

BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

THE CANBERRA SOCIAL PLAN



All people reach their potential, make a contribution and share
the benefits of our community

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ISBN 0 642 60263 8

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Produced by Publishing Services for the Policy Group, Chief Minister's Department.

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Publication No 03/0699

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Chief Minister's introduction



The quality of life we enjoy in the ACT is equal to the best in Australia and indeed the world. Our clean air, our parks, our schools, our healthcare are just some of the things we value about living in Canberra. This is a community that celebrates when times are good and pulls together when they are tough. Our self-confidence and self-awareness are such that we do not need the praise of outsiders to reaffirm what we already know - that Canberra is a great place in which to live.

With so much going for us, it would be easy to rest on our laurels. That would be a mistake. National and global influences and changing community needs are putting pressure on the special qualities that make the ACT a desirable place to live and work. Nor should we ever forget that not everyone in Canberra has shared equally in its success. It is precisely because most of us are so fortunate that there is no excuse for ignoring those who are not.

The challenge for our community, and for government, is to find and put in place new ways to plan, develop and manage the ACT - to create a place in which *all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community*.

Building Our Community – The Canberra Social Plan helps us meet this challenge. Developed after wide-ranging consultation with the

community, the plan establishes the seven social priorities that will guide our decision-making over the next ten to fifteen years. It identifies, within each priority, specific goals and the actions needed to achieve them, and key progress indicators to help measure our success.

Threaded through all of *Building Our Community* are the core social justice principles of access, equity and participation. We heard during our consultation with the community that Canberrans want the plan to reflect a social justice agenda, with particular emphasis on inclusion, affordable housing and social cohesion. *Building Our Community* reflects those views.

Building Our Community links closely to the *Canberra Spatial Plan* and the *Economic White Paper*. Together the three form the *Canberra Plan*, a comprehensive blueprint for the way we want the ACT to develop over the coming years.

Many organisations and individuals have worked closely with the Government to develop *Building Our Community*. I would like to thank all of them for their valuable contribution.

Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister

Building Our Community - The Canberra Social Plan

A vision

Building Our Community – The Canberra Social Plan, is an expression of the Government's vision that we become a place where *all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community*.

It is an expression that captures the Government's commitment to the principles of access, equity and participation, and its belief that we must:

- value and invest in our people as the ACT's most precious asset;
- ensure that every citizen has a decent standard of living; and
- safeguard the freedoms necessary to allow all to live a life of dignity and value.

Underpinning the vision is the concept of sustainability, a recognition that innovation and creativity must be encouraged in order to continue strong economic growth, that the causes of disadvantage and social exclusion must be addressed if all citizens are to share in our good fortune, and that our natural and built environment must be kept healthy so that all in the community can reap the recreational and spiritual benefits they offer.

Building Our Community - The Canberra Social Plan: **At a glance**

Building Our Community — the Canberra Social Plan is a statement of what we are now and what we want to become as a community in the future. It is a framework to guide government and community decision-making in social policy over the next 10 to 15 years. *Building Our Community* identifies the changes in Canberra's social environment and the determinants of disadvantage and exclusion. It highlights the opportunities and challenges ahead, and the means of achieving sustained improvement in access, equity and participation for the people of the ACT.

Canberra is a fortunate and prosperous community. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that some Canberrans are vulnerable and excluded from fully participating in the life of their community. The priorities and goals of *Building Our Community* reflect this reality, emphasising the importance of helping Canberrans in need. However *Building Our Community* is about much more than that. It is about ensuring that we keep doing the things we do well; that we continue to enjoy Canberra's diversity, its cultural facilities and its open spaces; and that we raise and educate our children in the best environment possible - a safe, healthy and cohesive community.

Our commitment to develop a Social Plan, made to the people of Canberra in April 2001, was one element of a larger commitment to develop a new social, economic and planning framework to guide the development of the ACT over the coming generation. *Building Our Community* therefore sits alongside the other key government plans - the

Economic White Paper and the *Canberra Spatial Plan*. Together they provide an integrated approach to planning, while retaining flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

Through *Building Our Community* the Government acknowledges that not all services can or should be delivered by government. It therefore sets out a new policy framework for the partnership with the community sector which gives providers the stability and certainty they need to let them get on with the job — delivering quality service to the Canberra community — while encouraging innovation and building on best-practice at the local level.

Building Our Community also includes a clear statement on Human Rights and the Plan's central role in putting into effect our aspiration for economic, social and cultural human rights for all - the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to education, the right to work and to enjoy just and favourable conditions of work and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

In setting a framework for the future, *Building Our Community* uses a 'layered' approach. First, it establishes seven *Social Priorities*, to be achieved over a 10-15 year timeframe. Within each Priority is listed a number of Goals, for achievement over 5-10 years. These are supported by shorter-term Actions— commitments for the next five years. The Plan's Priorities and Goals are set out below.



Building Our Community — the Canberra Social Plan is a statement of what we are now and what we want to become as a community in the future. It is a framework to guide government and community decision-making in social policy over the next 10 to 15 years.



Canberra Social Plan - Priorities and Goals

Priorities (10-15 years)	Goals (5-10 years)
Economic opportunity for all Canberrans	- Reduce poverty and exclusion for vulnerable people - Maintain Canberra's status as the State/Territory with the lowest unemployment rate - Reduce long-term unemployment and the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the ACT average - Provide opportunities for older people to remain in, or return to, the workforce - Identify Canberra as an Australian centre for excellence for turning ideas into income - Increase economic opportunities and encourage creativity and innovation
Respect, diversity and human rights	- Protect, promote and enhance the rights of all Canberrans - Promote fairness and understanding - Promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canberrans - Promote the inclusion of people with a disability in all areas of the ACT community - Promote gender equity across all aspects of community life - Recognise the valuable contribution made by older people to the community - Maintain an environment that welcomes immigrants, particularly refugees
A safe, strong and cohesive community	- Meet the diverse needs of our ageing community - Build and support community participation based on common interests, neighbourhoods, schools, sport and culture - Reduce the risks of social exclusion by narrowing the gap between the information rich and information poor - Prevent and reduce crime and its impacts - Create a safe environment for every member of the community - Recognise and support the role played by community organisations and by volunteers - Promote and support the role of carers - Recognise and build on the role played by the business sector in the community - Improve the accessibility of and viability of using public transport - Value our role as the nation's capital - Enhance community access to, and participation in, the arts and other cultural activities

Priorities
(10-15 years)

Goals
(5-10 years)

Improve health and well being

Meet the health needs of an ageing population
Invest in children and young people
Focus on prevention and early intervention throughout people's lives
Improve the good health of the Canberra population and narrow the health gap between the general community and the poor and disadvantaged
Strengthen the health of the community through a whole of government approach to health issues, together with community partnerships to develop sustainable social care supports
Promote a better balance between work and family
Support an active lifestyle at all stages of people's lives
Improve mental health and reduce the barriers facing people with mental health problems
Reduce harm from alcohol and other drug use

Lead Australia in education, training and lifelong learning

Reduce inequalities in children's first five years and improve the transition between home, early childhood settings and kindergarten
Increase education participation, engagement and achievement of children and young people
Increase literacy and numeracy levels, particularly for students at risk
Improve the transition between school, further study, and the workforce
Provide opportunities for lifelong learning

Housing for a future Canberra

Increase the supply of public and community housing in the Territory
Ensure that the type, size and location of housing in the ACT meets the changing needs of the community
Improve access to quality, affordable and safe housing
Enhance the provision of specialist housing and support services
Improve the regulatory regime to enable individual needs to be addressed
Strengthen the links between crisis accommodation services and long-term housing options
Reduce homelessness

Respect and protect the environment

Enhance Canberra's liveability, recognising the importance of environment to the overall health of the community
Care for our parks, landscapes and remote areas
Protect biodiversity for future generations
Reduce water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and waste
Create and maintain inclusive public space for use by the entire community

The Actions included in *Building Our Community* — commitments for the next five years - are listed at the end of this chapter. Among these are a number of 'flagship' commitments. These highlight the essence of the Government's vision for the social development of the ACT.

Flagship Commitments

Building a stronger community

Measures to build a stronger, more cohesive relationship between the ACT Government and the Canberra community, renew community infrastructure and facilities, reform community sector funding, help community network-building at the grassroots level, and support the celebration of significant days on the calendar such as Canberra Day, Australia Day and New Year's Eve. (Social Plan Actions 3.1 & 3.3)

Energy, water and sewerage concessions

Measures to ease the financial pressures facing individuals and families on low incomes, particularly older people, by

increasing concession payments on electricity, water and sewerage charges to ensure that people on low incomes are not disadvantaged by price rises, introducing a streamlined energy concession that includes a new concession for gas, and improving the energy efficiency of households receiving these concessions.

(Social Plan Action 1.2)



Photo provided courtesy of
The Canberra Times

Caring for our children and young people

A package of measures to help our community's children and young people grow up in a healthy, safe and well-balanced environment. It includes increased support for child protection, measures to improve health and reduce childhood obesity, universal newborn hearing screening, expanded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander midwifery access and an increase in Indigenous early childhood and family support.

(Social Plan Actions 3.9, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 & 5.5)

Child and Family Centres

Child and Family Centres will provide local services with a focus on support and early intervention, including health, education, parenting and family support services. The first Centre will be located in Gungahlin and the second in Tuggeranong. Child and Family Centres will replicate the successful integrated service model at the Lyons Bushfire Recovery Centre.

(Social Plan Action 4.1)

A Community Inclusion Board and Community Inclusion Fund

The Board is based on the successful South Australian model and will comprise nine members from a range of social policy fields. It will provide an additional source of high-level advice to the Chief Minister on community inclusion issues and will commission research into priority areas identified by the Government.

The Fund is designed to assist the most vulnerable members of our community as part of a concerted attack on the causes of poverty and social exclusion. It will be administered with advice from the new Community Inclusion Board and will encourage new ways of working in partnership to improve social and economic outcomes for Canberrans. (Social Plan Actions 1.1 & 8.1)

Making it happen

Building Our Community is ambitious in its scope and objectives. By setting the framework for the evolution of our social policy over the next decade or so, it seeks to be a 'living document' — one that remains a reference point for a generation of policy-makers.

In order for this to occur it is necessary that an effective implementation strategy be put in place. At the heart of this strategy will be the Community Inclusion Board, comprising community leaders with experience and expertise across non-government organisations, the business sector and the broader community, together with senior government representatives. The Board will give high-level advice on key challenges facing the Government as it works to achieve the commitments contained in *Building Our Community - The Canberra Social Plan*.

Within government, implementation of *Building Our Community* will be strengthened by the involvement of officials at the highest level and coordination by the Chief Minister's Department with direct reporting to the Chief Minister.

The Government will reinforce its commitment with a 'poverty-proofing' trial, based on the successful Irish model, to ensure that government decisions do not act to increase the levels or causes of poverty.

Building Our Community also incorporates a number of indicators and targets to assist in reviewing the effectiveness of the Plan and its implementation. Indicators specific to Indigenous disadvantage have already been endorsed as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*. The Government is also preparing the first of a regular *Towards Sustainability Report* for the ACT. The Report will draw upon a set of social, environmental and economic indicators that measure what is important to the ACT community, as well as the *ACT State of Environment Report*. It will measure progress over time, thereby assisting the community and government make decisions about how we manage our financial, human, physical and natural resources. As such it will allow measurement of the

influence of *Building Our Community*, as well as the other elements of the *Canberra Plan*.

The targets, timed to coincide with Canberra's Centenary in 2013, are to:

- reduce long-term unemployment
- decrease income inequality
- reduce homelessness
- increase the proportion of young people successfully completing secondary or vocational studies
- increase the proportion of adults with post-school qualifications.

Details of the targets are listed under the Chapter 'Measuring Success'.

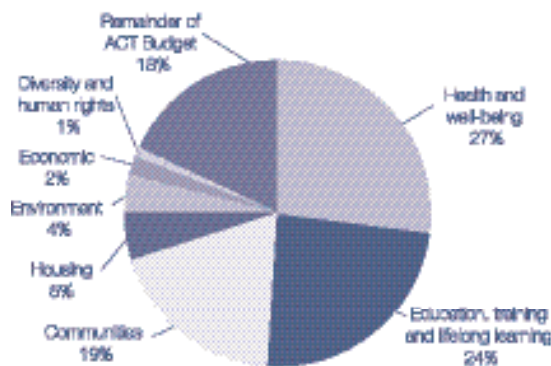
Already underway

It is important to recognise that when the Government commenced work on this Plan it was not starting with a blank sheet. *Building Our Community* identifies the important work already underway within each of the Priority areas. Of the total 2003-04 Budget, for example, some 82 per cent was allocated to areas associated with the Plan's priorities.

- Economic: \$55 million;
- Diversity and human rights: \$12 million;
- Communities: \$456 million;
- Health and well-being: \$655 million;
- Education, training and lifelong learning: \$562 million;
- Housing: \$107 million; and
- Environment: \$88 million.



Graph 1: Social priorities as a proportion of 2003-04 ACT Budget



Source: ACT Treasury, November 2003.

Priorities, Goals And Actions

Priority 1: Economic opportunity for all Canberrans

Goals

- Reduce poverty and exclusion for vulnerable people.
- Maintain Canberra's status as the State/Territory with the lowest unemployment rate.
- Reduce long-term unemployment and the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the ACT average.
- Provide opportunities for older people to remain in, or return to the workforce.
- Identify Canberra as an Australian centre for excellence for turning ideas into income.
- Increase economic opportunities and encourage creativity and innovation.

Actions

The Government will:

- Establish a Community Inclusion Fund to assist the most vulnerable members of our community, as part of a concerted attack on the causes of poverty and exclusion. The initiative will be administered with advice from the new Community Inclusion Board.
- Ease the financial pressures facing individuals and families on low incomes, particularly older people, by increasing concession payments on electricity, water and sewerage charges to ensure that people on low incomes are not disadvantaged by price rises, introducing a streamlined energy concession that includes a new concession for gas, and improving the energy efficiency of households receiving these concessions.
- Maintain emergency relief services funding for the most vulnerable members of our community.
- Implement the actions which underpin the strategic directions outlined in the *Economic White Paper*.
- Introduce a Training Pathway Guarantee of one year's post-school training in a relevant vocational course for school leavers who have not commenced some form of post-school study or training within twelve months of leaving school; introduce a Skills Development for Young Adults at Risk initiative; and introduce a vocational education and training program specifically targeted at the over 45 year old age group.

Priority 2: Respect, diversity and human rights

Goals

- Protect, promote and enhance the rights of all Canberrans.
- Promote fairness and understanding.
- Promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canberrans.
- Promote the inclusion of people with a disability in all areas of the ACT community.

- Promote gender equity across all aspects of community life.
- Recognise the valuable contribution made by older people to the community.
- Maintain an environment that welcomes immigrants, particularly refugees.

Actions

The Government will:

- Enact and implement a Human Rights Act for the ACT and build a human rights culture within the ACT community.
- Scrutinise all new legislative policy proposals to ensure that they are consistent with human rights.
- Enact new laws to protect personal privacy in the ACT.
- Build community and ACT agency support for the Statement of Vision and Values for People with a Disability and implement the Access to Government strategy for people with a disability.
- Build on the principles of respect, fairness, inclusiveness and multiculturalism outlined in the Government's Facing Up To Racism discussion paper.
- Develop and support an across-agency approach to meeting the needs of women through a shared Strategic Plan for Women.
- Put in place an ACT Indigenous Partnership Plan 2004-2013, an integrated series of measures to address Indigenous disadvantage. The report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003* will be utilised as the key framework for measuring Indigenous outcomes in the ACT.
- Provide housing assistance to Temporary Protection Visa holders who meet normal eligibility conditions if they are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in extreme hardship.
- Establish a Multicultural Centre.

Priority 3: A safe, strong, cohesive community

Goals

- Meet the diverse needs of our ageing community.
- Build and support community participation based on common interests, neighbourhoods, schools, sport and culture.
- Reduce the risks of social exclusion by narrowing the gap between the information rich and information poor.
- Prevent and reduce crime and its impacts.
- Create a safe environment for every member of the community.
- Recognise and support the role played by community organisations and by volunteers.
- Promote and support the work of carers.
- Recognise and build on the role played by the business sector in the community.
- Improve the accessibility and viability of using public transport.
- Value our role as the nation's capital.
- Enhance community access to, and participation, in the arts and other cultural activities.

Actions

The Government will:

- Build a stronger community, with a community engagement strategy to ensure a stronger, more cohesive relationship between the ACT Government and the Canberra community, renew community infrastructure and facilities, reform community sector funding, and help community network-building at a grassroots level.
- Commission and build an ACT Veterans' Memorial.

- More effectively support events surrounding significant days of the year such as Canberra Day, Australia Day and New Year's Eve, as important opportunities for the community to celebrate its city, people and culture.
- Expand the Schools as Communities program, working with families and communities to build resilience and foster a sense of connection and belonging in local communities.
- Further develop and implement a Public Art Policy to ensure that Canberra's public art collections are maintained and developed to

enrich the experience of our city's public places and to reflect our community's history, experience and aspirations.

- Develop arts, science and technology, and cultural precincts that become stimulating environments that foster creativity and innovation, and will enhance support for arts and cultural programs designed for young people.

- Encourage and recognise business support for community development.

- Ensure adoption of the

principles and objectives set out in the Caring for Carers policy.

- Put in place an ACT Children's Plan to provide a more focussed and strategic approach to policies and programs that support the health and wellbeing of all children in our community.
- Ensure we better care for our vulnerable children and young people, with additional funding to enable an immediate response to the dramatically increased need for intervention and support services in child protection.
- Encourage active community participation by the growing 'ageing' population in areas such as

mentoring, further education, sport and community services.

- Institute a 'Canberra Gold' Chief Minister's Award, to be given annually to all people reaching their 50th anniversary as ACT residents.
- Develop and implement a Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT.
- Work to reduce the incidence of property crime, with a particular focus on repeat property offenders.
- Trial circle sentencing for Indigenous offenders.
- Build a prison that represents best practice in design, construction and operation and provides effective management of ACT prisoners.

Priority 4: Improve health and well-being

Goals

- Invest in children and young people.
- Meet the health needs of an ageing population.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention throughout people's lives.
- Improve the good health of the Canberra population and narrow the health gap between the general community and the poor and disadvantaged.
- Strengthen the health of the community through a whole of government approach to health issues, together with community partnerships to develop sustainable social care supports.
- Promote a better balance between work and family.
- Support an active lifestyle at all stages of people's lives.
- Improve mental health and reduce the barriers facing people with mental health problems.
- Reduce harm from alcohol and other drug use.



