

The Canberra Social Plan | Progress Report  
June 2007





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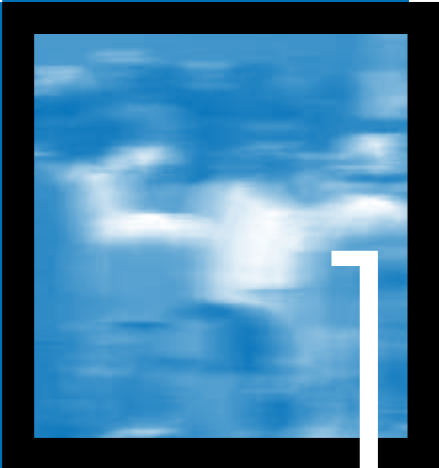
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*BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY:*  
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# foreword

In 2004 when launching the *Canberra Social Plan* I commented that by almost any measure, Canberrans lived better than people in every other Australian State or Territory.

The data showed that we were richer, healthier, fitter, better educated, closer to our community, and more open-hearted than just about any other city in the country. In 2007 this is still very much the case.

I am very proud that we, as a Government and community, have made substantial progress towards achieving the visions and goals of the *Canberra Social Plan*. This Progress Report highlights these many achievements.

We have:

- built a stronger community by supporting community activities and celebrations;
- provided local support to families in Gunghalin and Tuggeranong in the form of Child and Family Centres;
- given concessions on utilities to more than 26,000 low-income households; and
- provided an extra 147 beds for the ACT health system, since 2004-05 to reduce the number of patients waiting for elective surgery.

Fundamental reforms have also been initiated in almost all areas of Government activity and service delivery, including high profile changes in the public education, housing and health systems.

These reforms will ensure the ACT is placed on a stable financial footing. It will also allow us to direct the resources at

our disposal to the areas of greatest priority, and to those in greatest need.

In doing so, I believe we can still achieve the vision we set for ourselves back in 2004 when releasing the *Canberra Social Plan*. Namely, the creation of a community, here in Canberra, where all people can reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community.

The achievements set out in this report are testament to the commitment and effort shown by many within ACT Government and across our community in recent years. Yet there is more to do and the 'forces at play' in our society and economy cannot be ignored.

Accordingly, this report pays attention to emerging pressures and issues such as an ageing population profile and the subsequent impacts on workforce, income, housing needs, health and educational services. It also acknowledges the importance of the environment and the significance of matters such as climate change on our social interactions. It sets out the key challenges ahead and the actions we have planned which respond to those pressures and challenges.

I hope the reader will find this report both informative and inspiring and trust that all within Government and the wider Canberra community will continue to support the goals of the *Canberra Social Plan* and work in partnership over the coming years towards its successful implementation.

Jon Stanhope MLA  
Chief Minister



INTRODUCTION

*BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY: THE CANBERRA SOCIAL PLAN*

# introduction

*Building Our Community – The Canberra Social Plan* is a key element of The Canberra Plan, the Government's strategic plan for Canberra embracing the social, spatial and economic aspects of our present and future.

The *Canberra Social Plan* was released in February 2004 and is an expression of the Government's vision that Canberra becomes a place where *all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community*. It also reflects 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 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.

The Priorities of the *Canberra Social Plan* are:

- Economic opportunities for all Canberrans
- Respect, diversity and human rights
- A strong, safe, and cohesive community

- Improve health and wellbeing
- Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning and training
- Housing for a future Canberra
- Respect and protect the environment

The priorities, goals and actions contained within the *Canberra Social Plan* are to be achieved over 10 to 15 years and five to 10 years respectively. Much has already been achieved including a number of flagship commitments.

## **Progress Report**

The Government released *Getting on with the job* in September 2005 – which detailed how far we have come in achieving the goals and implementing the actions set out in the *Canberra Social Plan*.

This new report, along with the September 2005 report, more than fulfil the specific commitment in the *Canberra Social Plan* to report on progress every two years. It describes the ACT community today and provides information on movement against the priorities in the Plan as well as identifying the challenges ahead.

This report takes the *Canberra Social Plan* to the next stage, providing an update on achievements and targets, while reflecting on the changing environment and the actions taken by the ACT Government to help position the community for the future.



FLAGSHIP COMMITMENTS



### **Building a stronger community**

The ACT Government has been building a stronger community within Canberra by supporting community activities and major celebrations which foster inclusion and participation, funding organisations to renew their infrastructure and facilities, providing information technology upgrades for community organisations and implementing reforms to community sector funding.

