



# ACT Government

## 2005-2006 BUDGET

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### EXTRA \$482,000 FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN AND FAMILIES

An increase in funding for the successful Family Violence Intervention Program in the ACT 2005-06 Budget highlights the ACT Government's commitment to addressing family violence issues in our community and will ensure that criminal justice and community organisations continue to work together to address domestic violence in the ACT.

"\$482,000 over four years in additional new funding will ensure that this outstanding program can continue to work to address the impacts of violence on families, individuals and our community," Minister for Women, Children, Youth and Family Support, Katy Gallagher said.

"This initiative will provide recurrent funding over four years for two full-time case workers to work with all people affected by domestic violence, including people who have been subjected to violence, people who use violence or abuse in their relationships, and children and young people who have witnessed violence in their families," Ms Gallagher said.

The Family Violence Intervention Program works on a cooperative inter-agency basis with the ACT Magistrates Court, the Australian Federal Police, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, ACT Corrective Services, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the ACT Legal Aid Office and the Department of Justice and Community Safety all key partners in the program.

"Violence against women is one of the most serious issues confronting women, not only in the ACT but across Australia and in every socio-economic and cultural group. In fact, statistics show that one in three women over the age of 45 has experienced domestic violence.

"The ACT's Family Violence Intervention Program is recognised throughout Australia as leading the way in the area of criminal justice intervention in family violence," Ms Gallagher said.

The Program is responsible for a number of significant achievements:

- a 288% increase over five years in cases prosecuted that involve a family violence offence (from 168 matters prosecuted in 1998-99 to 651 matters in 2002-03);
- an increase from 24% to 76% of early pleas of guilty from 1998-99 to 2002-03;
- an increase in the number of defendants convicted of one or more family violence offences from 68 defendants in 1998-99 to 271 defendants in 2002-03;
- 86% of all family violence matters commenced and completed resulted in a conviction in both 2000-01 and 2001-02; and
- strengthening mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration and planning.

“Any kind of violence in our community is unacceptable. It is particularly abhorrent that violence, for some people, is encountered in their own homes, within their own families, and in some cases repeated for many years.

“My Government is committed to maximising safety and protection for victims of family violence, ensuring that offenders are made accountable for their actions and opportunities for rehabilitation are provided.

“All Canberrans have the right to live their lives free of violence. Through the *Canberra Social Plan* and the *ACT Women’s Plan* the ACT Government is working towards the eventual eradication of domestic violence,” Ms Gallagher said.

Other initiatives in this Budget that will benefit women include the establishment of nurse practitioner positions in the ACT, the introduction of a new nurse refresher and re-entry scheme, the provision of obstetric and gynaecological on-site registrar cover at Calvary Hospital and extra funding to increase pre-school hours from 10.5 to 12 hours per week.

**Statement Ends**