



## ACT Government

# 2003-2004 BUDGET

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### HELPING RURAL COMMUNITIES RECOVER AFTER THE BUSHFIRES

The Stanhope Government has extended its commitment to helping rural lessees recover from the dual burdens of drought and bushfires, Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment, Jon Stanhope, said today.

The ACT Government has allocated an additional \$150,000 in the 2003-04 budget to help rural lessees affected by bushfires and drought. The funding is in addition to the \$170,000 allocated in 2002-03.

The funding will be the second instalment of the ACT Government component of the Greening Australia's ACT Rural Recovery Project, which has also received Commonwealth funding. The funding allocated in 2002-03 covers weed suppression, soil stabilisation and the purchase of tree seedlings for new plantings on rural leases.

"Farming communities and rural lessees are a very important part of the ACT community and economy.

"Our local farmers and rural lessees have played a key role over the years in our economic, social and environmental growth, and contributed significantly to evolution and ongoing maintenance of our 'Bush Capital'.

"These people and communities have been hit hard by both the drought and bushfires and need the support of both the Government and the community.

"My Government provided \$170,000 as an immediate response to people affected by these two natural disasters.

"We recognise, however, that the recovery from the dual burden of drought and fire requires time, effort, commitment and resources – both financial and human.

"To further help our rural lessees and farmers overcome these bad times, we are providing an extra \$150,000.

"This funding will help suppress weeds in rural leases and Government land adjoining those boundaries.

"It will also help further prevent soil erosion by allowing for the continuation of soil stabilisation measures.

"It will also help farmers and rural lessees buy tree seedlings, helping to meet the costs of re-planting after the drought and fires.

"This funding will provide direct relief to our farmers and rural lessees and will also ensure the ACT Government delivers on its commitment to the sustainability of the ACT ecology," said Mr Stanhope.

**Statement ends.**