### **Energy, water and sewerage concessions**

The ACT Government has provided additional funding of \$1.6 million since 2004 to increase concessions and ensure that individuals and families on low incomes are not adversely affected by utility price increases. More than 26,000 low-income households have benefited from the new streamlined energy concession.

### **Caring for children and young people**

New initiatives under the *ACT Children's Plan* are helping our children to access opportunities that support them to reach their full potential. School programs are encouraging healthy eating and the *Round Town* and *Kids at Play* programs are promoting healthy lifestyles by increasing physical activity in community play environments for children. Through the *ACT Young People's Plan*, Government has funded services for at risk young people, provided opportunities for young people to participate in the development of services and legislation and improved coordination and integration of service delivery to young people.

Specific child protection initiatives have included improved policies and practices, amendments to the *Children and Young People Act 1999* including additional protections for children and the introduction of Indigenous cultural plans. The establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit to advise on the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families and an increased investment in the training of practitioners across the ACT Government and non government child and family sector are further achievements.

More than \$3 million in extra funding from 2005 has increased funded preschool education for eligible four-year-olds from 10.5 hours to 12 hours per week. Specific care and protection initiatives include integrated service delivery for those with multiple needs and the training of child and family practitioners in the Triple P Positive Parenting Program.

The Children and Young People Commissioner has been appointed to promote improvements of services for all children and young people and to hear complaints from users of these services.

### **Child and Family Centres**

Child and Family Centres are providing specialised local services with a focus on support and early intervention, including health, education, parenting and family support services. Services are delivered in partnership with community organisations and professionals.

The Gungahlin Child and Family Centre began delivering services to the community in September 2004, with permanent premises opening in May 2006. The program was extended to Tuggeranong in 2005 and a purpose built facility opened in April 2007.

### **The Community Inclusion Board and Fund**

The Board is providing high-level advice to the Government on community inclusion issues and the social priorities identified in the *Canberra Social Plan* and on the allocation of grants from the Community Inclusion Fund.

During its first term, the Board progressively addressed its priorities of reducing household debt; reducing Indigenous disadvantage; and building neighbourhood and belonging. The Board began its second term in the latter half of 2006.

The Community Inclusion Fund has provided support for 25 community organisations working with their government partners helping the most vulnerable members of the ACT community improve their social and economic circumstances. To date \$4.4 million has been committed through the Fund to these projects.

Some examples of Community Inclusion Fund projects include:

The **Integration of Frail Aged back into the Community Program** which helps aged people who live at home and have become isolated reconnect with the community.

The **SPICE Program** which helps high school students at risk of dropping out by combining education with a volunteer part-time work placement.

The **Mums at Home in the Community Project** which provides community based support for isolated mothers through strengthening social networks, friendships and peer support.

The **Early Morning Centre (EMC) in the City** which provides the homeless with breakfasts and referral services enabling them to re-engage with society.

The **Big Issue Case Worker** which assists disadvantaged and homeless people within the Big Issue program to access government and community service programs.

The **SU-Re program** is providing a transition into mainstream CIT courses for Sudanese refugees.



THE ACT COMMUNITY TODAY

## Population

The population of the ACT makes up 1.6% of the total Australian population.

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

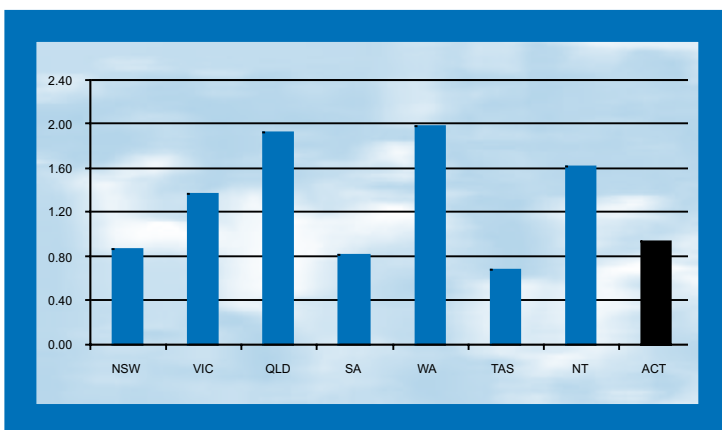
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are estimated to comprise 1.3% of the ACT population today, up from 1.2% in 2001. In 2006 around 4,300 people in the ACT were believed to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Around 40% are aged under 15 years, compared to only 19% of the general population in this age bracket.

