



ACT Government

2003-2004 BUDGET

ACT BUDGET SUPPORTS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

The 2003-04 ACT Budget will continue the Government's reconciliation agenda in partnership with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"Community consultation forums, together with the Ngunnawal Elders Council, have provided key guidance on where the Government needs to focus its policies and its budget expenditure. These include issues of youth affairs, substance abuse, justice, housing, family violence and enhancing self-determination," Mr Stanhope said.

Mr Stanhope said that statistics show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are far too often the most disadvantaged of an already underprivileged social group, and therefore the Government developed youth initiatives that will directly enhance the future opportunities of Indigenous youth.

"For example, almost \$1 million over four years will go towards continuing the innovative RecLink program. This targets at-risk young people, including those from Indigenous backgrounds, and encourages greater participation in sport and recreation.

"And, as promised in the last budget, we've provided \$194,000 in 2003-04 to address the gap in learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students."

Mr Stanhope said that substance abuse was an area of concern to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and that extra funding in the budget for alcohol and drug programs, while not specifically targeted at Indigenous people, would provide some assistance in this area.

"We are funding upgrades to the Karralika Alcohol and Drug Therapeutic Communities at Fadden and Isabella Plains, and the Alcohol and Drug Unit in the city," he said.

"A further \$250,000 has been allocated for implementing priorities of the Alcohol and Drug Strategy, which will be completed before the end of 2003. These initiatives are in addition to \$175,000 that will be spent in 2003-04 for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services for indigenous youth, as committed in the last budget.

The Chief Minister noted the budget's setting aside \$146,000 over four years to provide an indigenous official visitor to local and interstate prisons and juvenile detention centres.

"The official visitor role will ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not feel culturally isolated in these facilities and continue to receive satisfactory legal advice," he said.

Media Release



“As promised last year, we will also provide \$120,000 in 2003-04 for establishing alternative approaches to intervention to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experiencing domestic violence.”

Mr Stanhope said a number of budget initiatives would also assist with reconciliation and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Self determination can be advanced in many practical ways and \$350,000 will be spent in 2003-04, committed in the last budget, to provide better housing access and wider choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” he said.

The Stanhope Government will also provide an overall \$13.3 million over four years to confront the problem of homelessness in the ACT. The budget initiatives will expand the range of supported accommodation facilities available in the ACT.

“The Ministerial Advisory Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs has been involved in this homelessness strategy, which I think clearly demonstrates the government’s commitment to provide housing assistance to people who are from an indigenous background.

"As a further step towards reconciliation, the Government will continue its research next financial year into dual naming of natural landscape features around the ACT. We will also explore options for a tribute to Onyong, an Aboriginal Elder who lived in the Namadgi National Park area in the early 1800s, and who was buried near Lanyon Homestead in 1851. This work, done within recurrent funding, will raise awareness of our valuable Indigenous heritage.

“A further \$200,000 has been set aside in this budget to assess bushfire damage to heritage places, and to plan for protection and repair of these culturally important places, many of which are Aboriginal sites.

“The budget assigns \$100,000 to commission a public artwork that will celebrate prior indigenous ownership of the land, which I think can become a great public symbol of reconciliation. We will consult broadly with the community and engage an aboriginal artist to create a thought provoking tribute and feature of the city’s aesthetic appeal.

“And in the 2003-04 budget, \$123,000 will be provided for the management and operation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre, as committed last year. The centre, which will open shortly, will be a focal point for awareness raising and education on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.”

The Chief Minister said that his government, through the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, would continue to focus on self determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people next financial year, providing them with opportunities to reach their potential.

“We’ll see Canberra confront indigenous social disadvantage fired with a great pride in the unique contribution the First Australians continue to make to the cultural landscape of our city and our community,” he said.

Statement ends.