



ACT Government
2005-2006 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

20 NEW MEDICAL BEDS FOR ACT PUBLIC HOSPITALS

The ACT Government will provide \$2.3 million in this year's Budget for an additional 20 medical beds in the ACT's public hospitals.

Announcing this today, the ACT Minister for Health, Simon Corbell, said the new beds were part of a portfolio-wide program to improve access to acute hospital services and to ease the pressure on medical beds.

"Access to sufficient staffed and equipped acute medical beds is essential for the treatment of patients in our public hospitals," he said.

"Additional beds will support our efforts in elective surgery, help reduce access block in emergency departments and enable our Intensive Care Units to transfer patients to general wards once intensive treatment has concluded.

"This all adds up to less waiting time in ED, reduced likelihood of operating theatre disruptions and better patient care."

Mr Corbell said the funding of the 20 beds fulfilled a Government election promise and further demonstrated the Government's resolve to address problems in the ACT health care system.

He said eight of the beds, to come on line this financial year, would be at TCH and 12 at Calvary.

Up to 25 additional nursing, and eight allied health staff will be recruited for the beds to become operational in 2005-06. The cost of employing the additional staff is included in the \$2.3 million.

The 20 beds were in addition to 60 rehabilitation beds at the sub acute facility at Calvary Hospital scheduled to come on line in late 2006.

"The Government is working hard to improve the ACT's health care system," Mr Corbell said.

"We have already put in place a number of strategies to increase inpatient bed availability.

“These include opening discharge lounges at TCH and Calvary, coordinating bed management, increasing the weekend discharge rate and introducing the Intermittent Care Service aimed at preventing hospital admissions or nursing home placement for older residents.

“The discharge lounge at TCH has been particularly successful — after only seven months of opening, more than 1100 patients have used the facility.

“The lounge caters for people who are ready for discharge but are waiting for medication, a discharge letter for a specialist appointment, an allied health a consultation, or waiting for a relative or friend to collect them.

“It helps improve patient flow by making beds available earlier in the day for patients requiring admission.”

Mr Corbell said the effective management of beds and better communication had also helped improve emergency department throughput and waiting times. An indication of this was the reduction in the need for the hospitals to ‘load share’.

“TCH went on ‘load share’ for 42 hours in July 2004 but the figure spiralled downward to 19 hours in August, seven in December, and none in March this year,” he said.

“All these initiatives fall within the Government’s commitment under the Canberra Social Plan to the principles of access, equity and participation.”

Statement ends