## Growth

The estimated resident population of the ACT at 30 June 2006 was 328,817 people, an increase of 3,036 from 30 June 2005.

This represents an increase of just under 0.9% in 12 months, and whilst comparable with other southern states, is below the national average and the high levels of growth being experienced in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland.

## Percentage Change in Estimated Residential Population in 12 Months to 30 June 2006



The latest mid range population projections from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the ACT predicted a total population of 364,500 by 2021.

Achieving sustainable levels of population growth into the future will be vital to the long term economic prosperity of all Canberrans. Actions such as the Live in Canberra campaign and the renewed Skills and Business Migration Program

reflect the Government's commitment to responding to this issue and the ACT Skills Commission will also help guide further action in this area.

## Ageing

The population of the ACT is ageing, as are all other Australian jurisdictions. However, while the median age is currently lower than the national average, the ACT is distinguished by the fact that, because of low fertility rates and longer life expectancy, the median is increasing more rapidly.

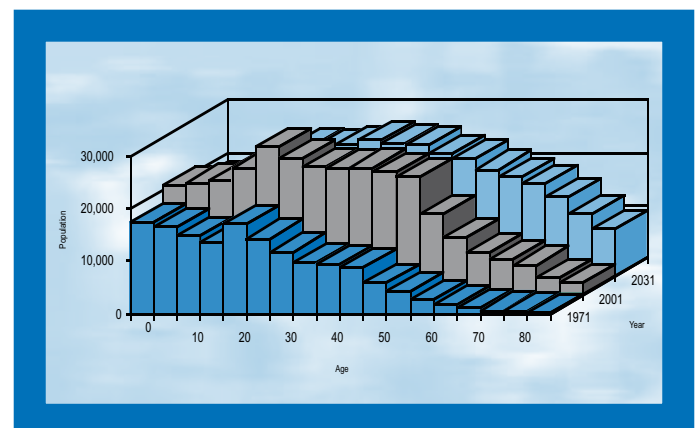
In that sense, it can be said that the 'ACT is ageing faster' than any other jurisdiction.

The median age of the ACT population (34.5 years in 2005) has increased 6.4 years since 1985. By comparison the median age of the Australian population has increased 5.9 years since 1985.

Over the last three decades the ACT has also experienced a steady decline in the proportion of the population aged under 15 years and a steady increase in the proportion aged 65 years and over.

Since 1995 the number of children aged under 15 years has decreased by 8.0%, while the population aged 65 years and over has increased by 45.5%, and the population aged 85 years and over has more than doubled.

## Changing Age Profile of the ACT



This changing age profile has major implications for the ACT.

It is likely to result in a shift in housing needs, reduced demand for education facilities, increased health costs and a further tightening of the labour supply.

## Workforce and Income

The ACT has the lowest unemployment in Australia. In October 2006, the official unemployment trend rate in the ACT fell to an historic low of 2.6%, compared with 4.7% nationally.

We also have the highest proportion of the population aged 15 years or over in work of all Australian jurisdictions at 55%, with many residents working in the professions and public service.

**Participation rates for women in the labour force are also the highest in the country at 71.4% compared with 57.4% nationally, resulting in a strong demand for childcare and other family supports in the ACT.**

We know for example that in 2005 some 31,000 or 58% of all children in the ACT were in some form of formal or informal childcare. This compares to only 45% of children nationally.

The numbers in the workforce are expected to fall rapidly with the retirement of the baby boomer generation. For example, medical practitioners in the ACT on average are the second oldest in Australia (46.5 years) and 16% of the ACT's Visiting Medical Officers have indicated an intention to retire within the next five years.

This trend is likely to put further pressure on the ACT economy, which is already feeling the impact of skills shortages in trades and occupations.

The ACT has the highest gross household disposable income per capita at \$43,100 compared with \$27,500 nationally and average weekly total earnings in the ACT are almost \$100 above the national average.

Yet there are some costs of living which are higher for Canberrans by virtue of geography and diseconomies of scale. For example, Canberrans pay more to rent in the private rental market paying \$257 (mean weekly) compared with \$198 (mean weekly) nationally.

## Housing

The ACT has a proud tradition of public housing and the highest proportion of people residing in public housing of any jurisdiction, with 9.2% of households in public housing compared to 4.9% nationally.

This significant investment makes it all the more important to maintain a stock of housing which is balanced with society's changing needs and is managed as efficiently as possible.

Housing affordability is an issue for many jurisdictions including the ACT, despite our relatively higher income levels.

