



ACT Government

A coordinated package to help Canberra's youth

Embargoed until 1 May 2001

NB: This package of initiatives was announced on Thursday 26 April 2001.

The 2001-02 ACT Budget will provide a package of measures to better support Canberra's young people, ACT Chief Minister Gary Humphries and Youth Minister Michael Moore said today.

The Ministers confirmed the Budget will provide **\$11.637 million over four years**, with \$3.068 million in 2001-2002, for a range of initiatives to improve the education and health of young people and those with special needs.

"Canberra has a generally vibrant, resilient, creative and healthy community of young people. However, some young people remain at risk of falling through the cracks of mainstream society, or find that for other reasons they are unable to access opportunities and key services," Mr Humphries said.

"The Young People's Framework launched today supports all young people, including those with complex problems, and provides the Government with the flexibility to respond to emerging issues.

"But I acknowledge that a Framework is nothing, if not supported by real initiatives, and real dollars. So we are today announcing a range of Budget-funded programs that build on the bones of that Framework, and specifically target young people at risk or disadvantage."

Mr Humphries said that in the field of education, the 2001-02 Budget will fund a range of initiatives putting education online and helping students with special needs.

"We are committing **\$500,000 next year** to develop an **Internet-based online virtual campus** for CIT programs. This initiative will give young people access to vocational education right in their home or workplace and will complement the work we are doing to give students online access to CIT administration," Mr Humphries said.

"The ACT is also contributing **\$600,000 over four years**, with \$150,000 in the first year, to the development of **online curriculum** through a joint Federal and State/Territory government project. State and Territory education agencies will develop the materials in partnership with industry. This initiative will improve the quality of teaching by increasing access to high-quality curriculum materials."

Mr Humphries said **\$839,000** will be provided over the next four years for a program to support **students at risk of early school leaving**. "This is part of our early intervention approach. We first need to identify those students at risk of leaving school early, and do all we can to help them to stay at school.

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"The program will also strengthen partnerships with agencies, schools and community groups to improve transitions between education, employment and training activities for young people," Mr Humphries said.

"We are also providing **\$400,000 over the next four years for 50 scholarships for financially disadvantaged students**, including Indigenous students, to study at the CIT. The scholarships will include both new and continuing students and will be awarded based on previous academic performance."

\$492,000 over four years, with \$120,000 in the first year, will go towards expanding the successful **Out of School Education Program**. This program provides young people who have left mainstream education with the opportunity to re-engage in education in a non-threatening, flexible and informal environment.

\$450,000 over two years has been committed for establishing a community-based program to provide accessible **sport, recreation and support** for at-risk youth, including those at risk of homelessness, substance abuse, being victims of crime or becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

"**\$414,000 over four years**, with \$100,000 in the first year, will also go towards the **Smith Family's Learning for Life program**, which assists children from low income families to complete their education. The program provides a financial scholarship and access to a support worker," Mr Humphries said.

"The Government is also committed to supporting Canberra families with drug problems, so it is committing **\$336,000 over four years for an alcohol and drug family skills based program**. The program will provide for the implementation in the ACT of the NSW Family Drug Support 'Stepping Stones' skills based program.

"This program will support families and friends of those affected by alcohol and other drug usage."

The Chief Minister, also Minister for Indigenous Affairs, said the 2001-2002 Budget also provides significant assistance for Indigenous young people.

"We are providing **\$415,000 over four years** to build the **Gugan Gulwan Indigenous Youth Centre's** capacity to address the needs of young Indigenous people and students at risk of poor performance in the education system," Mr Humphries said.

"The program will also give Indigenous students and other young people more opportunities to perform better at school, make the transition from school to work, and access culturally appropriate support and recreation services."

Mr Humphries said the Government would also commit **\$1.036 million over four years for enhanced health services for Indigenous young people and their families**, including outreach and case management services.

Youth Minister Michael Moore said the budget also included initiatives helping young people with special needs.

"A **Young Carers' Package** will receive **\$905,000 over four years** to provide assistance to young people who are caring for sick or disabled parents or relatives," Mr Moore said. The Package will assist with their education by providing additional tuition, school materials, counselling and in-home support.

"**\$307,000 over four years**, with \$75,000 in the first year, will be provided for counselling and support services to support some of the most at-risk families in the ACT. The **Youth Connection and Family Support** program will provide a specialised family counselling service for 60 at-risk families to improve their resilience."

Mr Moore said another **\$498,000 over four years** will go towards a range of **home-based outreach services** that will help young people with special needs to maximise their potential and independence and assist them to participate in valued social and economic roles.

"The program specifically targets young people aged 12-25 years with a mental illness, substance abuse problem, disability or behavioural problems," Mr Moore said.

"**\$939,000 over four years** will also be provided to a **proactive early intervention program** for families with adolescents that are experiencing family conflict or dealing with issues like substance abuse. The program will include high intensity family mediation and counselling and the capacity for ongoing follow-up to manage and prevent the escalation of family crisis."

Mr Moore said that the budget also funded youth health initiatives, with **\$830,000 over four years** for a **youth smoking and health campaign** to reduce teenage smoking in the ACT, a major health issue.

"We will also provide additional funding of **\$206,000 over four years** for extending general practitioner hours at the **Junction Youth Health Service**, supporting at-risk and disadvantaged young clients," Mr Moore said.

"**\$1.97 million over four years** is also being provided for a four-bed residential withdrawal service. The **Residential Youth Withdrawal Beds** will be established in conjunction with the Ted Noffs Foundation Youth Residential Rehabilitation Service."

The program will provide a co-ordinating link between detoxification and rehabilitation for young people in the ACT, and will also provide withdrawal services for young people progressing to other services for treatment.

"Young people are one of Canberra's greatest resources. These initiatives will help the 70,000 plus young people aged between 12 and 25 in the ACT to meet the challenges and enjoy the opportunities that come their way in our community," Mr Humphries said.

"My Government's vision is to have an even healthier, better educated community of young people, unhindered by the barriers of social disadvantage, disability or cultural background. The important measures Mr Moore and I have announced today go a significant way to turning that vision into reality."

Statement ends
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