Photo provided courtesy of
The Canberra Times

Actions

The Government will:

- Establish two Child and Family Centres to provide local services with a focus on support and early intervention, including health, education, parenting and family support services. The first Centre will be located in Gungahlin and the second in Tuggeranong.
- Develop a package of initiatives to promote good health in children and young people, including advice on food and nutrition, fitness and health, and other measures to combat childhood obesity; peer mentoring programs in drug education; services to assist students with issues such as alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, sexuality and relationships and domestic violence; and improved services for children with complex health needs.
- Undertake and promote work-based childcare initiatives.
- Extend the Newborn Hearing Screening Program currently operating at The Canberra Hospital to Calvary and John James Memorial Hospitals.
- Put in place innovative aged health care and accommodation initiatives that recognise our changing demographic profile.
- Expand the Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program provided by the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, and establish an ear health program for infants and children.
- Improve the capacity of mainstream ACT health services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Implement the National Mental Health Plan through an ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008.
- Implement the measures arising from the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Taskforce.

Priority 5: Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning and training

Goals

- Reduce inequalities in children's first five years and improve the transition between home, early childhood settings and kindergarten.
- Increase education participation, engagement and achievement of children and young people.
- Increase literacy and numeracy levels, particularly for students at risk.
- Improve the transition between school, further study, and the workforce.
- Provide opportunities for lifelong learning.

Actions

The Government will:

- Encourage all young people to complete 13 years of schooling and achieve a Year 12 certificate or equivalent vocational qualification by 2013, through the development of Pathway Plans for students (from Year 9), a Training Pathway Guarantee for school leavers not already in some form of post school study or training within twelve months of leaving school and encouraging high schools to access vocational courses for students to undertake competency based training with registered providers.
- Develop, in conjunction with peak industry bodies, a new program to build the links between schools and industries, providing senior secondary students with opportunities to work on industry-sponsored projects in the workplace.
- Improve the capacity of government schools to increase literacy and numeracy levels through intensive support for underachieving students.
- Improve learning outcomes for students with a disability and improve coordination between Commonwealth and Territory services assisting school leavers with a disability.
- Introduce an early education and development program to meet the needs of Indigenous children.

- Ensure that government schools are resourced to deliver information and communication technology skills to students, irrespective of school size and financial capacity.
- Improve the level of government school repairs and maintenance, recognising the importance of having environments which are conducive to effective learning.
- Support the Adult and Community Education (ACE) program and the non-accredited learning opportunities available to adults, and promote active community participation.

- Support the capacity of public libraries to provide lifelong learning, including establishment of a permanent home for the city library and upgrading its collection.

Priority 6: Housing for a future Canberra

Goals

- Increase the supply of public and community housing in the Territory.
- Ensure that the type, size and location of housing in the ACT meets the changing

needs of the community.

- Improve access to quality, affordable and safe housing.
- Enhance the provision of specialist housing and support services.
- Improve the regulatory regime to enable individual needs to be addressed.
- Strengthen the links between crisis accommodation services and long-term housing options.
- Reduce homelessness.

Actions

The Government will:

- Allocate significant additional funding for the supply of public and community housing.
- Continue to implement measures in response to the Report of the Affordable Housing Taskforce.
- Build on recent improvements to the Public Rental Housing Assistance Program, by reviewing the Housing Assistance Act 1987 and associated programs to ensure its responds to the needs of tenants and the Government.
- Continue to support public housing tenants by funding specific programs to meet their needs through the Community Linkages Program.
- Implement the Public Housing Asset Management Strategy.
- Continue to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, older women, people with a disability, young people and single people to find accommodation through the Boarding House Program.
- Improve the regulatory framework for community housing.
- Implement the restructure of Community Housing Canberra in conjunction with the community.
- Implement a homelessness strategy, including targeted programs in partnership with community organisations to address homelessness and associated support needs for individuals and families most in need.

Priority 7: Respect and protect the environment

Goals

- Enhance Canberra's liveability, recognising the importance of the environment to the overall health of the community.
- Care for our parks, landscapes and remote areas.
- Protect biodiversity for future generations.



- Reduce water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and waste.
- Create and maintain inclusive public space for use by the entire community.

Actions

The Government will:

- Work to increase community awareness of the size and impact of the ecological footprint made by the Canberra urban environment.
- Review and update the ACT Greenhouse Strategy and undertake research to better understand possible risks and implications for the ACT resulting from climate change.
- Maintain its commitment to reduce the amount of waste generated and promote recycling.
- Help protect our threatened species and ecological communities as part of best practice planning for urban development.
- Continue to identify, protect and manage key biodiversity assets through preparation of conservation strategies for lowland woodlands (2003), native grasslands (2004) and aquatic and riverine communities (2005).
- Develop and implement measures to increase the water and energy efficiency of residential and commercial buildings.
- Ensure that a reliable source of high quality water is maintained, in part through the finalisation and implementation of a Water Resources Strategy.
- At least maintain the current position whereby more than half of the ACT is under conservation management.
- Enhance Canberra's non-urban recreational facilities.

Implementation strategy

Actions

The Government will:

- Establish a Community Inclusion Board as a source of high-level community advice to the Government on social priorities.
- Trial a 'poverty-proofing' process, based on the successful Irish model, to ensure that government decisions do not act to increase the levels or causes of poverty.
- Publish a report on the implementation of *Building Our Community* every two years, as part of the reporting process for the *Canberra Plan*, with the first report in July 2006.

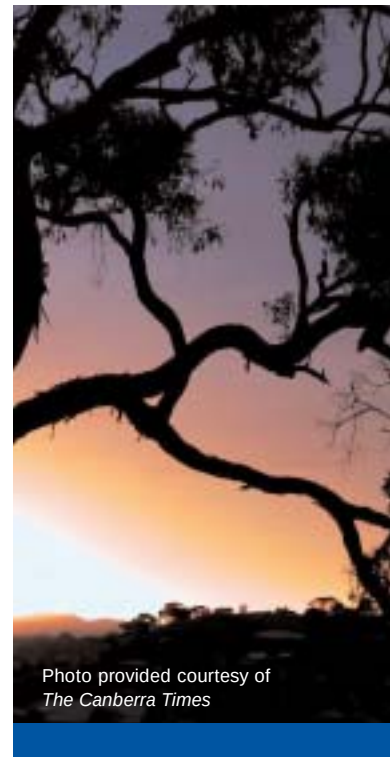


Photo provided courtesy of
The Canberra Times

Consultation

The success of the *Canberra Social Plan* depends on its relevance to the people of the ACT. Consultation with the community was, therefore, an integral part of its development.

Following policy work across ACT Government agencies over the last two years, consultation with peak community organisations and roundtable discussions, the ACT Government released a draft paper, *Towards the Canberra Social Plan*.

Public comment was sought and further consultations undertaken, culminating in an Open Forum held on 14 October 2003. The Forum was widely advertised and well attended. The outcomes of the Open Forum and a list of submissions received can be found on the Chief Minister's Department website at <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au>.

During the consultation period a consultant undertook market research in focus groups and the University of Canberra facilitated a series of expert forums. Targeted consultations with individuals and groups also took place and included young Canberrans, service providers, welfare organisations, groups concerned with ageing issues, health advocacy groups, multicultural groups, researchers, academics and government agencies. The Joint Community Reference Group and Community Development Network provided valuable input. Submissions

were also invited from community organisations. Individuals were encouraged to provide comments via the Chief Minister's Department website.

The Priorities, Goals and Actions that underpin *Building Our Community* and the future social planning of Canberra have emerged from these consultations and research.

It is important to emphasise that in developing *Building Our Community*, the Government did not start with a blank sheet. The plan builds on the evidence provided and policy development work of many projects over a significant period of time. These are referred to throughout this document.

This is not the last time the Government will be seeking the views of the community on these issues. The Government intends to build on its partnerships with the community and foster the interest and community participation that is at the heart of *Building Our Community – The Canberra Social Plan*.

Human rights in the ACT

Human rights are the inheritance of everyone in our community. Australia has played a proud role in contributing to the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its related Covenants. A Human Rights Act for the ACT carries on that tradition.

The enactment of an ACT Human Rights Act, and its implementation through *Building Our Community*, will give legal and policy force to the civil and political rights that are at the heart of a just and democratic society. It will ensure the equality of all people before the law and will protect the right of all people to life, privacy and freedom from slavery or forced labour.

The Human Rights Act is not only about protecting individuals in dealings with the Territory, it will protect our community by recognising the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society and by protecting the rights of minorities.

The ACT will protect the vibrancy of our democracy by ensuring our right to freedom of movement and association, our freedom to hold and express opinions without interference and our right to take part in community life.

Crucially, it will strengthen our justice system by enshrining rights to a fair trial and protection from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

While the Human Rights Act will focus on civil and political rights, *Building Our Community* will be the primary means for delivering economic, social and cultural human rights - the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to education, the right to work and to enjoy just and favourable conditions of work and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

A commitment to these economic, social and cultural rights is fundamental to achieving the *Building Our Community* vision of a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community.



The ACT community today

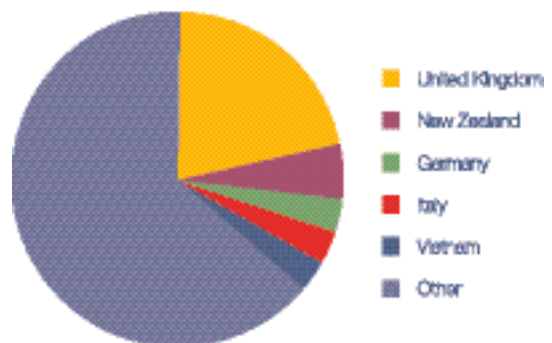
Our people

In June 2003, an estimated 322,850 people lived in the ACT¹. Canberra has a relatively young population, with a median age of 33.8 years in 2003, compared with 36.1 for Australia overall². Although, there are similar proportions of people aged less than 15 in the ACT and Australia at around 20 per cent, the ACT has only 9.1 per cent of people aged over 65 years, compared with 12.9 per cent nationally.

The ACT population has been increasing relatively slowly over the last five years, growing an average 0.8 per cent per year since 1998, compared with 1.2 per cent growth in Australia overall. Most ACT population growth has come from the excess of births over deaths (in 2002 there were 4,112 births registered³ and 1,373 deaths⁴). Interstate migration, however, has been negative over the last five years with more people leaving the ACT than arriving.

The 2001 census showed that over one-fifth of the ACT population was born overseas⁵. Many of these were from English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom (25%) and New Zealand (6%). Other major countries of birth were Germany (4%), Italy (4%) and Vietnam (3%).

Graph 2: Main countries of birth for ACT people born overseas



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprised 1.1 per cent of the ACT population⁶. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is significantly younger than the general population, with approximately 46 per cent under 18 years of age. The median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 20 years, around 13 years younger than for the non-Indigenous population.

There were 122,884 ACT households in 2002, with an average of 2.5 people per household⁷, slightly less than the national average. More than one quarter or 27 per cent of households were lone person households, while 41 per cent of households comprised three or more people.

The ACT population is spread across seven districts, the most populous of which are Tuggeranong and Belconnen, which together contain 55 per cent of the ACT population⁸.



In June 2003, an estimated 322,850 people lived in the ACT with over one fifth born overseas.

Photo provided courtesy of *The Canberra Times*

The fastest growth area is Gungahlin-Hall, which grew by an average of 11 per cent per year in the five years to 2002, to a population of 25,771.

There were 83,100 families (two or more related persons living together) in the ACT in 2003⁹. Couple families make up 81 per cent of family types, while one-parent families accounted for 18 per cent. Of couple families, 40 per cent had children under 15, while 55 per cent of one parent families had children under 15.

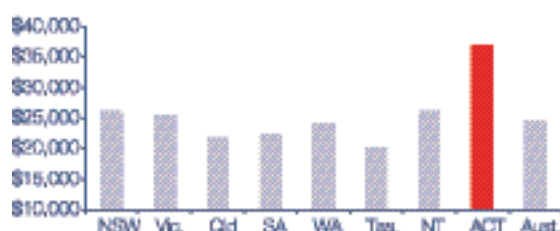
Some 55 per cent or 27,800 children in the ACT used some form of formal or informal childcare¹⁰.

In 1998, there were 5,200 people in households with a primary carer role¹¹, providing the majority of care to members with disabilities. A further 38,000 people had roles as non-primary carers. Females comprised 83 per cent of the primary carers, with the peak age for primary carers at 35-44 years.

Our living standards

Canberrans have the highest disposable incomes in Australia with an annual disposable income per capita of \$36,831 in 2002-03, compared with \$24,677 for Australia overall¹².

Graph 3: Gross household disposable income per capita, 2002-03



Average weekly earnings for full-time employed people in the ACT were also higher at \$978 in 2002, compared with the national level of \$873¹³. However, the gender disparity in earnings has continued with males earning on average 17 per

cent more than females in full-time employment.

The ACT has the lowest unemployment in Australia. In 2002-03, the official unemployment rate averaged 4.4 per cent, compared with 6.5 per cent nationally¹⁴. Youth unemployment was considerably higher, with a rate of 16.5 per cent, although this too was lower than the national figure (19.2%) and lower than any other time in the last decade. The ACT's lower unemployment is also associated with higher participation in the labour force. Almost three-quarters or 73 per cent of people aged 15 to 64 years were in the labour force compared with 64 per cent nationally.

In 2002-03 an average of 1,300 Canberrans were long-term unemployed - that is, out of work for 12 months or more.

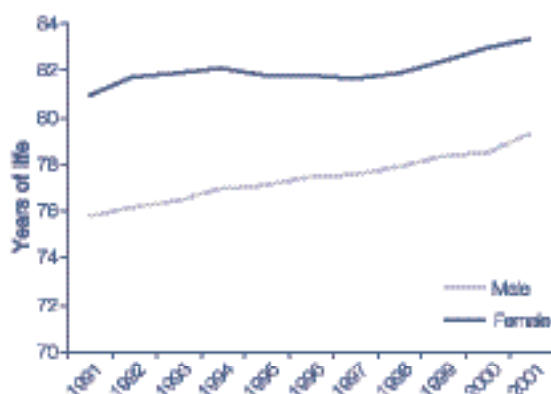
While the ACT population is wealthier overall than other Australians, there are still some households with relatively low incomes. Close to one-in-thirteen adults and one-in-nine children live in poverty. A study on poverty in the ACT indicated that people living in financial hardship are more likely to be young, in receipt of government cash benefits, living in public housing, in lone-parent households and unemployed¹⁵. In the ACT, the average disposable weekly income of low income households was \$342 in 2000-01, compared with \$246 nationally¹⁶. The ACT also has a more even distribution of income than most other States, as indicated by the Gini coefficient (a measure of the equality of income distribution in the population)¹⁷.

Government pensions and allowances were the principal source of income for 15.4 per cent of ACT households, compared with 28.3 per cent for Australia¹⁸. This reflects the ACT's lower unemployment and a higher proportion of people of working age than other States. ACT households are also more likely to have multiple earners, with an average of 1.4 earners per household, compared with 1.1 nationally. Around 60 per cent of ACT women with children aged less than five years were also in the labour force, compared to around 50 per cent nationally.

Our health and well-being

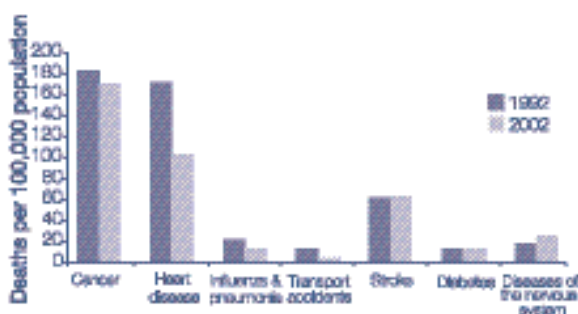
Health indicators for Canberrans compare favourably with other jurisdictions and to previous times. Life expectancy at birth for the ACT has increased steadily. At around 83 years for women and 79 years for men¹⁹, it is higher than the Australian average and is amongst the highest in the world.

Graph 4: Life expectancy at birth, ACT



Death rates for most leading causes of death have declined over the period 1991 to 2001. The largest declines were for cancer, heart disease, influenza, pneumonia and transport accidents²⁰. Although the breast cancer death rate has declined in recent years, it has generally been higher than the Australian rate²¹.

Graph 5: ACT standardised death rates - selected causes of death



Infant mortality rates in the ACT have also improved substantially in recent years. Between 1992 and 2002, infant deaths have almost halved, dropping from 6.3 deaths per 1,000 live births to 3.4 deaths per 1,000 live births²².

There were around 53,000 people with a disability in 1998. Of these 38,100 had a core activity restriction and needed assistance with self-care, communication or mobility²³.

The proportion of people over 15 years taking regular physical exercise for sport, recreation or fitness is also higher than nationally with 76 per cent of adults doing some level of exercise, compared with 69 per cent in Australia overall²⁴.

Child immunisation rates are in line with the national average.

The proportion of children in non-smoking houses at 72 per cent is higher than in NSW at 66 per cent. Well over 90 per cent of ACT parents or carers protect their children from sunburn by applying sunscreen and using broad-brimmed hats²⁵.

The 2001 National Health Survey found 27,500 people, or 8.8 per cent of the population in the ACT reported a long-term mental or behavioural disorder. The survey also showed that 10 per cent of Canberrans were experiencing high levels of psychological distress²⁶.

ACT adult residents are generally satisfied with their health status. In 2001, 54 per cent of Canberrans over 15 years reported they had 'very good' or 'excellent' health. However, healthy lifestyles are far from universal in Canberra.

Although the level of overweight and obesity among adults is the lowest in Australia, there has been a marked increase in obesity and overweight adults in the ACT, with 41 per cent of adults exceeding their recommended body mass index in 2001²⁷.

The problematic use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs also remains a public health concern in the ACT. Alcohol consumption levels considered risky or high-risk were recorded by 14 per cent of adult males and 9 per cent of adult females in the ACT in 2001²⁸. Smoking has decreased over time and is marginally less prevalent than elsewhere in Australia, with 20 per cent of ACT adults being

daily smokers in 2001, compared with 22 per cent nationally²⁹. Illicit drugs were used by 17 per cent of the population within the last 12 months, with 14 to 24 year olds having the highest drug use rates at 39 per cent³⁰.

Our education and learning

People in Canberra continue to have the highest levels of educational attainment in Australia. Some 65.5 per cent of the population aged 25-64 years had a post-school qualification in 2003,

compared to the national average of 55.3 per cent.