The Real Estate Institute of Australia's Home Loan Affordability Indicator for September 2006 ranked the ACT first for affordability in Australia, with the Territory's indicator of 52.5 on the Index about double the NSW indicator. This means that ACT homebuyers spent on average 19% of their family income on loan repayments, compared with around 35% in NSW.

This relative strength is manifest in the positive year-on-year increase in residential approvals in the ACT (66.4%), compared with a national drop of 2.9% and a 13.8% rise, in trend terms, in the number of housing finance commitments for owner occupiers in the ACT for the year ending September 2006.

Given the importance access to affordable housing has on community life and maintaining a strong economy, the challenges of balancing growth, affordability and environmental impacts are considerable and can only be addressed through evidence-based policy. This is why the ACT Government established a high level cross-agency taskforce to develop the Affordable Housing Action Plan, which was released in April 2007.

## Education

Canberrans have the highest level of educational attainment in Australia.

Almost 59% of the ACT population have a post-school qualification compared to 51.1% of Australians.

Maintaining this high level of educational attainment will be critical to the future of the ACT economy with its demand for highly skilled and well trained people. This in turn is contingent upon a strong primary and secondary educational system which develops well educated young people committed to further study.

ACT primary school students regularly achieve high levels of performance against nationally agreed benchmarks. The ACT also has the highest retention levels of any jurisdiction for full time students from Years 7 to Year 12.

Throughout Australia there has been an increasing percentage of students attending non-government schools. While choice in education is important, it is vital for the future that the Government sector is strong and well patronised and provides high quality educational opportunities.

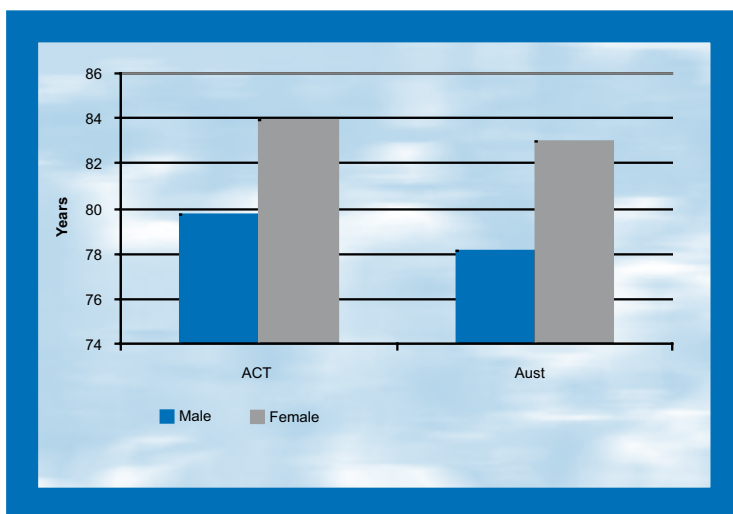
This can be achieved in the ACT by delivering quality outcomes for students and responding strategically to the distinct demographic shifts occurring across our suburbs, as evident in the Government's Towards 2020 reforms.

### Health & Wellbeing

Canberrans are amongst the healthiest people in Australia.

Nearly 60% of ACT residents regard their health as either very good or excellent and life expectancy in the ACT is 79.7 years for males and 83.9 years for females. This exceeds the Australian averages of 78.1 for men and 83.0 years for women.

### Life Expectancy at Birth



Our participation in organised sport is at levels well above the national average and we are also more likely to get involved in our communities with the proportion of persons in the ACT aged over 18 years who volunteered in the previous 12 months being 41.4% compared with 34.4% nationally.

However, there are some areas of concern.

The prevalence of cancer at 1.9% and diabetes at 3.7% is marginally higher in the ACT than nationally where the rates are 1.7% and 3.5%.

ACT residents also show mixed results when it comes to health behaviours.

On the positive side, the ACT has the largest (9%) proportion of people who exercise at 'high' exercise levels compared with the national level of 6% and the ACT also has the lowest proportion (17%) of current smokers compared to the rest of Australia (23%).

Yet ACT residents reported higher than average alcohol consumption patterns compared to the rest of Australia (53% consumed alcohol at low risk levels compared to the national average of 49%).

In the ACT the infant mortality rate over the last 30 years has also regularly been below the national average. However, since 2001 it has risen marginally and is now slightly higher than the national average. While this is not a statistically significant change, it will warrant further attention should the trend continue.

