



# ACT Government

## 2004-2005 BUDGET

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **\$71.84 M TO FUND NEW ACT HEALTH INITIATIVES**

Health Minister Simon Corbell has announced that the 2004-2005 budget has provided \$71.84 million over four years to fund new ACT Health initiatives.

The initiatives range from a hearing health program for Aboriginal infants, additional services for acute care and patients on the surgery waiting list, through to funding to expand mental health forensic services in the ACT.

Mr Corbell said the funding demonstrated the Government's commitment to the *Canberra Social Plan* objective of improving the health of all Canberrans.

"In line with its commitment to introduce an integrated series of measures to address Aboriginal disadvantage, the Government has provided a total of \$2.305 million over four years to fund health initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples," he said.

These included a hearing health program for infants and children; the appointment of two outreach workers to work with people with drug and alcohol problem; an Aboriginal Midwifery Access program; and a feasibility study to assess the viability of an ACT Bush Healing Farm to improve the well-being of Canberra's Aboriginal community.

Funding of \$562,000 over four years has been allocated to identify and implement School Education Alcohol and Drug Programs; \$642,000 has been allocated towards a Compliance testing program in regard to tobacco sales to minors; and \$416,000 has been set aside to develop clear protocols for a case-management framework.

Mr Corbell said new budget initiatives would improve access to surgery and provide more beds in the Intensive Care Unit at The Canberra Hospital. "Funding of \$17.025 million has been provided over four years for a ninth operating theatre at TCH, the employment of two additional Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) general surgeons to provide elective and acute surgery, additional surgical inpatient beds and other associated costs," he said.

"As well, \$4.153 million over four years has been allocated for cataract and joint replacement surgery.

"These additional services will cover patients presenting for acute care and patients on the elective waiting list. The outcome will be improved quality of care and access for patients, especially for general surgical patients on the waiting list."



Mr Corbell said \$11.368 million will be provided over four years to increase the number of beds in the Intensive Care Unit at TCH by three beds.

“To help reduce the risk of injury to health professionals, the Government has allocated \$1.553 million in this year’s budget to provide equipment as part of a comprehensive Manual Handling Program across the ACT Health portfolio,” he said..

Mental health is another key priority area for the Government with \$1.373 million over four years being allocated to suicide prevention. A full-time suicide prevention project officer will be employed to develop a suicide prevention strategy to drive initiatives and provide a more co-ordinated approach to the prevention of suicide in the ACT.

The Gungahlin outreach service for child and adolescent mental health clients has received funding of \$624,000 over four years to provide recurrent funds for two Gungahlin Outreach clinicians stationed at the Northside child and Adolescent Mental Health Service office.

The Government has provided funding of \$1.246 million over four years to expand Mental Health forensic services in the ACT. This initiative will establish a forensic community case management team for the first time in the ACT.

The Government has also allocated \$70,000 funding for a feasibility study into a new ACT psychiatric services facility. Refurbishment of the existing PSU is currently underway with further funding of \$1,000,000 to be provided by the government in 2004-05.

Moreover, a further \$60,000 has been allocated for a feasibility study into the viability of an adolescent inpatient facility for the ACT. The study will investigate the structure, function and costs associated with the establishment of an adolescent inpatient facility.

**Statement Ends.**