Thirty-six per cent of Canberrans aged 25-64 years had a bachelor's degree or higher³¹.

Canberrans have a wide choice of institutions in which to pursue further education. The ACT is served by four universities and three Vocational Educational and Training (VET) institutions. In 2003 the Australian National University was ranked equal 49th best university in the world, according to *The Academic Ranking of World Universities* study conducted by the

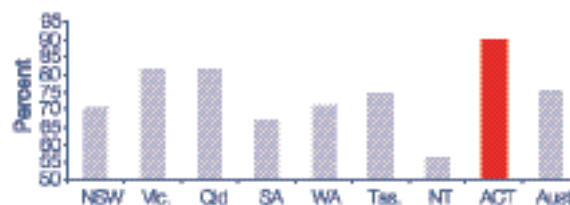
Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education. In 2001, there were a total of 24,900 students enrolled in the ACT's universities with some 67 per cent studying for bachelor degrees and 31 per cent pursuing post-graduate study. There were 21,600 students enrolled in VET institutions in 2001.

The 2002 unemployment rate for Canberrans who have post school qualifications was almost half that of those who do not have these qualifications. The unemployment rate for those with post school qualifications was 3.8 per cent, compared to 6.1 per cent for those without³².

The ACT had the highest apparent retention rate of full time students from Year 7 to Year 12 of any State or Territory in 2003 at 89.7 per cent, compared with 75.4 per cent nationally³³.

The apparent retention rate of students from Year 10 to Year 12 was also the highest in the country at 89.8 per cent, compared with 77 per cent nationally. The apparent retention rate for Indigenous students from Year 10 to Year 12 was the highest of any State or Territory at 78.8 per cent, compared with 45.8 per cent nationally³⁴.

Graph 6: Apparent retention rate, Year 7 to Year 12, 2003



In 2002, 82 per cent of the Year 12 cohort achieved an ACT Year 12 Certificate, with 55 per cent completing a Tertiary Entrance Package and 41 per cent completing at least one vocational qualification as part of their Year 12 Certificate studies.³⁵ According to 2001 Census data 77 per cent of 19 year-olds had a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent.

While the ACT had the highest participation rate for 15 to 24 year olds in education and training³⁶, it had the lowest proportion of people in that age group participating in vocational education and training (16.8% compared with 22.6% nationally). For people aged 15 to 64 years, the participation rate was 8.2 per cent compared with 11.8 per cent nationally³⁷.

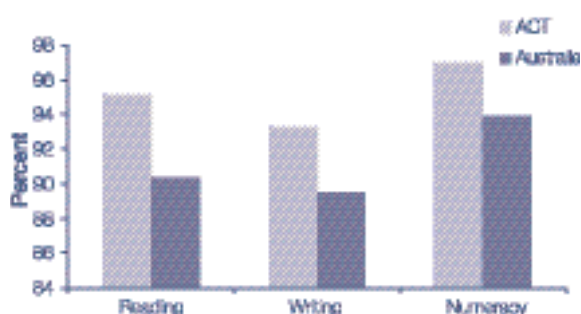
In terms of reading, writing and numeracy skills, ACT students perform well. The proportion of Year Three students in the ACT who achieved the reading benchmark in 2001 was 95.1 per cent - above the national average and equal second with Tasmania. The proportion of Year Five students who achieved the reading benchmark was the highest in the country at 94.6 per cent, compared



Photo provided courtesy of The University of Canberra

with 89.8 per cent nationally. The proportion of Year Three students who achieved the writing benchmark was also second highest nationally at 93.3 per cent. However, while 90.6 per cent of Year Five students in the ACT achieved the writing benchmark, this was below the national average. The proportion of Year Three students who achieved the numeracy benchmark was 97.0 per cent compared with 93.9 per cent nationally. The ACT had the second highest proportion of Year Five students achieve the numeracy benchmark at 93.1 per cent with a national average of 89.6 per cent³⁸.

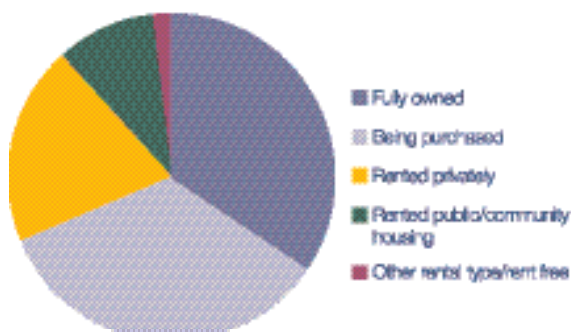
Graph 7: Proportion of Year Three students achieving benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy



Our homes

There were 114,842 occupied private dwellings in the ACT in 2001. Houses accounted for 76 per cent, townhouses 13 per cent and flats/units 10 per cent. Of the occupied private dwellings in the ACT, 33 per cent were fully owned, 33 per cent had money owing on a mortgage and 28 per cent were being rented³⁹.

Graph 8: Housing tenure and landlord type, ACT, 2001



Housing affordability in the ACT in September 2003 was the third lowest of all capital cities after Sydney and Melbourne.⁴⁰ In the June quarter 2003, the median house price in the ACT was \$305,000. Over the year, Canberra had the second largest increase in house prices of all capital cities, growing by 30.4 per cent. Hobart grew by 38.5 per cent⁴¹.

Over the period July 2000 to June 2002, there were 6,643 recipients of the First Home Owner Grant in the ACT.⁴² Over the same period, there were 18,116 housing commitments which are secured loans to individuals where the purpose of the loan is to buy or build a dwelling.⁴³

The ACT had the highest median weekly rent for a three bedroom house of all capital cities in June 2003 at \$280. Sydney was the next highest at \$250. The median weekly rent for a two bedroom flat/unit was \$260. This was the second highest after Sydney.⁴⁴

The ACT has the highest proportion of households residing in public housing. In 2002, nine per cent of ACT households were in public housing compared with five per cent nationally⁴⁵.

In 2002-03 there were 11,035 public housing dwellings in the ACT, with 185 of these being Indigenous households. Of these households 8,990 were paying less than market rent. In the same period there were 946 new households assisted with 49 of these being Indigenous households. The ACT had 3,471 people on the public housing waiting list. Of these 1,515 were classified as of 'greatest need' in 2002-03⁴⁶.



Photo provided courtesy of ACT Planning and Land Authority

In 2002-03 there were 424 community-housing dwellings in the ACT with 11 of these being Indigenous households. Some 168 new households including six Indigenous households were supported over this period. There were 374 applicants on the waiting list with 71 classified as of 'greatest need'⁴⁷.

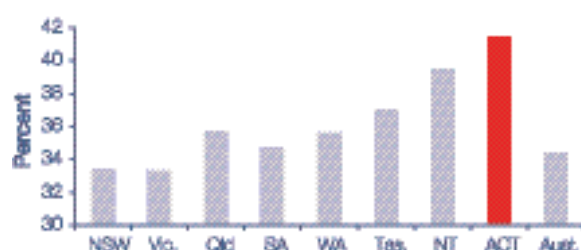
The ACT has the highest proportion of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) clients remaining in crisis accommodation. In 2002-03, 63 per cent of ACT people who entered crisis accommodation achieved independent housing at the end of the support period, compared with 72 per cent nationally. The proportion of clients moving to private rental housing was the lowest of any State or Territory at 19 per cent with a national average of 39 per cent⁴⁸.

Homelessness was estimated to affect around 1,230 Canberrans at any one time in 2001⁴⁹. The number who sleep rough (primary homelessness) each night was between 120 to 315 people⁵⁰.

Our community

In 2002, the ACT had the highest proportion of adults participating in voluntary work at 41 per cent⁵¹.

Graph 9: Proportion of adults engaged in voluntary work, 2002



In 2002, Canberra had higher attendances at cultural venues than any other State or Territory, with 95 per cent of residents aged 18 and over attending at least one cultural event or venue⁵².

Canberrans were more active in sports and physical activity than any other State.

Some 79 per cent of males and 73 per cent of females aged 18 and over participated in sport and physical activities in 2002 with the total participation rate for the ACT being 76 per cent. Nationally, the participation rate was 62 per cent. The ACT had one of the highest participation rates in sport and physical activities for children aged 5 to 14 years at 63 per cent⁵³.

In 2001-02, there were 41,831 offences reported to the police. Burglaries, fraud and other theft offences accounted for 55 per cent of all offences with property damage at 18 per cent. ACT residents had higher rates of confidence in the police than nationally. Consistent with this, the proportion of people who feel safe or very safe at home alone after dark was higher in the ACT than other jurisdictions.

There were 2,124 notifications of child abuse and neglect recorded in the ACT in 2002-03. Of these 310 (15%) were substantiated, resulting in 149 children being admitted to care and protection orders.⁵⁴

There were over 1.6 million visitors to public libraries in the ACT in the 2002-03, borrowing over two million items. Public library internet terminals were used for more than 97,000 hours⁵⁵.

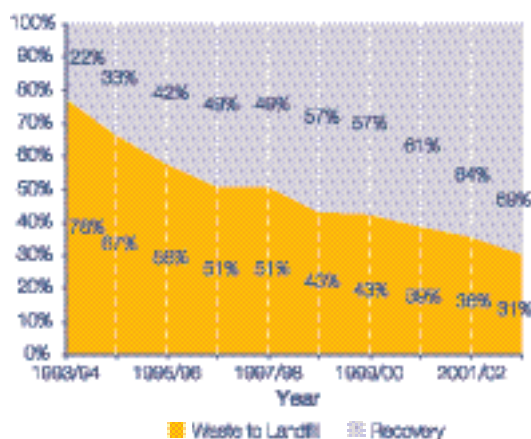
The ACT leads the nation in home computer usage in 2002 with 78 per cent of households having home computer access. The national average was 61 per cent. The ACT also has the highest rate of home internet access at 60 per cent, with a national average of 46 per cent. People in the ACT are more likely to pay bills or transfer funds over the internet than those elsewhere in the nation⁵⁶.

Our environment

The ACT community has a higher awareness of and concern for environmental issues than anywhere else in Australia. Our usage of environmental products is also higher than elsewhere in Australia. Some 61 per cent of households use refillable containers, 57 per cent use recycled paper products and 39 per cent use unbleached paper products.⁵⁷

In 2001-02, Canberrans increased the amount of material they recycled by 12 per cent, while at the same time decreasing the amount of material going to landfill. We now recycle 69 per cent of our waste, compared to just 22 per cent a decade ago. The salvage operation Revolve enabled the reuse of 6,995 tonnes of articles either dropped off at the site or recovered from landfill⁵⁸. Nevertheless, there is more work to do, as the waste we produce per capita continues to rise.

Graph 10: ACT waste reduction, 1993-94 to 2002-03⁵⁹



ACT residents are also more aware of 'green power' schemes or electricity generated from renewable sources than other Australians⁶⁰.

Water conservation is an increasingly important issue for Canberrans, given the recent drought and the effect of the 2003 bushfires on Canberra's water catchments. In 2001 the ACT led Australia in adopting the water-saving gardening practices of using mulch in the garden with 76 per cent of households doing so and 66 per cent of

households using native plants in the garden⁶¹.

Over the last year, Canberrans have increasingly adopted water conservation practices in response to water restrictions. The percentage of Canberrans satisfied with drinking water quality was high at 88 per cent in 2001⁶².

More than half the ACT's land is under conservation management, offering a wide range of opportunities for recreation.⁶³



Photo provided courtesy of Capital Tourism

Priorities, Goals and Actions: In detail

Priority 1: Economic opportunities for all Canberrans

The ACT has a relatively well off, healthy and educated community. It has diversified its economy and responded well to global and national economic challenges. Workforce participation and skill levels are the highest in Australia, and the unemployment rate is the lowest. The ACT's gross State product per head of mean population is consistently higher than the national average, and it has the highest average income in Australia. We are also a creative, innovative and enterprising Territory, with the strongest concentration of scientific talent and research expertise anywhere in the country.

However we should not let our economic success overshadow the fact that there are Canberrans in every suburb who experience disadvantage and exclusion. Close to one in thirteen adults and one in nine children live in poverty.

Promoting participation and access to economic opportunity for all is as much an economic as it is a social objective. Ensuring that there are jobs for all people who want them is central to the aspirations of the Canberra community, not only as a source of income and material wellbeing, but also as a vehicle for personal fulfillment and social engagement, and as a means of contributing to the welfare of our community.

The Government is committed to maintaining the strength of our economy and our enviable position as the jurisdiction with the lowest rate of unemployment of any Australian State or Territory. We want to enhance economic opportunities across our adult life-span by increasing employment, supporting life long learning and promoting a diverse economic base.

Goals

- Reduce poverty and exclusion for vulnerable people.
- Maintain Canberra's status as the State/Territory with the lowest unemployment rate.
- Reduce long-term unemployment and the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the ACT average.
- Provide opportunities for older people to remain in, or return to the workforce.
- Identify Canberra as an Australian centre for excellence for turning ideas into income.
- Increase economic opportunities and encourage creativity and innovation.

Actions

1.1 Community Inclusion Fund: The Government will establish a fund to assist the most vulnerable members of our community, as part of a concerted attack on the causes of poverty and exclusion. The initiative will be administered with advice from the new Community Inclusion Board.



We are an open-hearted community, with Canberrans more likely to work as volunteers and support their extended families than people in any other part of Australia.

Photo provided courtesy of *The Canberra Times*

The Community Inclusion Fund will assist Government and non-Government agencies to progressively change service delivery in line with best practice and evidence of 'what works' for individuals, families and communities experiencing social exclusion. It will assist Government and non-Government agencies to work holistically to meet the needs of some of the most at-risk members of the community. Advice on the allocation of the Fund will be sought from the Community Inclusion Board and will focus primarily on allocating funds for the employment of additional human service staff, such as community development officers, social workers, youth

workers, counsellors, psychologists and other health workers in areas of high need, and will seek to build on existing initiatives that have the support of the local community. For example, the Fund could support the employment of additional ACT Health outreach psychologists to work with the *Turnaround Project* to meet the needs of youth most at risk.

In line with the *Addressing Disadvantage Report* the Fund will focus on:

- the need for multidisciplinary services that target multiple risk factors with an emphasis on results;
- a greater focus on follow-up of clients and ongoing support;
- planning for greater synergies between government and non-government providers; and
- a shift in focus from brokerage/advocacy services to more holistic support for individuals, families, and communities experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion.

1.2 The Government will ease the financial pressures facing individuals and families on low incomes, particularly older people, by increasing concession payments on electricity, water and sewerage charges to ensure that people on low incomes are not disadvantaged by price rises. It will also introduce a streamlined energy concession that includes a new concession for gas, and improve the energy efficiency of households receiving these concessions.

Government concessions help people on low incomes to maintain a reasonable quality of life by providing concessional rates on government (and some non-government) fees and charges. The number of concessions offered amount to well over thirty, including rebates on electricity, water and sewerage, school and pensioner bus concessions, a subsidy for spectacles, a firewood concession and various education and training assistance. Eligibility for income-based concessions is generally based on the applicant being in receipt of a means tested benefit from either Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and holding either a Pensioner Concession Card or a Health Care Card. Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card holders are also eligible.

The Government is currently reviewing the overall effectiveness and coverage of these concessions. As an initial response, the following reforms will be made to energy, water and sewerage concessions.

A new concession will be introduced for households connected to gas, thereby removing an anomaly in current arrangements, and energy concessions will be streamlined.

The Government will ensure that ACT residents on low incomes are not disadvantaged by electricity, water and gas price rises by ensuring that rebates are adjusted accordingly.

Households in receipt of concessions will be offered advice on means to improve their energy efficiency.



1.3 The Government will maintain emergency relief services funding for the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Government provides emergency relief which is essential support for people when they are most vulnerable and provides a range of basic and essential resources such as financial relief, household goods and clothing, food, financial information, advice and referral. Current Government funded providers are the Salvation Army, the Smith Family and the St Vincent de Paul Society.

1.4 The Government will implement the actions which underpin the strategic directions outlined in the *Economic White Paper*.

The Government is committed to encouraging strong economic growth through private sector development. More and stronger firms and industries will provide more diverse and secure employment and a high quality lifestyle for residents. A stronger economy will give government greater scope to shape better social and spatial outcomes. The strategic directions outlined in the *Economic White Paper* are for policies that:

- support business, with the broad aim of establishing the ACT as the premier location for business activity;
- capitalise on competitive advantages by understanding our industries and targeting government support in areas that will provide the greatest return;
- leverage off our intellectual assets by continuing to invest in the region's human capital to enhance skills and knowledge for business application; and
- provide supportive planning and infrastructure to ensure a more balanced approach where planning and infrastructure can support and lead economic outcomes, as well as social and spatial considerations.

1.5 The Government will: introduce a Training Pathway Guarantee of one year's post-school training in a relevant vocational course for school leavers who have not commenced some form of post-school study or training within 12 months of leaving school; introduce a Skills Development for Young Adults at Risk initiative; and introduce a vocational education and training program specifically targeted at the over-45 year old age group.

Three actions announced in the *Economic White Paper* are of particular relevance to the *Building Our Community* priority of creating economic opportunity for all. These relate to vocational education and training and skills development.

Training Pathway Guarantee: Of the 4,000 school leavers in the ACT each year, about 3,000 proceed directly to higher education or vocational education and training, and a further 700 take up part or full-time employment. About 300 neither take up a job nor continue their studies. School leavers who neither gain a job nor continue with their studies, or who enter employment with no training attached, are those most at risk of suffering prolonged bouts of unemployment and poverty. The Training Pathway Guarantee will ensure that young people not already in some form of post-school study or training will be guaranteed access to one year's post-school training in a relevant and available vocational education and training course within 12 months of leaving school. The training provided must meet ACT skill-needs priorities, and in most cases will lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Pre-vocational training and additional support will be available for those with special training needs.



Photo provided courtesy of
The Canberra Times

Skills Development for Young Adults at Risk:

A small proportion of young adults aged 18 to 25 years need significant individualised assistance to achieve productive futures. These young people have circumstances in their lives such as homelessness, mental illness, intellectual disability and drug and alcohol dependency, and may have entered the criminal justice system. The human and financial cost to the community will continue to be high if they are not provided with targeted and ongoing support to develop their skills and achieve success. The initiative will focus on case management support for improving well being, skills development and training, and working with Job Network agencies and Centrelink to help find employment.