Equally of note, the breast cancer incidence rate in the ACT (141.4 per 100,000 females) was higher than the rate nationally (117.2 per 100,000 females) in 2001. This higher incidence may be in part explained by a link between higher socio-economic status and an increased risk of breast cancer. Characteristics of women of higher socio-economic status, which are relevant include an average older age at the birth of their first child and a greater likelihood to not have children.

The ACT will continue to actively promote participation in breast screening programs.

With growing health expenditure across the country, the challenge for the ACT will be to make the most effective use of its resources, building upon its strengths and targeting its weaknesses.



WHERE TO FROM HERE

As evident in the preceding analysis of demographic trends within the ACT, there are a number of emerging pressures the ACT Government needs to address which in turn will impact upon the fulfilment of the *Canberra Social Plan*.

We will need to ensure our economic future through continued growth and responsible fiscal strategies. Equally, we will have to respond to the needs of an ageing population and its impacts upon health services, housing and education. It is also clear that the types of human services we provide today will need to change as much as the opportunities for communities and individuals to come together will alter over the coming decades.

The ACT Government remains committed to the priorities and goals it has established in the *Canberra Social Plan*. Canberrans expect and deserve the best possible health and education system and public amenities. They have a right to share in the benefits of our community and to contribute to that community.

The pressures faced by the ACT Government and set out in ***For the Future: Economic and Financial Outlook for the ACT*** released with the 2006-07 Budget, will lead to a new focus on what is important and how change can be achieved in the most efficient and effective manner possible, while still enhancing social justice outcomes and providing equitable access to services. The current high cost of service provision in the ACT and the relatively low revenue base is simply not sustainable. There will need to be major changes in how services are delivered to ensure positive community outcomes in the areas of health and education and the achievement of these reforms will be priorities over the coming years. Yet there are other matters which also require attention if we are to continue to work towards the vision of the *Canberra Social Plan*.

To assist in this work, the **ACT Community Inclusion Board** has been reinvigorated with new responsibilities and a number of new members. Amongst other things, the Board will:

- Provide strategic policy advice on addressing the causes of social exclusion.
- Provide leadership to government agencies to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to addressing the priorities and goals of the *Canberra Social Plan*.
- Monitor and report on national and international trends, developments and best practice relating to social exclusion.

- Assist the ACT Government to work collaboratively with the Australian Government on addressing the social inclusion needs of the people of the ACT.

While advances have been made in reducing social exclusion and poverty in the ACT since 2004, as evidenced throughout this progress report, the Board is focused on narrowing the poverty gap and creating a landscape where people can reach their potential and contribute in the creation of a strong, inclusive and equitable society.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** are the most disadvantaged group of people in Australia. In fulfilling the objectives of the *Canberra Social Plan* and reducing poverty and social exclusion, the ACT Government will be paying particular regard to its Indigenous residents.

The first steps towards the establishment of an elected Indigenous body to fill the gap created by the Federal Government's abolition of ATSIC have been taken and a new integrated service delivery initiative for Indigenous families and children at risk has been funded in the 2006-07 Budget. The Government has also publicly released the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Plan 2006-11* and will be working to fulfill the commitments set out in that document.

Pressures on **housing** and the possible impacts of reduced **affordability** have equally been recognised by the ACT Government as an area demanding attention. Creating affordability across the housing sector represents one of the most complex planning issues for the 21st century, needing as it does to balance social policy and economic considerations with the realities of the market, the limited resources of the public sector and the interests of the environment.

In response, the Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan was launched in April 2007 and provides a comprehensive plan to tackle this complex issue.

The **Council of Australian Governments' National Reform Agenda** also provides a unique opportunity to work with other jurisdictions and secure Commonwealth funding to address such critical issues as:

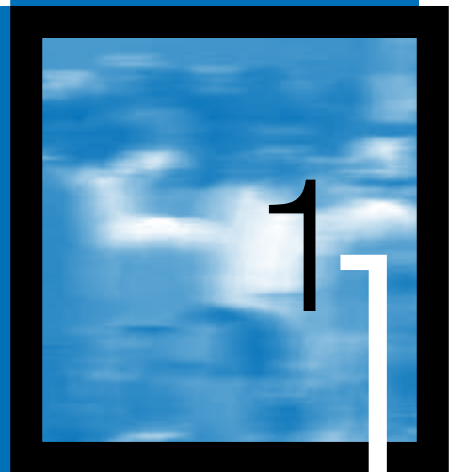
- the literacy and numeracy needs of our children;
- the stresses placed upon our communities through poor early childhood experiences; and
- the rise of Type II Diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Building upon the principles and objectives of *The Canberra Plan* and the *Social Plan*, the ACT Government will meet the challenges of the future head on and continue to strive towards its vision of a Canberra where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share in the benefits of their community.



