25 years, who are at-risk of homelessness, substance abuse, being victims of crime, or becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. The program will provide both centre-based and outreach activities. Free or low cost recreational activities will also be available during weekdays and on weekends from an accessible location.

- Sexual Health Services (\$508,000)

This initiative provides funding for strategies to address the needs of sexual assault victims and to provide sexual health services. This program will provide an integrated service to all sexual assault victims, with choice of gender of medical practitioner and streamlined therapeutic and forensic procedures within the Health portfolio.

- Youth Smoking and Health Campaign (\$200,000)

This initiative is primarily aimed at reducing the incidence of teenage smoking in the ACT. The program will provide a targeted education and support program in consultation with Healthpact and an appropriate NGO provider.

- Counselling Services for Women (\$200,000)

This program will provide general counselling services to women in non-crisis situations, consistent with the priorities outlined in the ACT Women's Action Plan 2000-01. Services offered will include therapeutic groups, education and short term counselling. The program will provide increase services for women with anxiety and depression and those affected by violence.

- Indigenous Mental Health Workers (\$186,000)

The funding provisions for additional mental health workers will ensure improved access for our indigenous community to more culturally aware and responsible mental health services. The program supports the Indigenous Regional Health Plan and seeks to build on our efforts to be more culturally aware and responsive to the mental health needs of indigenous people.

- Newborn Hearing Screening Program (\$186,000)

This initiative will provide early detection of hearing loss in newborns to reduce developmental delay as a result of untreated hearing loss. The program will support routine hearing screening of all babies in the ACT before the age of three months and ensure the availability of intervention by six months of age.

- Supporting Families with Adolescents (\$165,000)

The funding from this initiative will establish a pro-active, early intervention program for families with adolescent children who are experiencing family conflict and/or dealing with issues such as substance abuse. The program will focus on young people aged 16 years and under and will have the resources to intervene within 48 hours. It will include components of high intensity family mediation and counselling, and the capacity for ongoing follow-up to manage and prevent the escalation of family crisis.

- Expansion of the Out of School Education Program (\$120,000)

This program will provide young people who have left mainstream educational settings, with the opportunity to re-engage in education in a non-threatening flexible and informal environment. The initiative will also enable increase attendance for the program, enhance the quality and flexibility of delivery and develop outreach support.

- Home-based Outreach for Young People with Special Needs (\$120,000)

This initiative supports the Government's commitment to build social capital. It supports our youth with special needs by assisting them with their independence and well-being in the community. The program will provide for a range of home-based outreach services to support sustainable accommodation arrangements.

- Non-Government Schools Common Assessment Process for Literacy and Numeracy (\$120,000)

This initiative allows for the provision of a common literacy and numeracy assessment process for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in non-government schools, as presently operates in government schools. The initiative supports the assessment of Years 3 and 5 in 2001, expanding to 3, 5, 7 and 9 in 2002 and subsequent years. The initiative will also provide information for parents and teachers on student performance and assist with the provision of required ACT wide results to the Commonwealth.

- Cervical Cytology Register (CCR) Upgrade (\$100,000)

This funding is required to provide for the continued functioning of the system to ensure ongoing support for women who are participating in the scheme.

- Indigenous Youth Centre (\$100,000)

This initiative provides additional funding for the enhancement of the Indigenous Youth Centre's services, which will include an Indigenous High School Support Centre. The initiative will allow the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to build on its capacity to address the needs of indigenous young people in the community and students at risk of under-achieving. The program will also support indigenous students to achieve additional opportunities for better performance at school, make the transition from school to work and access culturally appropriate support and recreation services.

- Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (\$100,000)

This initiative will provide 50 scholarships to enable financially disadvantaged or indigenous students to undertake study at CIT. Each scholarship will include payment of a student's full fees for one year and an allowance for books and materials. This initiative allows CIT to further promote quality VET services to prospective students who are prevented from undertaking educational programs because of their financial circumstances or financial constraints of their families.

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome funding (\$100,000)

This initiative will provide for three key areas: a safe sleeping education program; training for peer support emergency volunteers; and an expansion of the existing bereavement support program. The program will support new parents and ACT families who have experienced the unexpected death of an infant or young child.

- Support For Learning for Life (\$100,000)

This funding will help to expand the work of the Smith Family and its successful 'Learning for Life' program. The program supports disadvantaged students to participate more fully in the education process and recreation activities by giving financial assistance, through scholarships, directly to the student or the student's family, who meet the eligibility criteria.

- Alcohol & Drug Family Skills Based Program for Parents (\$82,000)

This initiative will provide for the implementation in the ACT of the NSW Family Drug Support Stepping-Stones skills based program. The program will support the friends and families of those affected by alcohol and other drug use.

- Early Childhood Support in Non-Government Schools (\$82,000)

This initiative will support better educational outcomes and will assist non-Government schools to target assistance for lower primary students. It also supports the Government's plans to maintain and develop a clever, caring Capital.

- Indigenous Business Chamber (\$75,000)

This initiative provides funding for the recently incorporated Indigenous Business Chamber (IBC). The aim of the initiative is to support and increase indigenous small businesses in the ACT in turn providing indigenous employment opportunities. The IBC will operate like any other Chamber of Commerce in the provision of information, networking opportunities, representation of business interests, marketing, employment and training.

- Youth Connection Family Support (\$75,000)

This initiative will provide support for some of the most at-risk families in the ACT through the provision of counselling and general support services. In particular, there will be a specialised family counselling service for 60 at-risk families to support improvements in the level of resilience in these families.

- Early Intervention Student Management Program (\$62,000)

The Early Intervention Student Management Program will allow government schools to better address the growing number of students in schools with challenging behaviours. There will be a particular emphasis on early intervention and professional development. This program will support the establishment of an early intervention unit for 2002, and a program of professional development for teaching and administrative staff. The program includes identifying students at risk, provision of intensive support for these students and their home schools with the aim of improving educational and social outcomes for all students especially those exhibiting challenging behaviours.

- Indigenous Mentoring Program (\$60,000)

This program will provide mentoring services to 15 indigenous participants in a minimum of five different industries per year. The mentoring approach will involve the individual worker being supported personally in the work place. In the long term the program will address the higher unemployment rate of indigenous people and lead to higher retention rates in the workforce.

- Conflict Resolution Service (\$50,000)

This initiative will provide funding for a mediation service to resolve neighbourhood disputes. It will build on a trial project undertaken in Tuggeranong in 2000 that used a three pronged early intervention approach to resolve neighbourhood disputes.

- ACT and Eden-Monaro Cancer Support Group (\$45,000)

This initiative provides for marketing of the support group and will facilitate corporate sponsorship along with selling advertising in the group's biannual newsletter. It is anticipated that corporate sponsorship will encourage cost cutting initiatives for the group.

Statement ends

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