Developing the skills of older workers: New strategies are required to provide older workers with more attractive and flexible ways to maintain an active engagement with the workforce. An essential element will be to extend the opportunities available to older workers to refresh their skill base, acquire new knowledge and skills, and ensure that the new skills they acquire are recognised and valued by employers and put to good use in the workplace. This program will target the over-45 years age group, with a particular focus on people re-entering the workforce and those in the workforce who need to retrain in order to remain in employment.

We are already

- Implementing the *Economic White Paper* to provide a strategic framework for the development of the ACT economy over the next 10-20 years.
- Working to enhance the uptake of e-business and e-commerce in the ACT.
- Providing funding support to businesses that wish to export, through the Trade Development Program.
- Working with agencies to streamline regulatory and planning systems in the ACT.
- Strengthening links between schools and industry to improve the employability skills of ACT students.

- Providing over \$700,000 in funding for emergency relief services in the ACT and undertaking a Review of Financial and Material Assistance Services.
- Committing ourselves, through the Plan for Older Canberrans, to developing a Mature Age Employment Strategy.
- Encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs through the Creating Youth Business Initiatives Program.
- Supporting the establishment of AusBiotech in Canberra.
- Supporting the Knowledge Fund and providing grants since 2002 that have generated approximately \$11.2 million in private sector investment and created over 330 jobs.
- Establishing the Small Business Employment Ready Program to assist micro businesses employ and retain staff. To date 308 businesses have accessed the Program resulting in 160 new jobs worth \$8 million in salaries for the ACT economy.
- Sharing the operation of the ACT node of the National Information and Communications Technology Australia (NICTA) Centre of Excellence.
- Entering into an agreement with the Canberra Business Council to manage the 2004 Canberra and Region Focus on Business, in partnership with the local, regional and national business community.
- Holding the first industry development forum for the film, television and digital media sectors and announced a commitment to develop screenACTion - coordination and facilitation point for location services and industry development activities.
- Increasing the commercialisation rate of research and development in the ACT through the Canberra Commercialisation Council, in conjunction with the Canberra Business Council, University of Canberra, ANU and the CSIRO.
- Identifying barriers to international students studying in Canberra to maximise tourism outcomes from international students through the Council of Education Export.

- Entered into a co-operative funding partnership to establish a Canberra branch office of AusBiotech to assist the development of the ACT biotechnology sector through networking, information seminars, forums and workshops.
- Building critical mass in creative industries such as games development, film and television services, contemporary craft practices and exhibition management.

Links

- ACT Treasury (www.treasury.act.gov.au)
- Shaping Canberra's Future (Supplementary Budget Paper 2002-2003) (www.treasury.gov.au)
- ACT Treasury Strategic Directions (www.treasury.act.gov.au)
- Addressing Disadvantage in the ACT - The Need for and Provision of Human Services in the ACT (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- Review of ACT Business Regulation (www.treasury.act.gov.au)
- Business ACT (www.business.act.gov.au)
- The Economic White Paper for the ACT (www.business.act.gov.au)
- Capital Region Employment Council (www.crec.asn.au)
- ACT Economic Snapshot (www.treasury.act.gov.au/snapshot)
- Canberra Business Advisory Service (CanBAS) (www.canbas.com.au)
- Canberra Region Business Database (www.canberraregionbusiness.com.au)
- Office of Fair Trading (www.fairtrading.act.gov.au)
- ACT Legislation Register (www.legislation.act.gov.au)
- Canberra Connect Employment (www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au/employment/employment.html)

Priority 2: Respect, diversity and human rights

Respecting diversity by protecting each other's rights is essential if all Canberrans are to have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Fostering a culture of respect and inclusion helps to overcome barriers to participation. Celebrating diversity allows us to draw on a wealth of different experiences that add to our knowledge and understanding of the world. Promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canberrans builds a sense of unity and community.

Despite Canberra's relative harmony and economic well being, there are still human rights issues to be addressed. These include the need to recognise discrimination and exclusion in all its guises.

Our laws and policies can play an important part in promoting fairness and understanding, by removing both formal and informal barriers to participation and access to education, health, housing, employment, cultural and sporting activities and public life.

Goals

- Protect, promote and enhance the rights of all Canberrans.
- Promote fairness and understanding.
- Promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canberrans.
- Promote the inclusion of people with a disability in all areas of the ACT community.
- Promote gender equity across all aspects of community life.
- Recognise the valuable contribution made by older people to the community.
- Maintain an environment that welcomes immigrants, particularly refugees.

Actions

2.1 The Government will enact and implement a Human Rights Act for the ACT and build a human rights culture within the ACT community.

While Australians generally enjoy high standards of representative and responsible government, Australia is the only common law country without either a constitutional or statutory bill of rights. The ACT will lead Australia by enacting a Human Rights Act to ensure that everyone in the ACT can enjoy legal protection of their civil and political rights. The Human Rights Act will require that all

Territory laws must be interpreted, to the maximum extent possible, in a manner that is consistent with these principles. It will strengthen public accountability by enabling government decisions to be reviewable against these standards. It will also promote adherence to human rights principles in the conduct of judicial and administrative proceedings.

The Supreme Court will have the power to issue a Declaration of Incompatibility if it finds that a law is inconsistent

with human rights. The Declaration must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and a Government response issued within six months. A Declaration will not invalidate the law but it will alert the Government and the Assembly to any potential problem and promote public debate about human rights issues.

The Department of Justice will provide specialist advice, support and training to ACT Departments and agencies as part of the Government's ongoing implementation strategy. A human rights website will be established to ensure access to

basic information about the operation of the new law. Government departments and agencies will also be required to include information in their annual reports about the actions they have taken to comply with the Human Rights Act.

A Human Rights Commissioner will perform a public education role and will be able to advise the Government on any issues concerning compliance of ACT law with the Human Rights Act. The Commissioner will also be able to intervene in proceedings in which a human rights issue is raised.

2.2 The Government will scrutinise all new legislative policy proposals to ensure that they are consistent with human rights.

Compliance with the Human Rights Act will be part and parcel of the Government's policy development process. All new laws will meet the minimum standards set out in the Act unless it is strictly necessary for sound reasons not to do so. The Department of Justice will provide advice to departments and agencies about the requirements of the Act and statements of compatibility will be presented to the Legislative Assembly for each Government Bill. The statutory requirement for the statement of compatibility is an important part of the government's commitment to meeting minimum standards and ensuring transparency in the legislative process. The Standing Committee on the Scrutiny of Bills will continue to perform its important role in scrutinising both government and private member's bills. The Human Rights Act strengthens the role of the Committee by creating a clear obligation to assess proposed laws for compliance with the Human Rights Act.

2.3 The Government will enact new laws to protect personal privacy in the ACT.

The Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* was extended to apply to the ACT following self-government. While that legislation has served us well, it is important that the ACT, as a self-governing Territory, take responsibility to enact



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The Canberra Times

laws for the protection of the personal privacy of its citizens. New laws protecting personal privacy will be designed to enhance the right to privacy contained in the proposed Human Rights Act.

2.4 The Government will build community and ACT agency support for the statement of *Vision and Values* for people with a disability, and implement the *Access to Government* strategy for people with a disability.

Vision and Values is a statement based on how people with disabilities wish to be treated and valued as members of the ACT community. It recognises that people with disabilities should enjoy the same access to services and other aspects of community life as other Canberrans, minimising the impacts of their disabilities and maximising their opportunities for independence. The Government will communicate the *Vision and Values* statement across all ACT programs and services, and to the ACT community, to assist the process of improving the level of participation by people with disabilities in general community activities and services.

The *Access to Government Strategy* was endorsed and launched by the ACT Government in July 2003. The strategy targets ACT Government programs, policies, services and facilities and requires ACT departments to conduct 'access audits' to identify where people with disabilities may be excluded from those programs, policies, services and facilities and to prepare Disability Action Plans to address any identified gaps.

2.5 The Government will build on the principles of respect, fairness, inclusiveness and multiculturalism outlined in the Government's *Facing Up To Racism* discussion paper.

Facing Up to Racism: A Strategic Plan Addressing Racism and Unfair Discrimination is being developed following community consultation on the *Facing Up to Racism* discussion paper. The Strategy will build on the principles of respect, fairness, inclusiveness and multiculturalism

outlined in the discussion paper. The Strategy is a significant whole of government approach to addressing issues of racism and unfair discrimination in our community. It is expected that the Strategy will be available by June 2004.

2.6 The Government will develop and support an across-agency approach to meeting the needs of women through a shared *Strategic Plan for Women*.

The *Strategic Plan for Women* is being developed to continue to improve conditions, opportunities, recognition and understanding of the needs of women, particularly those who are disadvantaged. The Plan will provide a framework to better coordinate work across government agencies, enabling effective data collection, identification of gaps, and the focussing of priorities.

An inter-departmental committee, including representation from the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, is overseeing the development of this Plan. An initial consultation phase was completed in November 2003 and consultation on a draft Plan will be undertaken in February 2004. The Plan is scheduled to be finalised by April 2004.

2.7 The Government will put in place an ACT *Indigenous Partnership Plan 2004-2013*, an integrated series of measures to address Indigenous disadvantage. The report, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*, will be utilised as the key framework for measuring Indigenous outcomes in the ACT.

The ACT Government will develop an ACT *Indigenous Partnership Plan 2004-2013* in conjunction with the Regional Council of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). The Plan will incorporate the priorities contained in the report: *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003* which requires resources to be focussed on early childhood development, school attendance, teenage development, reducing substance abuse,

bolstering families, health care and economic opportunities. The *Key Indicators* report reflects a historic commitment by all Australian governments to work together to tackle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage at its root causes and to achieve the same standards of living and quality of life for Indigenous Australians as for other Australians.

The *ACT Indigenous Partnership Plan 2004-2013* will provide the framework at the ACT level for not only measuring progress in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage, but also spelling out strategic areas for action and measures that will track the effectiveness of government policies and programs in the ACT. The *ACT Indigenous Partnership Plan 2004-2013* will also:

- aim to align the ATSIC and ACT Government service delivery planning processes;
- examine opportunities to increase access to all funded programs by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the ACT;
- promote consistent and coordinated application of policies, programs and operations at the local level;
- increase dialogue and cooperation between ATSIC, the ACT Government and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; and
- develop plans and services which respond to the needs and outcomes determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the local level.

2.8 The Government will provide housing assistance to Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders who meet normal eligibility conditions if they are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in extreme hardship.

The ACT community and Government must continue to play their part in welcoming and easing the burdens faced by the small share of the world's 40 million displaced persons and refugees who find their way to Canberra. The Government will provide housing assistance to TPV holders who meet normal eligibility conditions if they are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in extreme hardship. While TPV holders are generally not

eligible for public housing assistance in the ACT, this action will ensure removal of the barriers in the Public Rental Assistance Program.

2.9 The Government will establish a Multicultural Centre.

The ACT Government recently announced that the new Multicultural Centre will be located on the refurbished second floor of the North Building in the city when alternative accommodation is found for ACT Health, the existing tenant.

The location of the new Multicultural Centre in the North Building will significantly add to the cultural life of that area of our city which already includes the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the Playhouse and the Canberra Theatre. The co-location of many multicultural community organisations in the North Building will bring more vibrancy to that part of our city.

The new Multicultural Centre will provide a focal point for the administration, performance, displays, exhibition, radio broadcasting and social interaction for many members of Canberra's cultural community organisations, international students and members of diplomatic missions. The Centre will provide an opportunity for the Canberra community to broaden its cultural experiences and understanding.

The establishment of the Centre demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring that Canberra remains a model city in terms of social harmony and cultural development. The new Centre will serve as an example for other jurisdictions in Australia.

We are already

- Reviewing government services and programs to ensure that they are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Implementing legislation to remove discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

- Developing a Human Rights Act to enhance the protection of and respect for human rights in the ACT.
- Recognising women's achievements and contribution to the community through the ACT International Women's Day Awards.
- Working to improve the level of participation of women in decision-making bodies, achieving close to 50 per cent representation on Government boards and committees, the highest level in Australia.
- Developing an anti-racism strategy *Facing up to Racism* to combat racist attitudes and actions and promote tolerance.
- Acknowledging the traditional owners of the ACT by erecting signs at entry points to the ACT.
- Developing a Blueprint for Action for Young People at Risk to help them build positive lives.
- Implementing a six month trial of circle sentencing for Indigenous offenders from early 2004, to reduce significant over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system.
- Involving people with a disability in decision making on issues that affect the way they live.
- Working in partnership with community organisations to strengthen the disability sector.
- Developing alternative support and accommodation options for people with a disability.
- Implementing the Government Response to the Report of the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services and Steps to Reform, the Reform and Action Strategy for 2003-05.
- Supporting Youth InterACT as a multifaceted youth consultation and participation initiative to engage young people aged between 12-25 years in government decision-making and community life.

Links

- ACT Human Rights Office
(<http://www.hro.act.gov.au/hr1.htm>)
- ACT Criminal Justice System Strategic Plan 2002-2005 (www.jcs.act.gov.au)
- Towards an ACT Human Rights Act, Report of the ACT Bill of Rights Consultative Committee, 2003 (www.act.gov.au)
- ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs
(<http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/community/mau.htm>)
- ACT Office of Women
(<http://www.women.act.gov.au>)
- ACT Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
(<http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/community/atsiu.htm>)
- Community Advocate
(<http://www.oca.act.gov.au/index.html>)
- Legal Aid (<http://www.legalaid.canberra.net.au>)
- ACT Ombudsman
(<http://act.ombudsman.gov.au>)
- Department of Justice and Community Safety (www.jcs.act.gov.au)
- Administrative Appeals Tribunal
(<http://www.aat.gov.au>)
- Social Security Appeals Tribunal
(<http://www.ssat.gov.au>)
- Migration Review Tribunal
(<http://www.mrt.gov.au>)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (www.hreoc.gov.au)
- The Inclusivity Challenge: A Discussion paper for school communities (www.deyfs.act.gov.au)
- Within Reach of Us All: ACT Government Schools Services To Indigenous People Action Plan
(http://www.deyfs.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/SchoolsPlan02_04Indigenous%20.pdf)

Priority 3: A strong, safe and cohesive community

Canberra is a city that is inclusive, healthy, creative and prosperous and is now home to people from over 200 different countries. We also have a cohesion that comes with an active arts and sports sector and well supported community facilities. We are an open-hearted community, with Canberrans more likely to work as volunteers and support their extended families than people in any other part of Australia. We have a national reputation for our festivals. Our community is also generally a

safe one and this is reflected in perceptions of personal safety in Canberra.

Our strong and cohesive family and community networks ensure that we nurture our children, care for those in need, help people find work, and look after and respect our older people. Our neighbours and families willingly help each other in times of crisis, as we saw in Canberra after the January 2003 bushfires.

The evidence is strong that the best way to maintain a cohesive, strong and safe

community is to have high employment and a high value-added society, where individuals and households have the opportunity to engage in satisfying, well-rewarded work, and have access to lifelong learning and cultural and sporting facilities. Such a society will generate the resources to sustain, through equitable allocation of resources, the social systems and public services needed by the whole population.



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Goals

- Meet the diverse needs of our ageing community.
- Build and support community participation based on common interests, neighbourhoods, schools, sport and culture.
- Reduce the risks of social exclusion by narrowing the gap between the information rich and information poor.
- Prevent and reduce crime and its impacts.
- Create a safe environment for every member of the community.
- Recognise and support the role played by community organisations and by volunteers.
- Promote and support the work of carers.
- Recognise and build on the role played by the business sector in the community.
- Improve the accessibility of and viability of using public transport.
- Value our role as the nation's capital.
- Enhance community access to and participation in the arts and other cultural activities.

Actions

3.1 Building a Stronger Community.

The Government will put in place a community engagement strategy that: ensures a stronger, more cohesive relationship between the ACT Government and the Canberra community; renews community infrastructure and facilities; reforms community sector funding; and helps community network-building at a grassroots level.

A stronger relationship with the community.

The Government will draw on the experiences of the bushfire recovery to ensure a stronger, more cohesive relationship between the community and government, particularly in the way we deliver on our commitments under *Building Our Community – The Canberra Social Plan*. A model for this type of engagement is the Community Expert Reference Group, which was established after the January 2003 bushfires. The initiative aims to change the prevailing culture to one in which government agencies focus on quality rather than quantity in

their engagement with the community, with greater participation by departmental staff and more selective use of consultants.

Renew community infrastructure and facilities. A number of ACT Government agencies have responsibility for managing government premises that house community sector (non-government) organisations. Most agencies have 'condition audits' for each building and allocate available funds for maintenance and repair. The Government will inject additional funding to enable further improvements to be made to premises to enhance community organisations' ability to serve the Canberra community. Each agency will be asked to submit applications for funding with a focus on the asset - that is the building itself, with a clear statement on the 10 year future of the building, the level of community sector services/activities provided and how this investment will improve the delivery of services/activities by the community sector. The types of minor capital works that could be funded include:

- fixing leaking roofs;
- fixing electrical and plumbing services;
- ramps and handrails to improve access to facilities;
- sound proofing and improved climate control;
- floor, wall and ceiling repairs;
- fire safety measures;
- green technology in sanitary drainage and water supply/reticulation; and
- better amenities (eg toilets, kitchens).

Community Sector Funding Reforms.

The Government has a strong commitment to work with the community sector and consumers to improve service delivery and to give the sector the certainty it needs to get on with what it does best - serving the needs of the ACT community. Currently the Government provides around \$70 million in funding to the community sector each year. A new Community Sector Funding policy, to be released in early 2004, will significantly reform the way that funding is provided. The policy

moves away from the outdated purchaser/provider model towards a more collaborative approach, and revises the terms on which the funding is provided. This will ensure the longer-term sustainability of community organisations, maximise consumer outcomes, better determine community needs, and support innovation and excellence in service delivery. The standard funding agreement will be revised to reflect this collaborative approach, a framework will be published outlining core-funding principles, and a Community Sector Funding Reform initiative will provide training and skills enhancement for staff and volunteers who work in the sector.

Community Networking Grants.

Building on the success of the Canberra Community Foundation Grants, Community Networking will fund activities to enable neighbourhoods and groups in the community to get together and share a common interest. This could include, for example, conversation groups like 'the tool group' and 'the knitting group', adventure activities for young people, social activities for home-based parents and carers and celebrating significant milestones of community organisations.

3.2 The Government will commission and build an ACT Veterans' Memorial.

A feature of most Australian towns is a Veteran's Memorial. Often erected after the First World War, the design of these monuments varies from place to place, but typically features a statue of a serviceman, an obelisk or an archway. Common to most is a plaque naming those who died in the service of their country, or in many cases, the names of all who served. While Canberra hosts that most distinctive monument to the nation's military sacrifice, the Australian War Memorial, the city has no memorial or cenotaph of its own.