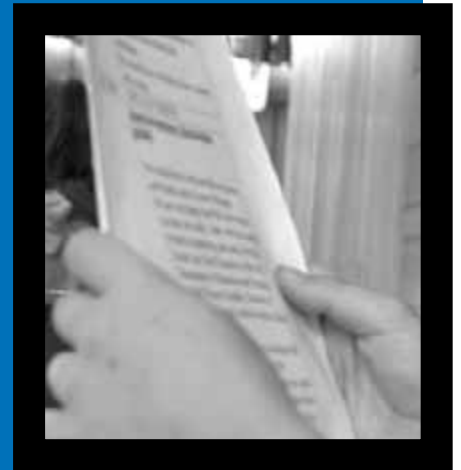
## Priority One: Economic opportunities for all Canberrans<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The ACT has a strong economy that is responding well to global and national economic challenges. However, economic success should not overshadow the fact that there are Canberrans who experience disadvantage and exclusion. Promoting participation and access to economic opportunity for all is as much a social as it is an economic objective.



# [key achievements

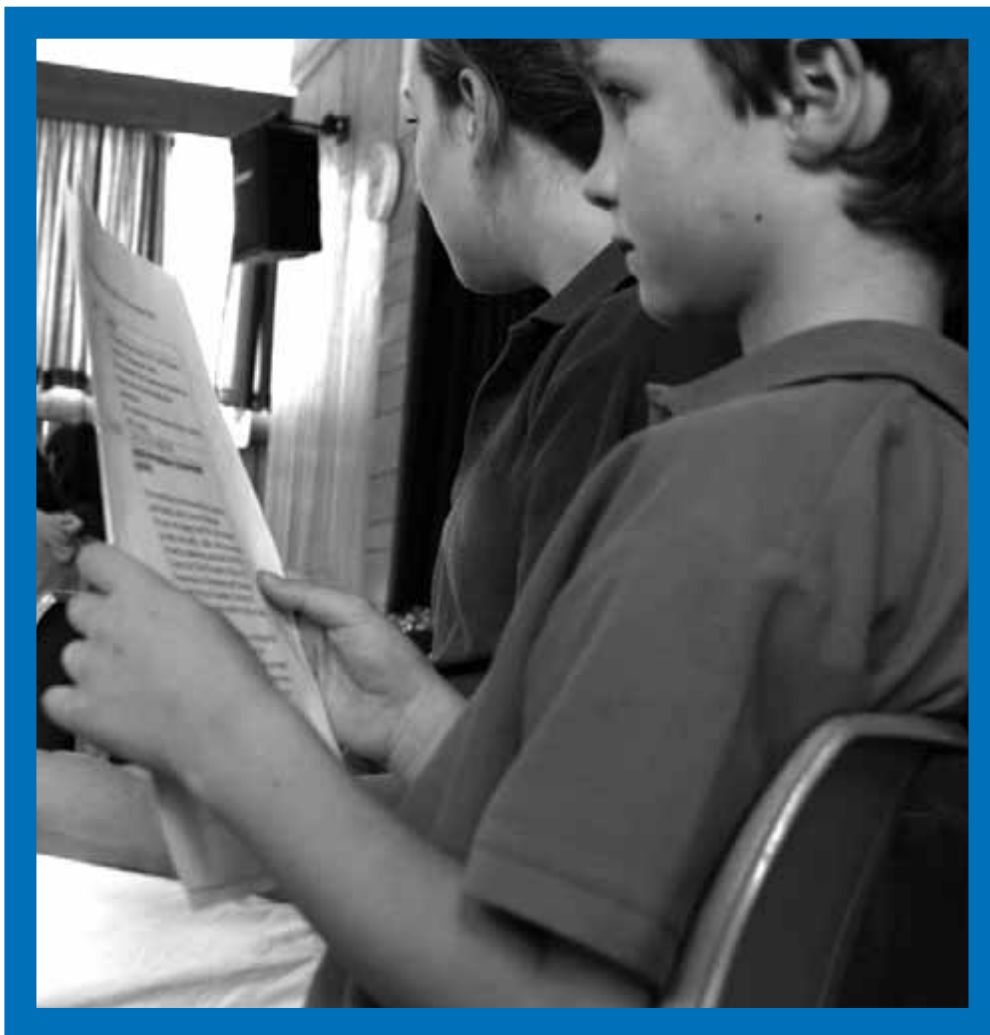
- Maintained AAA Credit Rating
- 11,000 new jobs created in four years
- Maintained lowest unemployment in nation
- Initiated *Live in Canberra* campaign
- Conducted Household Debt Project
- Initiated Poverty Proofing Trial
- Commenced upgrade of National Convention Centre



## 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.

# [ progress



The ACT economy is strong and grew by 3.4% in 2005-06. In addition, the Territory has a sound balance sheet and low levels of accumulated debt.

