Budget 2006-2007

FACT SHEET # F9:
SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAAP) and HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

What's in the Budget for Homelessness

Expenditure on the Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) and the ACT's response to homelessness in 2006-07 totals $13.7 million and will fund a range of accommodation and associated support services, such as:

- Refuge and crisis accommodation, including responses for women and children escaping domestic violence;
- Free food, information and referral services;
- Services for young people and families experiencing homelessness; and
- Outreach and supported accommodation services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Government is undertaking a range of reforms to the homelessness sector to improve service responses and ensure greater coordination of services for people as they enter and exit homelessness. This will be undertaken within the parameter of no overall reduction in service levels.

As part of this approach recurrent funding of almost $400,000 a year has been identified in 2006-07 for the continued operation of MINOSA House, a crisis accommodation service for single men. MINOSA House was previously funded as a pilot program and supports men experiencing homelessness to access longer term housing options.

While there is a commitment to no reduction in the level of services provided, there will need to be serious consideration of alternative service delivery models and options to improve the overall efficiency of the sector. This will clearly involve consideration of closer service coordination and amalgamation to reduce points of contact for clients seeking to access the service system. Further reform will be supported by the establishment of a transitional housing project, which will provide temporary accommodation, with less intensive support, for people who are waiting to move onto independent living. This step down approach will provide increased opportunities for self-reliance whilst maintaining a level of support commensurate with the specific needs of each individual.

How does the ACT compare to other States and Territories?

The ACT Government has a strong policy and program commitment to reducing and preventing homelessness. Since October 2001 the Government has increased supported accommodation places for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In 2004 the Government launched *Breaking the Cycle - the ACT Homelessness Strategy* underpinned by the establishment of nine new services to

respond to specific target groups within the community, including single men, families, young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Other recent initiatives include the Canberra Emergency Accommodation Service (CEAS), which received recurrent funding of $381,000 from the Government's 2004-05 Budget to provide flexible responses to homelessness and access to emergency accommodation.

Over the three years from 2002-03 to 2004-05, the Government increased funding for families who were homeless by 207% compared to an increase of only 18% for the national average.

Why is the ACT Government making this change?

Reform of the homelessness sector is consistent with the policy framework of the ACT Homelessness Strategy and the SAAP V Multilateral Agreement for 2005-2010. These frameworks focus on the improvement of service integration and collaboration, underpinned by targeted responses that meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

Recent funding initiatives increased the capacity of the homelessness sector and implemented innovative and contemporary service responses. The reform agenda accompanying this year's funding reduction will deliver client focussed and flexible service responses across the homelessness sector within existing resources.

By reducing expenditures, the ACT will move towards the benchmark cost for the provision of supported accommodation program services while improving outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Services will not be reduced through these reforms, they will be provided more effectively and efficiently.