The Government will ensure that those from the Canberra district who served Australia in military conflict are honoured with a Veterans' Memorial. The Memorial will be centrally located. Its design will reflect the simplicity and introspection to be found in the many local memorials throughout the country.

3.3 The Government will more effectively support events surrounding significant days of the year such as Canberra Day, Australia Day and New Year's Eve, as important opportunities for the community to celebrate its city, people and its culture.

While a number of community events are held in Canberra, such as the National Multicultural Festival, Canberra Celebrates and Floriade, there are significant days in the year where additional funds would enhance major community events and enable the provision of family friendly activities. These include New Year's Eve, Australia Day and Canberra Day.



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The Canberra Times

3.4 The Government will expand the Schools as Communities Program, working with families and communities to build resilience and foster a sense of connection and belonging in local communities.

The Schools as Communities program uses school sites as a base from which to develop community strengths and harness the potential of local communities. The program has a strong focus on building

communities that nurture children by supporting families in their role as parents. The program works to develop a sense of connection between community members and fosters a cooperative approach to local community issues.

The Program targets communities that will gain the greatest benefit from activities that build community capacity. The expansion of this program will focus on emerging areas of need in the local Canberra community and will result in additional outreach workers being deployed in specific Canberra schools.

3.5 The Government will further develop and implement a Public Art Policy to ensure that Canberra's public art collections are maintained and developed to enrich the experience of our city's public places and to reflect our community's history, experience and aspirations. The Government will develop arts, science and technology, and cultural precincts that become stimulating environments to foster creativity and innovation, and will enhance support for arts and cultural programs designed for young people.

Public art plays a vital role in Canberra's public places by making them enjoyable to use and by creating opportunities to reflect on our community's values and experiences. While there is already a wealth of public art in Canberra, there is much untapped potential for both traditional sculpture and for artistic design as a part of building works to enhance the identity, look and experience of our city. A public art policy will provide a much needed framework to guide the integration of high quality public art into our city and to ensure that existing public art works are made even more accessible.

The Government has allocated funding for a public artwork that will celebrate prior Indigenous ownership of the lands that constitute the political boundaries of the ACT. The artwork, to be completed in late 2004, will stand as a powerful symbol of the ACT's commitment to reconciliation and a reminder of our shared history.

Arts facilities, like educational, health and sporting facilities, play a key role in sustaining a healthy, fulfilled and engaged society. It is of vital importance that Canberra's arts facilities are developed to be highly accessible so that all Canberrans are presented with opportunities to participate in the arts. The Government's recently-released Arts Facilities Strategy seeks to strengthen existing, or develop new arts precincts, in Civic Square, City West and the Kingston Foreshore; and to develop arts centres and stand-alone facilities elsewhere. The Strategy provides a straightforward planning framework that can be used to plan for arts facilities to meet community requirements in future years.

Participating in the arts is a valuable process that can engage Canberra's young people in the life of our community. The Government will seek to enhance its support for programs that encourage young people to participate in the arts.

3.6 The Government will encourage and recognise business support for community development.

Business organisations and individual companies play a crucial role in the life of our community, whether it be through the sponsorship of children's sporting teams, donating or helping raise funds for organisations that help people in need, supporting the needs of their employees to balance their work and family life, or allowing community groups to make use of their facilities. The Government will ensure that good citizenship by the business community continues to be recognised and acknowledged.

3.7 The Government will ensure adoption of the principles and objectives set out in the *Caring for Carers* policy.

Carers make a substantial contribution to the economic and social well being of our community. The number of carers, as well as the complexity and intensity of care being provided has been increasing over recent years. In 1998 around one in seven people were carers in the ACT, a figure that is likely to have increased.

To ensure that carers are better acknowledged and their needs addressed, the Government, with the community, has developed a *Caring for Carers* policy.

The policy recognises the right of carers to decide whether to take on or continue the role of care, and the positive and negative aspects of caring.

The Government will ensure that its agencies and those it funds encourage individuals and families to plan future caring arrangements and support carers through advice, information, needs assessment and assistance with support coordination. It will also ensure that agencies regard the carer and the

person receiving care as a partnership in which each person has rights and responsibilities, as well as respecting and supporting the relations between carers and people requiring care through transitions to formal or shared care arrangements. The Government will ensure that the health and well being of carers is supported through services and programs that are flexible and responsive to individual needs and circumstances. Important to this will be the Government's commitment to the Home and Community Care (HACC) program and the provision of enhanced HACC services to older and frail people and younger people with disabilities.

3.8 The Government will implement an ACT *Children's Plan* to provide a more focussed and strategic approach to policies and programs that support the health and wellbeing of all children in our community.

The *Children's Plan* will:

- establish priorities and direction for children up to 12 years of age while also addressing the needs of families;
- promote prevention and early evidence-based intervention practices;
- facilitate collaborative efforts across governments and all sectors of the community to reduce gaps, duplication and piecemeal approaches to service development;
- use a collaborative framework to facilitate better referral pathways and seamless transitions and coordination between services;
- address inequalities through greater access to universal services.

3.9 The Government will ensure we better care for our vulnerable children and young people, with additional funding to enable an immediate response to the dramatically increased need for intervention and support services in child protection.

The *Children and Young People Act 1999* establishes a statutory responsibility for the protection of children and young people from abuse and neglect, to provide care, protection

and well being of children in a safe and stable environment, and to ensure that services provided by, or for government, for the care and protection of children and young people fosters their health, education and developmental needs.

There has recently been a dramatic increase in the number of child protection reports, in the number of reports requiring appraisal and in the number of substantiated cases. The most recent information suggests that this trend is continuing. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the complexity of work undertaken by Family Services caseworkers,

due to factors such as the severity of maltreatment and the number of instances where parents have chronic drug and alcohol, mental health and domestic violence issues.

A situation as disturbing as this must be met with immediate action. The Government will therefore provide immediate additional funding for the current financial year and following years to allow a significant increase in the number of staff for intervention and support services, and to meet the increased demand for substitute care days.



Photo provided courtesy of
The Canberra Times

3.10 The Government will encourage active community participation by the growing 'ageing' population in areas such as mentoring, further education, sport and community services.

The Government will encourage active community participation by Canberra's ageing population through the implementation of the strategic plan developed by the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing which promotes:

- meaning and purpose in later life through developing and trialing personal development/

self awareness courses for older people and reducing the incidence of social isolation for older people;

- healthy ageing;
- fitness in the ageing population;
- provision of responsive public and community transport services and policies to increase access and mobility for older people;
- targeted employment training programs; and
- policies and practices that enable life long learning.

3.11 The Government will institute a 'Canberra Gold' Chief Minister's Award, to be given annually to all people reaching their 50th anniversary as ACT residents.

The Canberra we know today was built by people who came from all over the nation, and from all over the world. Many stayed, raised families, and over time came to see Canberra as their home. It is no longer unusual to find people whose connection with Canberra spans more than a generation. Fifty years ago the ACT's population numbered just 30,300. Perhaps as many as 10,000 still live here. We should recognise and celebrate the commitment made by these Canberra 'pioneers'.

Every year as part of the Canberra birthday celebrations, a 'Canberra Gold' Chief Minister's Award will be presented to every current resident of the ACT who lived here 50 years ago. Through the year, nominations will be sought from qualifying residents. Community groups will also be asked to help find potential recipients.

3.12 The Government will develop and implement a Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT.

In December 2003 the Government released its *Draft Sustainable Transport Plan*. The draft Plan proposes a strategic framework to guide the planning, development and implementation of a sustainable transport system for Canberra over the next 20 to 30 years. It recognises that making a significant shift to a more sustainable transport system may require sustained effort and the long-term application of funds. In order to be more sustainable, Canberra's

future transport will have a greater emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport.

The draft Plan identifies specific short term priorities over the next five years, including:

- *Ageing Canberrans*: investigate the transport needs of the ageing population, including private, public and community-based transport.
- *Belconnen and Woden Interchange Upgrades*: integration of new bus interchanges into retail development in the town centre to improve passenger comfort and security.
- *Real Time Information*: real-time departure information improves passenger information and encourages use by new and infrequent public transport users. 'Real-time' information systems will be incorporated into new and existing interchanges and major stops.
- *Bike Racks on Buses*: install bike racks on buses on some services to encourage cycling and public transport.
- *Trunk Cycle Network Improvements*: construct cycle and walking paths identified as 'missing links' in the network. Further on-road cycle lanes will be provided on new and upgraded arterial roads.

The Plan includes a commitment to implement the Australian Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport. The Government will revise and update the ACT Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport to ensure that people with a disability are able to access public transport services consistent with standards under *the Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

3.13 The Government will work to reduce the incidence of property crime, with a particular focus on repeat property offenders.

A whole of government Property Crime Reduction Strategy will be initiated, focussing principally on the offences of burglary and theft of motor vehicles. Many elements of the strategy are already in place and new initiatives will be finalised and endorsed by late March 2004. Actions being developed fall into the categories of: law enforcement; justice and

regulatory responses; 'target hardening' using crime prevention through environmental design approaches; community education; and offender programs.

Law enforcement and corrections agencies will target repeat offenders. Canberra-based research has indicated that ACT Policing operations targeting recidivist property offenders have proved effective in lowering property crime rates. ACT Corrective Services are also designing intensive supervision programs for high volume recidivist property offenders, while the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services is coordinating the *Turnaround Program* for young people with complex needs, some of whom are high-risk offenders.

'Target hardening' initiatives under consideration include:

- wider promotion of the crime prevention design principles outlined in the *ACT Crime Prevention and Urban Design Resource Manual*;
- a possible expansion of the engine immobiliser program, particularly for older motor vehicles which make up the bulk of cars stolen;
- the continuation of the security hardware subsidy scheme for Community Liaison Advisory Safety Project (CLASP) patrons; and
- investigating ways of making public car parks more secure.

3.14 The Government will trial circle sentencing for Indigenous offenders.

Circle sentencing is a highly successful program for Aboriginal people which has been operating successfully in Nowra for some time, and is currently being extended to other parts of NSW. The sentencing circle is for adults and young people who have pleaded guilty or been found guilty of an offence and usually involves the offender and supporters, the victim(s) and supporters, community elders, the public prosecutor and defence lawyers and the magistrate, convened in a neutral location. The circle hears from all parties, with speaking rights passing from one to the other. The circle then determines the sentence to be imposed on

the offender. The sentences imposed can range from restorative programs designed to educate and rehabilitate the offender, to community service and restitution arrangements as agreed between the victim and the offender, and even terms of detention. The sentences are then mandated by the presiding magistrate and are enforceable.

Benefits of circle sentencing include addressing the underlying causes of crime, promoting healing for all affected parties, and building a sense of community and its capacity for resolving conflict.

A six-month trial will be held in 2004 to help determine a suitable model for the ACT.

3.15 The Government will build a prison that represents best practice in design, construction and operation and provides effective management of ACT prisoners.

No other Australian community transports its prisoners, arrested for offences against its laws and convicted by its courts, to serve a period of imprisonment interstate. This practice leaves the ACT justice system fractured and incomplete and denies the people of the ACT the opportunity to take responsibility for the management of its prisoners. Serving their sentences in NSW also denies ACT prisoners the opportunity to make reparations to their community for their offences.

With the establishment of the prison, the ACT will be at the forefront of both correctional design and operational practice. The prison operating model and its design will provide an environment that meets rehabilitative, security and safety requirements. Rather than being a source of community shame, the new ACT prison and its operation will reflect well on the ACT community.

The operation of the facility will maximise the time prisoners spend out of cells and foster their involvement in constructive activities. Prisoners will be expected to participate in treatment and life skills programs aimed at repairing the damage caused by their offences, minimising risks to the community and promoting positive reintegration

upon release.

Particular attention will be paid to the needs of women and Indigenous prisoners, taking account of gender specific health care, spiritual needs, substance abuse issues, parenting skills and life skills programs.

The prison will include a medical centre to meet the primary health care needs of prisoners and will also include a Crisis Support Unit to support and stabilise prisoners assessed as being at risk of self harm or suicide.

The prison will also provide a focus on visits and will be family and 'child friendly' in design, in recognition of the impact that maintaining family contact has on rehabilitation.

We are already

- Supporting community-based groups that volunteer services and assistance to people in the ACT.
- Providing financial support through various grants programs (including the Community Foundation Grants Program, the Multicultural Grants Program, the Sport and Recreation Grant Program, the Bushfire Recovery Community Grants Program and government sponsorships) to support community-based organisations in their activities within Canberra and the ACT region.
- Helping community groups to access information technology and bridge the "digital divide" through the ACT Information Technology Community Grants Program.
- Providing support (and peer support), counselling, respite, information, advocacy, equipment, assistance with home modifications and training for carers.
- Supporting crime prevention programs and buying back illegal hand-guns.
- Developing options for sustainable public transport systems, as part of the Canberra Spatial Plan.
- Providing financial and promotional support for

community and recreational events (including major events such as National Multicultural Festival, Floriade, the Subaru Rally of Canberra, the Canberra Blues 'n' Rock Festival, the National Folk Festival, the Sri Chinmoy Triathlon and the Mont 24 Mountain Bike Race).

- Supporting fifteen venues that are wholly dedicated to arts activities in the ACT.
- Supporting arts and cultural program activities in Canberra.
- Establishing an Indigenous Family Support Service, *Jumby Mulla*.
- Funding local sport and recreation organisations and promoting lifelong participation in sport and physical activity.
- Refurbishing the Higgins, Holder and Jamison shopping precincts, the Kippax Library and the Belconnen Lakeshore.
- Strengthening the Government's statutory response to children at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Supporting the RecLINK Program for youth at risk, and aiming to reduce anti-social behaviour by increasing participation in sport and recreation.
- Providing funding to ensure that all Canberrans can benefit from the rich and diverse experiences the arts have to offer.
- Supporting the ACT Inclusion Awards to coincide with International Day of People with a Disability to acknowledge and celebrate the achievement of businesses and organisations which have gone out of their way to consider the requirements of people with disabilities.
- Funding a study of current and emerging community needs for arts and cultural facilities in Belconnen.
- Providing support through the 'Arts at the Cutting Edge' initiative for significant projects that demonstrate innovation and excellence.
- Addressing issues of domestic violence and community safety for women under a whole of government framework, *Justice, Options and Prevention - Working to Make the Lives of ACT Women Safe*.
- Developing a new *Strategic Plan for Women* in

the ACT and increasing paid maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks, as part of the response to the Status of Women in the ACT Report.

- Working closely with the community sector in the development of a Community Facilities Asset Strategy.
- Upgrading the Quamby Youth Detention Centre.

Links

- Access Action Plan 2002-2004 (<http://www.urbanservices.act.gov.au/publications>)
- Communities OnLine (www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au) and (<http://www.actcommunitiesonline.org/>)
- Bushfire Fuel Reduction Program (<http://www.urbanservices.act.gov.au/bushfirefuel/reductionwork/>)
- National Multicultural Festival (www.multiculturalfestival.com.au)
- Arts Capital - The Arts Development Strategy for the ACT (www.arts.act.gov.au)
- ACT Public Art Program (www.arts.act.gov.au)
- ACT Arts Funding Program (www.arts.act.gov.au)
- ACT Festivals Fund (www.arts.act.gov.au)
- The Arts Facilities Strategy (www.arts.act.gov.au)
- Caring for Carers Policy (www.dhcs.act.gov.au/pubs/documents/carers.htm)
- Still More Than a Game - Future Directions for Sport and Recreation in the ACT (<http://www.sport.act.gov.au/aboutus/directions.html>)
- Advocacy on Behalf of Children and Young



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People, OCA (www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au)

- Addressing Disadvantage in the ACT (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- Towards a Society for all Ages - Forward Plan for Older People in the ACT (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- ACT Government response to the Poverty Task Force Report (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- Facing up to Racism - discussion paper (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- ACT Government Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation, October 2000 (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- Shaping Canberra's Future (http://www.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget_2003)
- Justice, Options and Prevention - Working to Make the Lives of ACT Women Safe, 2003 (www.women.act.gov.au)
- Your Canberra Your Future: Changes and Challenges, 2002 (www.actpla.act.gov.au)
- Towards a Sustainable ACT: A Discussion Paper, 2002 (www.sustainability.act.gov.au)
- Draft ACT Recreation Framework Discussion Paper, 2003 (www.environment.act.gov.au)
- Framework for a Multicultural Australian Capital Territory, 2001-2005 (<http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/community/index.htm>)
- Community Engagement Unit (<http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/community/CPU.htm>)
- Community IT Access Plan (www.cmd.act.gov.au/digitaldivide)
- Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services Annual Report (<http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au>)
- No Violence in Schools (<http://www.deyfs.act.gov.au/publicat/novis.htm>)

Priority 4: Improve health and well being

The health and well being of Canberrans is comparatively good. Life expectancy is among the highest in the world. We smoke less, are more active than other Australians and more report our health status as excellent or very good.

However problems remain. A significant proportion of the ACT population has eating patterns that fail to satisfy the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines for healthy eating and there has been a marked increase in the number of people who are obese or overweight. Drug abuse remains a problem despite a recent fall in the number of drug offences. Changes in family structure and an increasingly ageing population present challenges for the future.

An increasing body of evidence points to the importance of investing in our children and young people to enhance their life opportunities. The early years of children's lives are a critical time for brain development to improve physical, cognitive, social and emotional well being.

Strong supportive families and communities, too, are crucial for our well being. For people at risk of long-term unemployment, depression, suicide and crime we need a sustained effort by government, in partnership with the community.

By focusing on prevention and early intervention across the entire lifespan we can improve the likelihood of positive health and social outcomes for everyone.

Goals

- Invest in children and young people.
- Meet the health needs of an ageing population.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention throughout people's lives.
- Improve the good health of the Canberra population and narrow the health gap between the general community and the poor and disadvantaged.
- Strengthen the health of the community through a whole of government approach to health issues, together with community partnerships to develop sustainable social care supports.
- Promote a better balance between work and family.
- Support an active lifestyle at all stages of people's lives.
- Improve mental health and reduce the barriers facing people with mental health problems.
- Reduce harm from alcohol and other drug use.

Actions

4.1 The Government will establish two Child and Family Centres to provide local services with a focus on support and early intervention, including health, education, parenting and family support services.

Child and Family Centres will replicate the successful integrated service model at the Lyons Bushfire Recovery Centre. The first Centre will be established at Gungahlin and the second in Tuggeranong.