Unemployment in the ACT remains the lowest of all jurisdictions, falling as low as 2.6% in October 2006. More than 11,000 new jobs have been created across the Territory over the past four years and job advertisements in newspapers rose by 11.1% for the year ending October 2006 - further testimony to the strength of the economy and employment market.

In 2005, the Government initiated the *Live in Canberra* campaign to attract skilled workers to the ACT from other

States within Australia. The aim of the campaign was to address Canberra's growing skills shortage and the goal to create awareness that Canberra is a city with thousands of great jobs and hundreds of reasons why people should relocate here.

The Government has also established the ACT Skills Commission replacing the Canberra Partnership Board and the Small and Micro Business Advisory Council to ensure that tackling skills shortages is the forefront of decision and policy making.

The Community Inclusion Board has initiated a number of projects to reduce the burden of poverty and debt. The Household Debt Pilot Project, undertaken in conjunction with the YWCA

and CARE Financial Services, was established to provide intensive support to 25 people who are experiencing a range of difficulties relating to financial debt. The objectives of the project were to improve financial literacy, reduce debt levels and facilitate greater community inclusion amongst participants. It has had a positive impact, with a number of participants returning to the workforce, gaining control of their financial situation and reporting an increase in confidence.

Poverty Proofing is a process whereby government agencies build into their decision making and programs proper regard for the likely impact they will have on poverty and on inequalities that are likely to lead to poverty and adjust their

# [progress

plans accordingly. The Community Inclusion Board has been tasked in its terms of reference with monitoring the implementation of a Poverty Proofing Trial in the ACT.

The Government commenced a \$30 million upgrade of the National Convention Centre, which will transform the facility, boost Canberra's attractiveness as a convention destination, and assist in increasing economic and tourism-related opportunities in the ACT. The upgrade is due for completion in September 2007.

The Government has also provided funding of \$1 million to support the redevelopment of an icon of Australian research, the John Curtin School of Medical Research at the Australian National University.

The funding, which recognises the contribution the school makes to medical research in the national capital, is consistent with the ACT Government's determination to support activity that contributes to and fosters Canberra's future as a knowledge economy.

The BLITS (Business Leaders, Innovative Thoughts and Solutions) program is raising awareness in the community of the benefits of employing people with a disability and involving them in business opportunities. An interagency committee is also helping students with a disability to transition from school and college to adult life and improving the access of students with a disability to existing pre-vocational resources and programs.

# challenges ahead

Analysis undertaken in preparation of the 2006-07 Budget confirmed the underlying strength of the ACT's economy, while also highlighting a number of significant and immediate challenges for the ACT Budget. Amongst these is the critical issue of regular expenditure on service provision at 20-25% above national averages and a reliance on land-based revenues to support this higher spending.

In response, the Government has indicated that its focus will remain on building and strengthening the economy, while improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its services to the community – most particularly in the areas of health and education.

The Government has also determined that it will adopt the Government Financial Statistics accounting standard which excludes land sales from its operating revenue. The previous historical reliance on land-based revenues overexposed the ACT's financial position to cyclical changes and the reforms

now being made, while they may impact in the short term on government spending, will ensure the Territory is placed on a firm and sustained financial base.

To address emerging pressures and to position the ACT for the future, the Government announced in the 2006-07 Budget that it will:

- restore the budget to a surplus position;
- strengthen and broaden the ACT Government's revenue base;
- continue to invest in health and education;
- reduce the number of public sector agencies;
- bring agency costs closer to the national averages;
- implement further reforms in government information technology, property and procurement;
- invest in infrastructure maintenance; and
- further streamline planning processes.

These measures are fully described in **For the Future: Economic and Financial Outlook for the ACT**, released with the 2006-07 Budget.

