



# ACT Government

## 2004-2005 BUDGET

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### BUDGET DEMONSTRATES GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO OLDER CANBERRANS

The 2004-05 ACT Budget fundamentally recognises and funds the reality of Canberra's ageing population, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said today.

The Chief Minister said additional new funding of more than \$16 million has been committed over the next four years to specific programs aimed at increasing the quality of life for the ACT's senior citizens.

\$22.2 million for a sub-acute facility at the Calvary Hospital will also predominantly look after the Territory's ageing. Commissioned for 2005-06, the sub-acute facility will integrate with current hospital and community based rehabilitation and psychogeriatric services.

"Our population is ageing, and over the next 10 years the number of people aged 60 to 69 is expected to increase by 15,000. The number of people aged 70 and over is expected to increase by 9,100.

"We are now developing and funding a whole-of-Government approach to dealing with the many implications, both positive and negative, of that reality.

"The recently released *Canberra Plan* and *Social Plan* have focused strongly on maximising positive outcomes for our ageing population, and have targeted areas for attention such as economic opportunities, community engagement, health, life long learning and housing.

"Specific actions to achieve these objectives were also identified in the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing's Strategic Plan 2003-05, which I was pleased to launch last year."

Mr Stanhope said the 2004-05 Budget initiatives for seniors included \$4.2 million over four years to increase access to elective surgery for orthopaedic joint replacement and cataract removal.

"This extra money is aimed at reducing current elective surgery waiting lists as well as catering for future demand for these services from ageing members of the Canberra community," he said.



“The Budget also provides an increase of \$3.4 million in the level of funding available under the Home and Community Care Program, which provides support services to aged persons who wish to remain in their own homes.

“To further assist elderly people, \$341,000 allows for the employment of registered nursing professionals to manage the care of aged persons placed in residential care facilities following a period of hospitalisation.

“We have provided an extra \$681,000 over four years for palliative care services including those that are home-based.

“Both of these measures will greatly enhance the capacity of older people to choose the manner in which they cope with serious illnesses.”

Mr Stanhope said the Budget also directed an additional \$1.4 million for a range of positive ageing initiatives to enhance the quality of life of older Canberrans.

“They include the initial roll-out of the *Actively Ageing Framework* which provides opportunities for older people to remain physically active in an age-friendly environment.

“Positive ageing initiatives include increased funding for the ACT Seniors Card program to meet the growing demands of increased membership; and the establishment of an Older Person’s Information Service.

“Other new initiatives in the \$1.4 million package include the establishment of a Seniors Grants program to promote positive understanding of ageing, and an annual ACT Seniors Expo that will provide resources and information to foster healthy and productive lifestyles for seniors and their families.”

Mr Stanhope highlighted the budget’s \$6.2 million for increased concessions for Canberrans on low incomes, including pensioners, to assist with energy, water and sewerage payments. This provides a new concession for gas, and an increase in the residential rates rebate threshold.

“One of the key themes of the recently-released *Canberra Plan* is our 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.

“This budget emphasises the positive opportunities arising from our ageing population,” Mr Stanhope said.