Maternal health services, early education, specialist child and family workers and other allied health services will be provided or coordinated from the Centres. The professional mix of workers will be determined by the services already offered within that geographical area. The focus will be on linking children and families to services currently offered and then tailoring the service provision to meet the needs of that community.

Client focused service delivery will underpin the Centres as well as a strong commitment to outreach in other community settings and in partnership with community and professionals. Services may be offered after hours and on weekends.

The strength of the Centres will be the partnerships they develop in the local communities. This may include government and non-government services, the community sector, service clubs, charities and businesses.

4.2 The Government will put in place a package of initiatives to promote good health in children and young people, including: Advice on food and nutrition, fitness and health and other measures to combat childhood obesity; peer mentoring programs in drug education; services to assist students with issues such as alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, sexuality and relationships and domestic violence; and improved services for children with complex health needs.



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Childhood obesity is a growing problem, and is a major risk factor for diseases such as diabetes and heart disease later in life. The increase in childhood obesity is a result of poor nutrition for many children and declining levels of physical activity. The Government will put in place initiatives to combat childhood obesity including advice and support for children to improve nutrition, increasing opportunities for children to participate in physical activity, and programs to improve eating and physical activity patterns for obese children.

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are major causes of health problems among young people. Research has shown that education about the risks of drug use, and programs to improve young people's self-esteem and resilience are effective ways to reduce young people's use of these substances, and the harm caused if young people do use them. The Government will develop and implement improved school based programs to educate young people about drugs, and to improve their self-esteem and resilience.

Many young people, particularly those marginalised, do not use mainstream health services. This is more likely to be the case with sensitive issues such as drug use or sexual health. The Junction Youth Health Service has been operating successfully in Civic, providing health services for marginalised young people. The Government will establish new services in Belconnen and Tuggeranong based on this model.

Children with complex health needs arising from congenital problems or other chronic illnesses often require services from a number of providers over a sustained period of time. Without effective coordination of services to meet their needs, caring for these children puts a considerable burden on families. The Government will improve coordination of care for children with complex health needs to improve their health, and reduce the burden on families.

[4.3 The Government will undertake and promote work-based childcare initiatives.](#)

Access to affordable and flexible childcare impacts directly on the size and quality of the available workforce. Lack of access restricts parents' ability to participate in paid employment and can create a serious imbalance between work and family commitments. Encouraging parents to return to the workforce after the birth of a child increases the size of the available workforce and providing family-friendly conditions of employment may remove barriers that could otherwise influence people not to have children. It is also important to encourage greater participation of

women in the workforce to ensure equality of opportunity in terms of economic security and financial independence.

The Government sees considerable merit in exploring employer-based shared delivery childcare models involving both ACT Government and private sector employers. Following a feasibility study, the Government envisages putting in place a number of childcare centre trials involving government and private sector employers.

[4.4 The Government will extend the Newborn Hearing Screening Program currently operating at The Canberra Hospital to Calvary and John James Memorial Hospitals.](#)

Hearing is essential for the early development of children, and impaired hearing can have a significant effect on the way a child develops. A Newborn Hearing Screening Program has been running successfully at The Canberra Hospital to identify hearing impairment in newborn babies. The Government will extend this program to Calvary Hospital and the John James Memorial Hospital so that all children born in the ACT are screened.

[4.5 The Government will put in place innovative aged health care and accommodation initiatives that recognise our changing demographic profile.](#)

The ageing of the ACT population is placing increased pressure on health and aged care service to meet the needs of older people living in Canberra.

The ACT Government will put in place measures to improve services for older people. The Government has provided funding for the establishment of a sub-acute facility that will fill a gap in current services in the Territory. The facility will provide specialist rehabilitation and transitional care services that will ease the transition between hospital and home for many Canberrans, particularly our older residents. The facility will also provide acute psychogeriatric services.

This will provide a specialist environment for the care of acute patients and the establishment of

management plans to enable ongoing care to be undertaken in the community.

The ACT has also secured Commonwealth agreement to establish up to 50 transitional care places to provide more appropriate care for people waiting in hospital for a nursing home place to become available. The ACT Government will also continue to fund a residential aged care nurse to provide better links between hospitals and nursing homes to make it easier for people to find nursing home places.

Falls are a major and growing concern for older people resulting in loss of mobility and independence, and earlier entry into residential care. Falls assessment and management programs will be established in the Aged Day Care services at Tuggeranong and Belconnen Health Centres. GPs and Residential Care facilities will have access to more comprehensive advice and support to assist their older clients.

4.6 The Government will expand the Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program provided by the Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service, and establish an Ear Health Program for infants and children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are less likely to seek help early in their pregnancy, and this increases the risk of complications during pregnancy and birth. The ACT Government has been funding a successful Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program at the Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service. However, demand for this service has increased beyond its current capacity. The ACT Government will expand the service to meet the increased demand, and link the service with other maternal and child health services to provide greater follow-up support for Aboriginal mothers and children after birth.

Ear infections are the cause of hearing problems for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These hearing problems can result in difficulties in early childhood development and learning difficulties at school. The ACT

Government will fund a program at the Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service to screen and treat children to improve their ear health.

4.7 The Government will improve the capacity of mainstream ACT health services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often have difficulty accessing mainstream health services due to limited understanding within mainstream services of cultural and health issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As a result, they under-utilise mainstream services.

The Government will develop and implement a strategy to improve access to mainstream health services in the ACT for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The first step will be cultural awareness training across ACT health services to enhance the provision of culturally-safe service delivery in mainstream services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

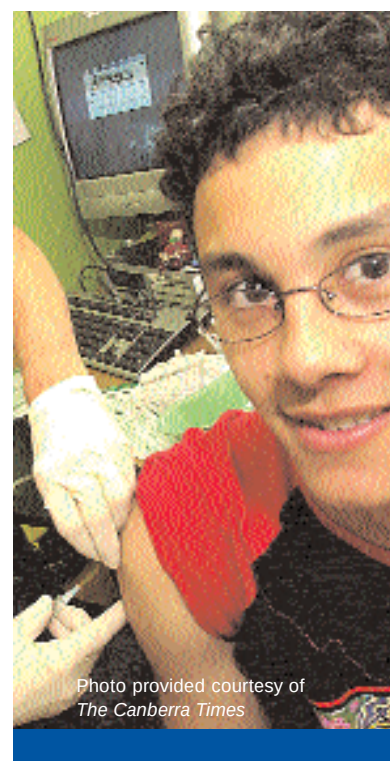


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4.8 The Government will implement the *National Mental Health Plan* through an *ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan for 2003-2008*.

The draft *ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan* has been developed in consultation with health professionals, consumers, carers, community organisations, other Government agencies and the general public to achieve a collaborative agreement on mental health priorities and actions for the people of the ACT.

The Strategy aims to implement the national objective to move towards a population health model for mental health, engaging all sectors of government and community to promote better mental health and wellbeing across the population. It aims to promote better mental health through healthy public policy, initiatives that address the social determinants of health and a stronger focus on rehabilitation and relapse prevention.

4.9 The Government will finalise and implement a new Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Strategy for the ACT.

In August 2002, the Government convened the ACT Alcohol and other Drug Taskforce to develop a draft Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Strategy for consideration by the ACT Government. The Taskforce comprised Government and non-Government representatives with expertise in alcohol and drug issues in the ACT.

Taskforce members consulted widely with experts and stakeholder groups, including clients and service providers, along with members of the wider community.

The Taskforce has recommended and prioritised a range of actions confirming the Government's commitment to harm minimisation.

In its initial response the Government committed to:

- 100 additional places in the methadone and buprenorphine program for heroin dependent people;
- a trial of vending machines for dispensing needles and syringes in the ACT, which will provide 24 hour access to sterile injecting equipment;

- increased and improved support for peer based models of service delivery, support and advocacy, and community development; and
- strengthened training programs across the drug and alcohol sector.

The Government will release its final Strategy in early 2004. Actions arising from the Strategy are likely to include:

- enhancing case management services for people with drug and alcohol problems;
- expanding school-based drug and alcohol education programs;
- improving rehabilitation services for people with drug and alcohol addictions;
- expanding QUIT services for people looking to give up smoking;
- strengthening enforcement measures to reduce the sale of tobacco to children.

We are already

- Providing early intervention assistance to children under six years of age with developmental and functional difficulties, and child health and development services.
- Supporting young people who need significant assistance to participate effectively in the economic, cultural and social life of the community.
- Providing access to after-hours GP services.
- Constructing a new 60-bed health care facility in the ACT to provide rehabilitation and transitional care services for people who need longer-term care than can be provided in an acute hospital and to provide short-term acute psychogeriatric services.
- Operating the Actively Ageing Program to encourage older persons to be physically active and participate in sport.



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- Funding programs to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, including the Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program, the Indigenous HACC Service and two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health liaison officers.
- Funding the establishment of the Canberra Medical School.
- Contributing to the HACC budget, and providing assistance to HACC organisations in the ACT to further enhance services.
- Increasing funding to provide access to elective surgery for around 600 additional people each year.
- Increasing the number of radiation therapists to 17.2 full-time equivalents.
- Raising the taxi subsidy for people in a wheelchair with a severe disability, and providing a subsidy paid directly to taxi operators when wheelchair lifting is required.
- Funding the ACT Youth Smoking Prevention Project to provide an effective anti-smoking model for Canberra's youth.
- Redeveloping the Canberra Hospital Emergency Department, and the Calvary Emergency Department.
- Funding new mental health initiatives.
- Providing a new support service for Hepatitis C sufferers through HepLine, an ACT Government funded telephone support service.
- Conducting extensive community consultation on an *ACT Children's Plan* which will provide a coordinated framework across government, non-government agencies and the community to guide the planning and provision of services and facilities that support children and families.
- Improving the delivery of therapy services for children and adults with developmental delays and disabilities, through the establishment of a single therapy service, Therapy ACT.
- Implementing the Health Action Plan 2002.

Links

- ACT Health Action Plan (<http://www.health.act.gov.au>)
- Disability Access to Government Audit (<http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/DisabilityACT/Publications/Publications.htm>)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Regional Health Plan (www.health.act.gov.au)
- Developing a Blueprint for Action for Young People at Risk (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- Addressing Disadvantage in the ACT - Locating Poverty in the ACT (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- Board of Inquiry into Disability Services - Final Report (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- * Towards a Society for all Ages - Forward Plan for Older People in the ACT (www.cmd.act.gov.au)
- ParentLink Parent Guides (www.deyfs.act.gov.au)
- Productivity Commission Report on Government Services (www.dhcs.act.gov.au)
- The ACT Children's Plan (www.deyfs.act.gov.au)
- Development of the ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan - Discussion Paper, 2003 (www.dhcs.act.gov.au)
- Caring for Carers Policy - A Discussion Paper, 2003 (www.dhcs.act.gov.au/pubs/documents/carers.htm)
- Investigation into Risk of Harm to Clients of Mental Health Services-Report to the Minister for Health prepared by the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner, 2002 (www.healthcomplaints.act.gov.au)

Priority 5: Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning and training

The ACT is the most highly educated community in the country. More of our children attend prior-to-school programs, we have the highest Year 12 retention rate, the highest population with post-school qualifications and the greatest percentage of young people attending university.

However, there remain areas where further work must be done. For example, the proportion of

indigenous students in Year 9 performing at the lowest profile level in literacy is approximately double that of non-Indigenous students.

The capacity of our community as a whole is enhanced whenever high levels of school completion and high levels of educational outcomes are achieved by our young people. To meet the needs of community members in the 21st century we must ensure education is contemporary, relevant and challenging, that there are flexible learning

pathways and we promote life long learning. It is important that education provides opportunities for every young person to develop their intellectual, emotional and physical potential as part of their preparation for effective citizenship.

It has been demonstrated that early school leavers are far more likely than their peers to experience prolonged periods of unemployment, and that without early and effective intervention, this can lead to social isolation, poor health, substance abuse and crime. We must therefore ensure that

every young Canberran receives the best education, regardless of their economic and social circumstances.

Catering for the needs of all students is both challenging and complex. The range of cultures, linguistic backgrounds, and social and economic situations within communities, the increasing demands of new technologies, providing enrichment and extension, and supporting students with special needs all add to this complexity.

Early school success is a key focus particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy and social skill development. We want to keep our young people engaged in learning throughout their schooling so that it is natural for them to become life long learners. Beyond Year 12 our universities, adult and community education and vocational education and training providers have an important role to play in developing the confidence and skills required to extend lifelong learning and create and maintain a knowledge-based society.

Goals

- Reduce inequalities in children's first five years and improve the transition between home, early childhood settings and kindergarten.
- Increase education participation, engagement, and achievement of children and young people.
- Increase literacy and numeracy levels, particularly for students at risk.
- Improve the transition between school, further study, and the workforce.
- Provide opportunities for lifelong learning.

Actions

[5.1 The Government will encourage all young people to complete thirteen years of schooling and achieve a Year 12 certificate or equivalent vocational qualification by 2013, through the development of Pathway Plans for students \(from Year Nine\), a Training Pathway Guarantee for school leavers not already in some form of post-school study or training within twelve months of](#)



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leaving school (*Economic White Paper* initiative - see Priority 1), and encouraging high schools to access vocational courses for students to undertake competency based training with registered providers.

Individual student pathways planning is designed to encourage and support all students, particularly those young people who may be vulnerable, to better engage with schooling and plan for successful transitions through the senior years of school to adult life. The initiative connects young people with personal, educational, career and transition support. It helps them plan a flexible curriculum pathway towards further education, training or employment. Pathway Plans are being implemented from Year Nine in ACT Government high schools.

The high school development initiative assists ACT Government high schools plan educational programs, develop engaging, relevant and inclusive curricula, and create structures that support and respond to the emerging needs of adolescents. This initiative supports and encourages ACT government high schools to link with ACT colleges, as registered providers of competency based training, to provide high school students with opportunities to enrol in vocational education courses.

5.2 The Government will develop, in conjunction with peak industry bodies, a new program to build the links between schools and industries, providing senior secondary students with opportunities to work on industry-sponsored projects in the workplace. (*Economic White Paper* initiative.)

In recent years ACT schools have responded strongly to national initiatives designed to extend the range of vocational options available to secondary students, develop the personal skills valued by employers, and strengthen the links between schools and industry. As a further contribution to building the links between schools and industry, a new program will be developed providing senior secondary students with opportunities to work on industry-sponsored

projects in workplaces. The projects will address specific issues identified by companies, which in turn will sponsor small teams of students trained in problem-solving techniques. Participating students will be provided with specific training in workplace analysis and presentation skills and will gain valuable skills in communication, teamwork, planning and enterprise. The new program will be developed in conjunction with peak industry bodies and introduced from the beginning of 2005.

5.3 The Government will improve the capacity of government schools to increase literacy and numeracy levels through intensive support for underachieving students.

The ACT has consistently recorded amongst the highest literacy and numeracy results in Australia. However, there are still a number of students not meeting the national benchmark standards in these areas. To enable all our young people to be successful at school and become lifelong learners functioning productively in a knowledge-based society, schools must provide more intensive support to these underachieving students.

Programs currently available in primary schools will be expanded and new literacy and numeracy programs will be introduced into high schools.

Intensive individual support will also be provided to Indigenous students in primary school who are not meeting national benchmarks in literacy.

5.4 The Government will improve learning outcomes for students with a disability, and improve coordination between Commonwealth and Territory services assisting school leavers with a disability.

The Government fully supports the introduction of Disability Standards of Education. The Standards seek to eliminate discrimination in education on the grounds of disability by setting out the rights and obligations of both students with disabilities and education providers. The ACT is well placed to meet its obligations under the Standards.

The Government is introducing a new process for determining the educational support needs of individual students with disabilities so that necessary adjustments can be made and resources allocated to schools to support learning in a more objective, fair and educationally appropriate way.

5.5 The Government will introduce an early education and development program to meet the needs of Indigenous children.

A new Indigenous Early Childhood and Family Support initiative will support Indigenous children's development through participation in early childhood education and support programs as well as promoting positive transitions between home, preschool and school. Close links will be established with community and service organisations to strengthen community capacity and identify relevant strategies. This initiative will specifically address two areas identified for action in the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* report:

- early childhood development and growth (prenatal to age three). and
- early school engagement and performance.

5.6 The Government will ensure that government schools are resourced to deliver information and communication technology (ICT) skills to students, irrespective of school size and financial capacity.

A dynamic, innovative economy must be underpinned by an education system that develops the capacity of students for innovative and creative use of information and communications technology (ICT). The ACT must optimise the competitive advantage it has in its skilled workforce in what is increasingly becoming a knowledge economy. It is critical that, in addition to a strong base in literacy, numeracy and broad communication competency, all students have a strong grounding in ICT. There has been substantial progress in recent years in the introduction of ICT into ACT Government schools. In many areas the ACT is in the forefront. All schools now have a capacity to use ICT in teaching, learning and administration. The ACT is the first jurisdiction to introduce ICT competencies

for Year 10 students and is also on track to have the first school system to be fully connected to broadband services.

However there are signs that some small schools are experiencing difficulties in, for example, acquiring and maintaining computing infrastructure of the necessary quality.

The Government believes it is unacceptable that the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills be dependent on either socio-economic background or attendance at a particular school. This Action will help ensure that students have equal access to a quality ICT environment.

5.7 The Government will improve the level of government school repairs and maintenance, recognising the importance of having environments which are conducive to effective learning.

The quality of government school buildings and environments is an important part of maintaining the conditions for effective teaching and learning, particularly as schools age. While schools are regularly repaired and maintained to the standard necessary to provide a safe environment and to maintain the value of the asset, ageing buildings can become 'tired'. Instead of promoting an effective learning environment, these buildings can have the opposite effect on teachers and students.

As a community we signal our commitment to educational excellence and innovation through the care that we take in enhancing and refreshing the teaching and learning environment. The Government understands that it is unacceptable to let the government school infrastructure detract from the excellent work done by our teachers.

5.8 The Government will support the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Program and non-accredited learning available to adults and promote active community participation.

The benefits of lifelong learning in strengthening a community's social fabric and wellbeing as well as its economic capabilities are widely acknowledged.

Adult and Community Education providers are important avenues by which all members of the community can engage in informal learning. The ACE program provides for training to be customised to meet the needs of community members who have difficulty in accessing more formal training. In some cases, the ACE learning experience is the first since the person left school and may also lead to formal accredited vocational training.

Skill acquisition, social interaction and pride in achievement, increased confidence, personal fulfilment and gaining employability skills are just some of the benefits that can result.

