



ACT Government

2005-2006 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

COMMITMENT TO OLDER CANBERRANS STRENGTHENS

The 2005-06 ACT Budget recognises - and funds - the reality of Canberra's ageing population, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said today.

"New funding of more than \$6.6 million has been committed over the next four years to programs that will increase the quality of life of our older residents," Mr Stanhope said.

"The investment includes \$1.15 million over four years for the ACT Dental Health Program. This injection of funds will benefit many older Canberrans, helping to reduce denture and general waiting lists, in line with the ACT Government's determination to ensure that older Canberrans enjoy a decent standard of dental health care.

"Falls are a major health worry for older members of the community and we have allocated \$1.2 million over four years for the development of fall prevention initiatives in the Territory's residential care facilities.

"There is \$1.08 million over three years for additional respite care support for older carers, matching the Commonwealth Government's commitment in this area. This will allow the community to provide additional respite services to primary carers aged 65 and over.

"Over the next 10 years the number of Canberrans aged 60 to 69 is expected to increase by 15,000 and the number aged 70 and over is expected to increase by 9,100. It is important that we provide the support that will help those older Canberrans who want to remain in their own homes do so for as long as possible.

"To that end the Government will invest an additional \$3.2 million over four years in the Health and Community Care Program. This recurrent funding, which matches anticipated Commonwealth funding, will help frail aged Canberrans and their carers remain at home and prevent early or inappropriate admission to residential care. Services include home nursing, podiatry, cleaning, social support, transport, respite care and meals on wheels."

The 2005-06 Budget contains a range of other initiatives that will benefit senior citizens.

Significant funding of \$2.3 million will help deliver on the Government's election commitment to provide more hospital beds, while funding of \$7.060 million over four years will help meet the escalating cost of and demand for pharmaceuticals at ACT hospitals, with the aim of shortening hospital stays and prolonging life expectancy.



The Government has allocated \$4.79 million over four years to the ACT Concessions Program, which offers rebates on expenditure on a range of essential services, including electricity and water, public transport, car registration and rates. The boost to the program will help offset cost increases and reflects the growth in demand for rebates as the target population, which includes pensioners, grows, and awareness of the program spreads.

“The *Canberra Plan* sets out the Government’s vision of a ‘City for all Ages’ – a city that celebrates the experience and knowledge of our older citizens and adapts housing supply and community services to meet their needs,” Mr Stanhope said.

“We have developed, and are funding, a whole-of-Government approach to dealing with the challenges and opportunities presented by the ageing of our population.”

“The Government is helping to improve the quality of life of older Canberrans, creating greater economic opportunities, improving community engagement, promoting active ageing and life-long learning and ensuring that our housing is appropriate for our changing needs as a city,” Mr Stanhope said.

Statement ends