Enhancing the opportunities for more people to engage in ACE learning experiences strengthens the 'connectedness' between lifelong learning, health and well being benefits. The Government will continue to support the ACE program as a means of promoting lifelong learning and the benefits of skill acquisition.

5.9 The Government will support the capacity of public libraries to provide lifelong learning, including establishment of a permanent home for the City Library and upgrading its collection.

Public libraries are an essential component in the provision of lifelong learning. The resources available to the public must be constantly upgraded to reflect changing community needs. The concept of libraries as lifelong learning centres allows information services and planning to address emerging community needs in this area. These range from courses provided by other institutions to language groups formed from informal contacts.

We are already

- Providing increased funding for government and non-government schooling.
- Funding the Canberra Institute of Technology and other providers to train people of all ages.
- Providing additional support for government schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged children through the Schools Equity Fund.
- Providing transition programs to assist children and young people to adjust to changing learning environments as they enter and progress through the education system.
- Providing special needs education services for 1,555 children.
- Providing additional funding to improve education outcomes through the Curriculum Renewal Project and the School Excellence initiative.
- Funding a new Career Education Support Service to assist students from government and non-government schools with school-to-work transitions.
- Providing to high school teachers professional development in curriculum, pedagogy and student engagement.
- Increasing pre-school funding.
- Expanding the *Koori Pre-school Program*.
- Providing approximately 6,000 new apprenticeship commencements over the past 18 months.
- Providing for 556 placements over the past two years under the new *School Based New Apprenticeship Program* for students with disabilities and youth at risk.



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- Supporting an overarching framework for achieving high standards in student learning, innovation and best practice in government schools.
- Lowering K-3 class sizes to 21 by the end of 2004 in government schools.
- Providing additional funding for the non-government schooling sector for K-3.
- Providing funding for training and professional learning for teachers.
- Providing \$950,000 to expand existing ACT Government-owned childcare centres across Canberra.
- Refurbishing the Erindale and Kippax Libraries.
- Providing additional funding for the non-government school sector.
- Providing an Information Technology grant to Catholic Systemic schools.
- Amending the Payroll Tax Act to allow exemptions for Group Training Companies for a training period of up to three years.
- Implementing the Community IT Access Plan to close the digital divide in the ACT by 2006.
- Improving the Educational Outcomes of Boys. A.J. Martin (http://www.deyfs.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/Ed_Outcomes_Boys.pdf)
- The Inclusivity Challenge: discussion paper for school communities (<http://www.deyfs.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/InclusivityReport.pdf>)

Priority 6: Housing for a Future Canberra

Housing provides every person in the community with the basis for a stable, healthy and productive life. More than anything else, it provides a sense of belonging and dignity.

Generally, people in the ACT enjoy a better standard of living than people elsewhere in Australia. Yet housing affordability is the third lowest of all capital cities, and residential rental costs and mortgage payments are now higher than in any other State or Territory except NSW. This makes it harder for disadvantaged Canberrans to find accommodation for themselves and their families, and for young people to buy their first home.

With future household sizes predicted to fall, the population continuing to grow and a significant increase in the number of people aged over 70, responsive and creative solutions will be needed to meet the changing demand and affordability pressures.

Homelessness, too, must be addressed. Up to 5,350 people in the ACT experience some form of homelessness each year, and the number sleeping rough each night is between 120 and 320. A substantial number of people experiencing homelessness in the ACT have complex or unmet needs.

Links

- ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services (www.deyfs.act.gov.au)
- Within Reach of Us All: ACT Government Schools Plan 2002-2004 (www.deyfs.act.gov.au)
- Canberra Connect - Education and Learning (www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au)
- Canberra Institute of Technology (www.cit.act.edu.au)
- Lifelong Learning Network (www.canberra.edu.au/lifelong)
- Adult Learning Australia (www.ala.asn.au)
- Canberra Lifelong Learning Taskforce and Learning Communities Catalyst (www.lcc.edu.au)
- ACT Government Schools Student Support Action Plan 2002-2004 (www.deyfs.act.gov.au)

Goals

- Increase the supply of public and community housing in the Territory.
- Ensure that the type, size and location of housing in the ACT meets the changing needs of the community.
- Improve access to quality, affordable and safe housing.
- Enhance the provision of specialist housing and support services.
- Improve the regulatory regime to enable individual needs to be addressed.
- Strengthen the links between crisis accommodation services and long-term housing options.
- Reduce homelessness.

Actions

6.1 The Government will allocate significant additional funding for the supply of public and community housing.

In December 2003 the Government announced an additional \$33 million from the Home Loan Fund for social housing. This is the most significant injection of capital funding for social housing since self-government. The funding will be used to build and acquire public and community housing stock across all areas of social priority, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, aged persons accommodation and fully accessible housing for people with a disability.

6.2 The Government will continue to implement measures in response to the *Report of the Affordable Housing Taskforce*.

Affordable housing is accommodation that does not place people in housing stress. Housing stress is generally perceived as a situation where a person's housing costs are more than 30 per cent of total gross income. It is of particular concern when people on low incomes (generally in the lowest 40 per cent of income earners) find themselves in such situations.

The *Report of the Affordable Housing Taskforce* has provided a sound framework for the consideration of affordable housing issues within the community, and to address broader housing policy concerns. The Government in the 2003-04 Budget took a number of decisions to address specific recommendations of the Report of the Taskforce, including: an expanded land release program; commencement of a rental bond assistance program; broader eligibility for stamp duty concessions for low-income home purchasers; \$3 million additional funding for community housing organisations to provide affordable housing; and more than \$13 million additional funding for homelessness initiatives.

The capital injection of \$33 million into community and public housing is a further significant measure to address the need for affordable housing.

The Government response to the *Report of the Affordable Housing Taskforce* supported further investigation of mechanisms to increase affordable housing in the ACT, including the recommended 3-4 per cent hand-back option in new multi-unit development sites. It also noted that it would consider the options for cash equivalent payments by developers to be made in lieu of physical provision of affordable housing in multi-unit/block residential developments.

The Government will release an implementation plan to accompany its final response to the recommendations of the *Affordable Housing Taskforce*, that will take into consideration the terms and requirements of the new Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA), once this agreement has been finalised between the Territory and the Commonwealth.

6.3 The Government will build on recent improvements to the Public Rental Housing Assistance Program, by reviewing the *Housing Assistance Act 1987* and associated programs to ensure its responds to the need of tenants and the Government.

In 2003 the Government introduced reforms to the Public Rental Housing Assistance Program and its administration to address problems identified by the Homelessness Advisory Group. The reforms included:

- reducing rent to a 'peppercorn' \$5 per week for tenants in psychiatric and alcohol and other drugs of dependence residential rehabilitation services;
- removing previous public housing debt as a barrier to obtaining public housing for people fleeing domestic violence;

- introduction of a public housing Debt Review Committee which can review and waive debt and assist victims of domestic violence;
- removal of the requirement to pay two weeks rent in advance for all new tenants entering public housing, so they can use the money for the costs of establishing their new home; and
- access to public housing for Kosovar refugees still in the ACT, other refugees on a Temporary Protection Visa, as well as a number of refugee women in refuges who are fleeing domestic violence.

While the reforms to date have made a substantial contribution, it is clear that the Public Rental Housing Assistance Program itself, the legislation which controls the overall allocation of public housing, requires review to identify further areas for improvement. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the community, using the successful model of the Homelessness Advisory Group and the development of the Homelessness Strategy.



6.4 The Government will continue to support public housing tenants through the funding of specific programs to meet their needs, through the Community Linkages Program.

The Community Linkages Program provides approximately \$2 million over four years to link public and community housing tenants to community support services. These include employment programs and opportunities, living skills, parenting and computing skills and other support and advocacy services. These projects have resulted in:

- improved relations between Housing ACT staff and tenants;
- early intervention to prevent issues escalating to an extent that would result in eviction, through the Prevention of Eviction Program; and
- ability to sustain tenancies at risk due to improved social connectivity and support for tenants within their immediate environment and the community.

6.5 The Government will implement the Public Housing Asset Management Strategy.

In November 2003, the Government endorsed and tabled in the Legislative Assembly the Public Housing Asset Management Strategy, which outlines the major responsibilities in relation to asset management. The strategy will be implemented in a context that acknowledges:

- that stable housing is a key foundation in the achievement of the Government's social objectives;
- the role of public housing in building stronger communities
- the broader process for achieving sustainable development in the ACT, particularly the Government's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to sustainable water management;
- the Government's commitment to maintain the level of housing stock;
- the need to balance the tenant's desire for security of tenure against the need to rejuvenate the asset base.

6.6 The Government will continue to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, older women, people with a disability, young people and single people to find accommodation, through the Boarding House Program.

The Boarding House Program is a \$5 million initiative to give single people with low incomes an additional option for public or community housing. It includes more intensive tenancy management than public and community housing and incorporates outreach support. The Program will fill a gap for people on low incomes between transitional accommodation services and entirely independent living.

A six-unit Youth Boarding House is already operational. This is managed by the Lowana Young Women's Service and provides accommodation to male and female young people aged 16-21 years with low-level support needs. The service also assists residents to access education, training and employment opportunities and support services. A 22-unit boarding house for single people is to be constructed adjacent to the Gungahlin Town Centre on land provided by the Gungahlin Development Authority. An eight-unit Older Women's Boarding House has been established at Chapman. This facility provides a service to women aged over 55 years who have experienced family breakdown, including elder abuse.

6.7 The Government will improve the regulatory framework for community housing.

The development of the Community Housing Framework provides a platform for the long-term growth and prosperity of the sector. The Government has enthusiastically undertaken the task of developing a comprehensive framework for the development of community housing in the ACT. With considerable funding being provided to the sector, it is important to have adequate quality improvement and governance arrangements in place. Evidence from other jurisdictions demonstrates that where there is a culture of continuous improvement, with accreditation of providers, and a regulatory framework, the outcomes for the sector and the tenants improve.

Currently Havelock Housing Association is the only accredited community housing provider in the ACT. As part of the Government's commitment to the highest standards of service provision, as well as to continuous improvement as a quality measure, the government will work with the sector to examine the current quality improvement measures in place, and look at the introduction of an accreditation and regulatory framework which meets the needs of the ACT, and is appropriate given the size of the sector.

To support the community housing framework the Government has already initiated a number of measures, including:

- the provision of \$3 million in 2002-03 and a further \$3 million in 2003-04 for the expansion of community housing;
- \$150,000 per annum for feasibility studies for innovative models of community housing;
- allocating \$1.2 million over four years for the development of Indigenous community housing options in the ACT;
- consultation on the development of a head-leasing program for community housing which will be operational in 2003-04; and
- ongoing funding for the peak community-housing organisation (CCHOACT).

6.8 The Government will implement the restructure of Community Housing Canberra (CHC), in conjunction with the community.

The structure of CHC was reviewed in 2003. The Government accepted the Steering Committee's recommendations as follows:

- making the Territory a member of the company with special rights that enable it to protect the public interest in the assets invested in the company;
- revising the objectives of the Company to strengthen the focus on community housing for low income households and alleviating poverty;
- requiring certain skills and experience for the Directors of the Board;

- requiring CHC to produce a business plan for all of its activities; and
- placing limitations on the company's borrowings from private financial institutions, participation in joint ventures and any disposal of assets without the approval of the Territory.

CHC currently has long-term leases over the 209 properties it manages. In addition the Government has decided to transfer to it the ownership of 153 properties with separate titles. This will enable CHC to increase the supply of stock for community housing using non-government funding. This approach for expanding the stock of community housing is consistent with the Government's policy directions outlined in the Community Housing Framework, as well as meeting the CSHA objective of attracting private finance.

6.9 The Government will implement a homelessness strategy, including targeted programs in partnership with community organisations to address homelessness and associated support needs for individuals and families most in need.

One measure of a society's compassion is the way it cares for its most vulnerable people. It is simply unacceptable in a society as fortunate as ours that as many as 300 people are sleeping rough on any given night.

The causes of homelessness are complex and may be attributed to a combination of many factors, including unemployment, poverty, relationship breakdown and family violence, drug and alcohol misuse and mental health issues. Responding to homelessness therefore requires more than the provision of a bed. Many people need intensive support to assist them to make the transition from homelessness, find employment and reconnect with family, friends or the community.

Through its Homelessness Strategy, due for release in early 2004, the Government will for the first time have a whole-of-community response to homelessness. The Strategy will enhance services

for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as developing the capacity of the community to identify and respond to this complex issue.

Underpinning the Homelessness Strategy, the Government has allocated \$2.4 million in 2003-04 to provide additional supported accommodation services. Increased funding to support services to respond to clients with complex needs has also been allocated. This funding is for new services to address unmet need identified in the *Needs Analysis of Homelessness in the ACT* - particularly for families, single men including those leaving the criminal justice system on remand, couples and single women.

We are already

- Improving planning approval processes for new aged care facilities, to reduce delays and expand the range of accommodation available to older persons.
- Developing and implementing a whole of community Homelessness Strategy.
- Revising the Home Buyer Concession Scheme to improve housing affordability for low-income home buyers.
- Achieving the highest level of land supply since the 1990s.
- Building capacity of and expanding the ACT's Indigenous community housing sector.
- Providing \$2.4m to reconstruct ACT Housing properties following the January 2003 bushfires.
- Providing \$250 to more than 120 ACT Housing tenants whose properties were damaged but not destroyed in the January 2003 bushfires, and \$5,000 or \$10,000 to those ACT Housing tenants whose properties were completely destroyed.
- Reintroducing a Rental Bond Loan Scheme to help Canberrans seeking to enter the private rental market with an interest-free loan of up to 80 per cent of the required bond.

- Providing funding for projects under the Community Linkages Program in 2003-04 to achieve safer living environments, more sustainable tenancies and enhance social interaction between tenants and the wider community.
- Providing \$13 million over four years to tackle the causes and effects of homelessness.
- Providing \$3 million for community housing in 2003-04 to increase the supply of affordable housing and diversify the ACT's range of housing options.

Links

- ACT Homelessness Strategy (<http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/hcs/Services/Homelessness/Homelessness.htm>)
- Community Housing in the ACT - future directions (www.health.act.gov.au)
- Final Report on Affordable Housing in the ACT: Strategies for Action (www.dhcs.act.gov.au)
- Government Response to Final Report on Affordable Housing in the ACT (www.dhcs.act.gov.au)
- Canberra Connect Housing (www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au/housing/housing.html)
- The Canberra Spatial Plan (www.actpla.act.gov.au)
- Department of Housing and Community Services (www.dhcs.act.gov.au)

Priority 7: Respect and protect the environment

Canberra is an environmental success story. The ACT community is more concerned about environmental issues than anywhere else in Australia. Our use of environmentally-friendly products is higher and we have dramatically increased the amount of waste we recycle, at the same time reducing the amount of material going to landfill. The response by Canberrans to the current drought and water restrictions has shown

that the ACT community is very receptive and willing to contribute to the sustainable use of the ACT's water resources. It is crucial to continue water saving practices into the future to ensure the ACT's water resources are adequate to cope with variables such as the impacts of bushfires, climate change and population growth.

Apart from its inherent value, protecting the natural environment in and around Canberra helps ensure that, as a crucial part of our heritage, it can be enjoyed by future generations. A well-managed environment is also important for our health - both physical and spiritual.

While the *Canberra Spatial Plan* proposes a direction that will provide for the sustainable and equitable growth of Canberra, inclusion of the environment as a priority in *Building Our Community* demonstrates the impact that the state of the environment has on individuals, families and communities.

Goals

- Enhance Canberra's liveability, recognising the importance of environment to the overall health of the community.
- Care for our parks, landscapes and remote areas.
- Protect biodiversity for future generations.
- Reduce water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and waste.
- Create and maintain inclusive public space for use by the entire community.



Photo provided courtesy of Environment ACT

Actions

7.1 The Government will work to increase community awareness of the size and impact of the ecological footprint made by the Canberra urban environment.

The ACT community consumes material and energy resources, often imported from outside the Territory, and generates waste which has to be either redirected into new markets or disposed into the environment. A forward-thinking city should be seeking to reduce consumption and waste generation, thereby limiting its 'footprint' on the environment. The government will identify and implement an appropriate measurement model in order to increase community awareness of the size and impact of Canberra's ecological footprint.

7.2 The Government will review and update the ACT Greenhouse Strategy and undertake research to better understand possible risks and implications for the ACT resulting from climate change.

The ACT Greenhouse Strategy was released in early 2000. It established goals for greenhouse gas emission reductions and introduced a comprehensive range of measures to progress them. The Strategy contained a requirement that it be regularly reviewed to assess progress towards the target. The first independent review of the Strategy was completed in mid-2003. It found that the current Strategy was achieving results in reducing emissions and that there was scope for considerable improvement. However due to updated greenhouse gas emissions projections and improved emission inventory methodologies, the quantity of emissions that need to be reduced was found to be higher than originally estimated in 2000.

The Government is currently considering options for reformulated and new measures in the Strategy, with a final revised Strategy to be released in mid-2004. This will also address the need for further research into the impacts of climate change on the ACT.

7.3 The Government will maintain its commitment to reduce the amount of waste generated and promote recycling.

The amount of waste disposed at ACT landfills was reduced to 207,000 tonnes in 2002-03, half the amount reached in 1993-94. As a percentage of total waste, this represents a reduction from 78 to 31 per cent over that period. Some 467,000 tonnes of material was recycled, with major increases in recent times in the levels of garden organics, demolition waste and metals recycled.

This is a dramatic turnaround which the Government is committed to continue as part of its *No Waste* strategy.

7.4 The Government will help protect our threatened species and ecological communities as part of best practice planning for urban development.

The Government will implement the Nature Conservation Act and use the Flora and Fauna Committee and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to comment on or influence planning decisions that may impact on threatened species and ecological communities.

7.5 The Government will continue to ensure that key biodiversity assets are identified, protected and managed through preparation of conservation strategies for lowland woodlands (2003), native grasslands (2004) and aquatic and riverine communities (2005).

The Lowland Woodland Strategy has been released as a draft for community comment. These strategies integrate the conservation requirements of a number of threatened species in the one document addressing the ecological community as a whole.

7.6 The Government will develop and implement measures to increase the water and energy efficiency of residential and commercial buildings.

The Review of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy found that energy use in buildings caused about two-

thirds of the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions and that there was considerable scope to improve the energy efficiency of both new and existing buildings.

In the residential sector, energy efficiency has been promoted through the use of the ACT Home Energy Rating Scheme both to set a standard for new housing and as an energy rating of existing dwellings when they are put up for sale. The Government has also provided funding for a home energy advisory service and subsidies for installation of solar hot water heaters and cavity wall insulation.

Measures in the commercial sector have been on a smaller scale due to the lack of a nationally-agreed energy rating scheme for commercial buildings and also because many office buildings in Canberra are occupied by the Commonwealth Government which has its own energy efficiency program. The Government has however provided funding for the facilitation of energy efficiency upgrades of existing commercial buildings. New and reformulated measures to improve the energy efficiency of buildings will be considered as part of the development of the draft revised ACT Greenhouse Strategy.

The Government will finalise and commence implementation of the Water Resources Strategy in 2004. Through a range of water efficiency measures outlined in the draft Water Resources Strategy the Government will continue to support the Canberra community to improve water use and management in the home, garden and workplace. The water efficiency programs will be supported by an extensive information and awareness program to support long-term behavioural change.

7.7 The Government will ensure that a reliable source of high quality water is maintained, in part through the finalisation and implementation of a Water Resources Strategy.

Potable water is essential to a healthy community. Recent threats like the January 2003 bushfires highlight the vulnerability of that supply. It will remain a high priority issue to protect the health of our

water supply catchments as indicated in the Water Resources Strategy.

The final strategy will address a range of issues, including variables affecting the future of the ACT's water resources; water supply options; water use efficiency; water quality; water sensitive urban design; catchment management; riparian zone management; and education and community partnerships.

7.8 The Government will at least maintain the current position whereby more than half of the ACT is under conservation management.

Some 53 per cent of the land of the Territory is in parks and reserves where nature conservation management is the predominant and priority issue. The Government has committed to the inclusion of further reserves relating to lowland woodlands which will further increase the amount of ACT land under conservation management.

7.9 The Government will enhance Canberra's non-urban recreational facilities.

The Government's response to the Non-Urban Lands Study proposes enhanced recreational facilities in non-urban areas of the ACT that were affected by the January 2003 bushfires. Current programs are enhancing these facilities in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. A Five Year Recreation Strategy for the Natural Areas of the ACT is currently being developed to guide restoration, recovery and redevelopment of recreation facilities destroyed and damaged by the January 2003 fires as well as ensuring an effective foundation for recreational opportunities into the future.



Photo provided courtesy of
The Canberra Times

We are already

- Subsidising the cost of installing domestic solar hot water systems, cavity wall insulation and replacement of wood heaters.
- Committed to reducing mains water consumption by 12 per cent over the next ten years.
- Committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a comprehensive range of measures that are being monitored and reviewed in the light of progress made, new information and national developments.
- Protecting grassy woodlands and other endangered ecosystems, and further protecting biodiversity by ensuring there are Action Plans for all listed threatened species in the ACT.
- Providing funding for cultural heritage preservation as a result of the January 2003 bushfires.
- Restoring fire-damaged Aboriginal rock art in Namadgi National Park.
- Conserving and rehabilitating the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.
- Increasing the rebate for Canberra households to instal solar hot water heaters under the Solar Water Heater Rebate Scheme.
- Providing on-road cycle lanes from Woden to Dickson.
- Providing further relief for rural lessees with a bushfire relief package to focus on weed control, soil stabilisation, tree planting and rural recovery.
- Funding the Re-greening Canberra project for urban areas affected by the January 2003 bushfires.
- Funding heritage grants for community organisations and individuals involved in heritage conservation in 2003-04.

Links

- ACT Commissioner for the Environment (www.envcomm.act.gov.au)
- Environment ACT (www.environment.act.gov.au)
- Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra (<http://www.ecoaction.net.au/ccserac>)
- ACT NOWaste (www.nowaste.act.gov.au)
- Australian Greenhouse Office (www.greenhouse.gov.au)
- The Canberra Spatial Plan (www.actpla.act.gov.au)
- ACT Office of Sustainability (www.sustainability.act.gov.au)
- Cities for Climate Protection (<http://www3.iclei.org/ccp-au>)
- Water Strategy (<http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au>)



The ACT is the most highly educated community in the country. More of our children attend pre-school programs and we have the highest Year 12 retention rate.

Photo provided courtesy of *The Canberra Times*

Making it happen

Implementation strategy

Building Our Community is ambitious in its scope and objectives. If it is to set the framework for the evolution of our social policy over the next decade or so, it must be a 'living document' – one that remains a reference point for a generation of policy-makers. For this to occur it is necessary that an effective implementation strategy be put in place.

Community Inclusion Board

8.1 The Government will establish a Community Inclusion Board as a source of high-level community advice to the Government on social priorities.

At the heart of the implementation strategy is a Community Inclusion Board, based on the successful South Australian model.

The Community Inclusion Board will include community leaders with experience and expertise across non-government organisations, the business sector and the broader community. It will be chaired by a prominent person with a strong background in and empathy with social issues. It will provide an additional source of high-level advice to the Chief Minister on social inclusion issues and will commission research into priority areas identified by the Government. The Board will meet and report to the Chief Minister on at least a quarterly basis.

The Board will include two senior government officials and be supported by a Community Inclusion Unit based in the Chief Minister's Department. Its terms of reference are at Attachment 1.

Commitment within Government

Within government, successful implementation of *Building Our Community* will be strengthened by a more integrated approach, the involvement of officials at the highest level, and coordination by the Chief Minister's Department with direct reporting to the Chief Minister.

The better integration in delivery of the *Building Our Community* commitments will be driven by a committee of agency Chief Executives. Once a year this group will meet with the Chairs of the Government's Advisory Councils to provide some whole of community advice on the implementation of the Plan.

The Chief Minister's Department will undertake a coordination and monitoring role for the implementation of *Building Our Community*, with agencies to lead the implementation of various actions.

The Treasury will lead evaluation processes for major whole-of-government Social Plan initiatives, with 5 per cent of funding for major new whole-of-government initiatives directed to evaluation.

Poverty Proofing

8.2 The Government will trial a 'poverty-proofing' process, based on the successful Irish model, to ensure that government decisions do not act to increase the levels or causes of poverty.

Poverty proofing is a process by which government agencies assess policies and programs at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact they will have on poverty and on inequalities that are likely to lead to poverty.

Reporting on implementation

8.3 The government will publish a report on the implementation of *Building Our Community* every two years as part of the reporting process for the *Canberra Plan*, with the first report in July 2006.

The Chief Minister's Department will prepare these reports as part of its coordination and monitoring role for *Building Our Community*.

Measuring success

Building Our Community incorporates a number of indicators and targets, listed below, to assist in reviewing the effectiveness of the Plan and its implementation.

In addition, indicators specific to Indigenous disadvantage are included in the nationally-agreed Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*. The Government is also preparing the first of a regular *Towards Sustainability Report* for the ACT. The Report will draw upon a set of social, environmental and economic indicators that measure what is important to the ACT community, as well as

Priorities	Key progress indicators
Economic opportunity for all Canberrans	Progressively reduce the level of poverty in the ACT over the life of the Plan. Reduce the level of long-term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment. Reduce income inequality for vulnerable groups, including Indigenous people, people with a disability and women.
Respect, diversity and human rights	Enact and implement a Human Rights Act.
A safe, strong, cohesive community	Maintain the proportion of Canberrans attending and participating in community, sporting and cultural events. Reduce assaults and property crime. Reduce Indigenous incarceration rates.
Improve health and well being	Increase life expectancy at birth. Reduce deaths and hospitalisations associated with alcohol and other drug use. Reduce the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the community in general.
Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning and training	Increase the proportion of young people achieving a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent vocational qualification. Increase literacy and numeracy for ACT students. Increase the proportion of adults with post-school qualifications.
Housing for a future Canberra	Reduce the proportion of ACT residents on low incomes who experience housing stress. Increase sustainable tenancies by reduction in evictions from public housing. Reduce the number of people who are homeless.
Respect and protect the environment	Maintain the proportion of ACT land currently under conservation management. Maintain air and water quality. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

the *ACT State of Environment Report*. It will measure progress over time, thereby assisting the community and government make decisions about how we manage our financial, human, physical and natural resources. As such it will allow measurement of the influence of the *Social Plan*, as well as the other elements of the *Canberra Plan*.

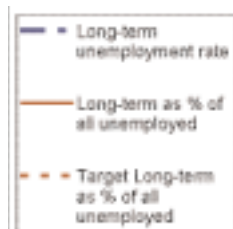
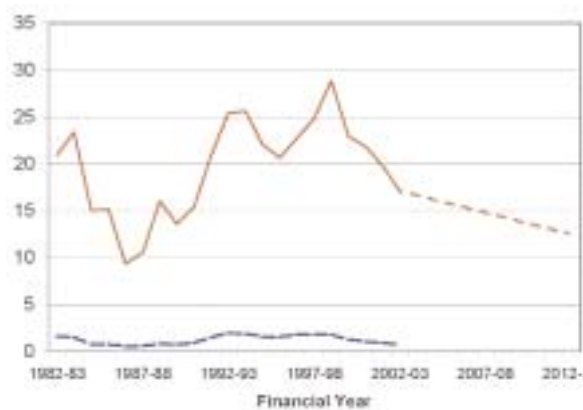
Targets

Reduce long-term unemployment

In 2002-03, the number of people in the ACT who had been out of work for 12 months or more averaged 1,300. This amounted to 17 per cent of all unemployed people. This figure has fluctuated over the last 20 years, reaching around 9-10 per cent in 1986-87 and 1987-88 when total unemployment was around five per cent.

The Government's target is to reduce the level of long-term unemployment to 12.5 per cent of total unemployment by 2013.

Graph 11: Long-term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment



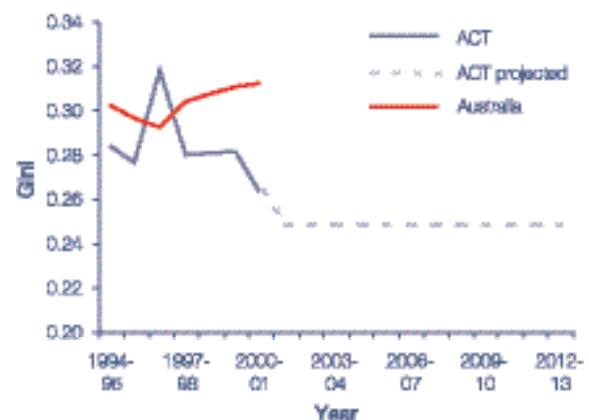
Decrease income inequality

Income inequality is measured by an indicator called the Gini coefficient. This describes the difference between a baseline hypothetical case where all income is distributed perfectly evenly throughout the population and the actual distribution of income throughout that population. The larger the figure, the less even the income distribution.

According to ABS data, the ACT had the second lowest Gini coefficient in Australia in 2000-01, with a figure of 0.26 compared with an Australia overall level at 0.31.

The Government's target is to decrease income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, to average at most a figure of 0.25 over the decade to 2013.

Graph 12: Income inequality



Reduce homelessness

According to the *Needs Analysis of Homelessness in the ACT 2002*, the number of people sleeping rough each night (primary homelessness) may be between 120 and 315, or approximately 10 per cent of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This includes people who live on the streets, sleep in parks, squat in derelict buildings or use cars for shelter.

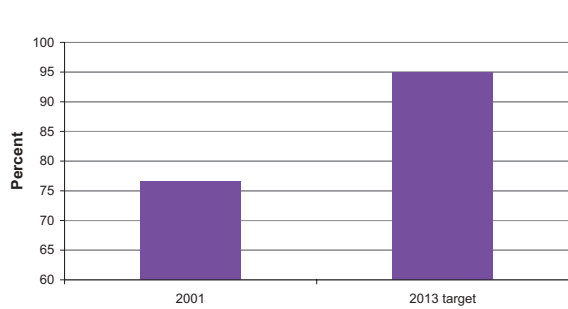
The Government's target is to reduce primary homelessness to as close as possible to zero by 2013.

Increase the proportion of young people successfully completing secondary or vocational studies.

According to the 2001 Census, 77 per cent of 19 year olds in the ACT had achieved a Year 12 certificate or equivalent. The corresponding level for Australia overall was 64 per cent.

The Government's target is to increase to 95 per cent the proportion of 19 year olds with a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent by 2013.

Graph 13: Proportion of ACT 19 year olds with a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent

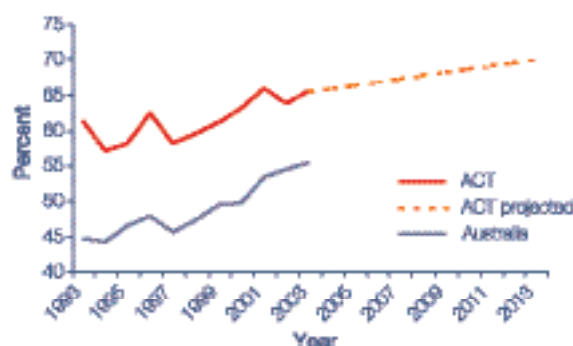


Increase the proportion of adults with post-school qualifications.

In 2003, the proportion of ACT 25-64 year-olds with post-school qualifications was 65.5 per cent. This represents an increase of around four percentage points from 1993. The growth for Australia overall over this period was around 11 per cent, although from a considerably lower base.

The Government's target is to increase to 70 per cent the proportion of 25-64 year olds with post-school qualifications.

Graph 14: Proportion of people aged 25-64 years with post-school qualifications



Attachment

ACT Community Inclusion Board

Terms of Reference

Role and functions

The ACT Community Inclusion Board will consist of nine members.

The nine Board members will include a Chair, six other non-government members, the Chief Executive of the Chief Minister's Department (CMD) and one Chief Executive from a human services department (on an annual rotating basis).

Members will be appointed by the Chief Minister for a two-year term. Non-government Board members cannot be appointed for more than two consecutive terms.

The Board will meet at least quarterly.

Public communications by the Board will be through the Chair in consultation with the Chief Executive of CMD, consistent with agreed protocol.

Responsibilities

Develop strategies for dealing with the causes of social exclusion.

Provide leadership to the work of government agencies through the Community Inclusion Unit to ensure that there is a coordinated and integrated approach to developing, implementing and reviewing the actions flowing from *Building Our Community*.

Ensure that Government receives expert policy advice on identified social priorities.

Monitor the implementation of the 'poverty-proofing' initiative.

Provide recommendations, information and advice to the Chief Minister and Cabinet, including advice on potential priorities for Government funding consideration.

Provide guidance to the Community Inclusion Unit in addressing issues identified by the Chief Minister and Cabinet.

Provide direction, advice and information to the Community Inclusion Unit to assist in research activities.

Liaise closely with the Joint Community Government Reference Group, which will provide advice on implementation of the 'Building a Stronger Community' flagship.

Report on a quarterly basis to the Chief Minister.

Footnotes

- ¹ ABS Australian Demographic Statistics, (ABS Cat no. 3101.0)
- ² ABS Population by Age and Sex Australian States and Territories (ABS Cat no.3201.0)
- ³ ABS Births, Australia (ABS Cat no.3301.0)
- ⁴ ABS Deaths, Australia (ABS Cat no.3302.0)
- ⁵ ABS Australian Capital Territory in Focus (ABS Cat no.1307.0)
- ⁶ ABS 2001 Census Indigenous Profile
- ⁷ ABS Australian Demographic Statistics, (ABS Cat no. 3101.0)
- ⁸ ABS Regional Population Growth (ABS Cat no. 3218.0)
- ⁹ ABS 6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Annual FA1 - Families by family type, State, sex, number of family members
- ¹⁰ ABS Childcare (ABS Cat no. 4402.0)
- ¹¹ ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers Survey, Summary Tables ACT (ABS Cat no. 4430.8.40.001)
- ¹² ABS Australian National Accounts, State Accounts, (ABS Cat no.5220.0)
- ¹³ ABS Average weekly earnings Australia, (ABS Cat no. 6302.0)
- ¹⁴ ABS Labourforce survey
- ¹⁵ Locating poverty in the ACT, 2002, NATSEM
- ¹⁶ ABS Household Income and Income Distribution (ABS Cat no. 6523.0)
- ¹⁷ ABS Household Income and Income Distribution (ABS Cat no. 6523.0)
- ¹⁸ ABS Household Income and Income Distribution (ABS Cat no. 6523.0)
- ¹⁹ ABS Deaths, Australia (ABS Cat no. 3302.0)
- ²⁰ ABS Causes of Death (ABS Cat no 3303.0)
- ²¹ ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2000-2002
- ²² ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2000-2002
- ²³ ABS Disability Ageing and Carers 1998 (ABS Cat 4430.8.40.001)
- ²⁴ ABS National Health Survey 2001, Summary of Results (ABS Cat. No. 4364.0)
- ²⁵ ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2000-2002
- ²⁶ ABS National Health Survey 2001, Summary of Results (ABS Cat. No. 4364.0)
- ²⁷ ABS National Health Survey 2001, Summary of Results (ABS Cat. No. 4364.0)
- ²⁸ ABS National Health Survey 2001, Summary of Results (ABS Cat. No. 4364.0)
- ²⁹ ABS National Health Survey 2001, Summary of Results (ABS Cat. No. 4364.0)
- ³⁰ ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2000-2002
- ³¹ ABS Education and Work, Australia 2003 (cat No 6227.0)
- ³² ABS Australian Social Trends 2003 (Cat No 4102.0)
- ³³ ABS Schools Australia 2002 (Cat No 4221.0)
- ³⁴ Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2004
- ³⁵ ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies Year 12 Study 2002.
- ³⁶ ABS Survey of education & work and survey of transition from education & work (unpublished) cited in Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2004.
- ³⁷ Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2004
- ³⁸ Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2004
- ³⁹ ABS Australian Capital Territory in Focus 2003 (Cat No 1307.8)
- ⁴⁰ HIA Commonwealth Bank Housing Affordability Report, September Quarter 2003
- ⁴¹ Real Estate Institute of Australia Market Facts June quarter 2003
- ⁴² ABS Australian Social Trends 2003 (Cat No 4102.0)
- ⁴³ ABS Housing Finance for Owner Occupation September 2003 (Cat No 5609.0)
- ⁴⁴ Real Estate Institute of Australia Market Facts June quarter 2003
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- ⁵⁴ Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2004
- ⁵⁵ ACT Library Services, unpublished data 2003
- ⁵⁶ ABS Australian Capital Territory in Focus 2003 (Cat No 1307.8)
- ⁵⁷ ABS ACT in Focus 2003 (Cat No 1307.8)
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- ⁵⁹ Source: ACT NOWaste, Department of Urban Services.
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