Another key challenge facing the ACT, and the nation, is the shortage of skilled workers. The ACT Skills Commission will focus on developing strategies and actions to help overcome this challenge. The Commission is expected to focus on five themes:

- developing local talent - maximising the impact of existing ACT skills training and education;
- attraction and retention strategies – advice on domestic and international skills attraction strategies, inward investment attraction with a people dimension and the marketing of Canberra as a place to work and live;



# [ challenges ahead ]

- areas of acute shortage and strategic importance
  - Information and Communication Technology is likely to be one of the first areas that will be looked at by a commission working group;
- community interest - ensuring that broader community issues, such as underemployment, assisting those wishing to enter the workforce to do so, and the ageing of the population are addressed; and
- ACT Skills Futures - going beyond fixing current issues to identify and respond to expected future skills issues.

In addition, the Government will continue the *Live in Canberra* campaign to attract skilled workers from other States.

Finally, the Government is refocusing its support for business, with a greater emphasis on the provision of advice and support and on initiatives to make Canberra an attractive place in which to do business. This will involve a shift away from awarding grants to individual businesses.

## **Future Actions**

- Continue to implement measures described in *For the Future*
- Support the ACT Skills Commission
- Continue *Live in Canberra* campaign
- Finalise Household Debt Project
- Finalise Poverty Proofing Trial
- Complete the upgrade of the National Convention Centre



## Priority Two: Respect, diversity and human rights<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Respecting diversity by protecting each other's rights is essential if all Canberrans are to have the opportunity to reach their full potential. A culture of respect and inclusion helps to overcome barriers to participation. Celebrating and fostering diversity allows us to draw on a wealth of different experiences.

2

# [key achievements

- Australia's first Human Rights Act passed
- Human Rights Commission established
- Civil partnerships legislation introduced
- Community consultation on establishing representative body to represent the Indigenous community
- Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre opened
- \$5.9m increase over three years in Individual Support Package funding
- Introduction of Local Area Coordination Services
- Specialist accommodation service for people with an acquired brain injury



## 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 migrants, particularly refugees

# [ progress



The ACT leads Australia in providing a systematic and comprehensive scheme for the protection of rights and fundamental freedoms.

The *Human Rights Act 2004* is a vehicle for building a culture where respect for fundamental human rights becomes an integral part of how the ACT public service and the wider community goes about its work. The Act commenced operation on 1 July 2004 and incorporated into ACT law most of the individual civil and political rights guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Government has also striven to ensure that its anti-terrorism laws are human rights compliant.

The ACT Government has also introduced legislation to recognise same sex partnerships, as another element of its long standing commitment to remove all forms of discrimination against gay, lesbian and transgender members of the community.

As a measure to further progress reconciliation, the ACT is currently finalising the model for an elected Indigenous representative body for the Territory, to represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community following the abolition of ATSIC. The first election will be held later in 2007.

The Government has recognised older Canberrans through the Chief Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award and a range of grants to promote positive ageing, encourage older Canberrans to maintain and enhance their connections with the broader community, and to encourage seniors to maintain active and healthy lifestyles.

Community inclusion was furthered with the opening of the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre in December 2005 that houses six peak bodies and 23 community organisations. The Centre provides a safe, supportive environment where people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can meet and access information and advocacy services and participate in programs specifically designed to assist migrants.

# [ progress

The *Young People In Residential Aged Care* program is intended to further reduce the number of people aged under 50 years, living in residential aged care. There are currently 3 people in this age group in the ACT, so interested people aged under 55 will also be included in the assessment processes for assistance. This is a five-year program jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Governments. \$3.9m is allocated over the life of the program: this includes capital works funding to establish appropriate community-based accommodation.

Future Directions: A Framework for the ACT 2004-2008 is a four year policy framework that extends work undertaken by Disability ACT beyond service delivery to minimise the impact of disability and maximise outcomes. The framework is underpinned by the Vision & Values for People with Disabilities in the ACT.

The number of people with a disability accessing Individual Support Packages has increased to 161 representing a recurrent funding increase of \$5.9 million over the past three years, while the new Local Area Coordinators encourage people with disabilities to become active participants in the planning of their services.

The ACT Government has also established a Family-centred Flexible Intensive Response Model (AFFIRM) and developed a specialist accommodation service for people who have an acquired brain injury. A community based support service for youth and young adults on the north side of Canberra has also been initiated and the Government has introduced Intensive Treatment and Support (ITAS) services, which provide care and treatment for people with dual disabilities and complex behavioural problems.

The ACT Government has also consistently supported the International Day of People with a Disability held on 3 December each year through the celebration of Inclusion awards and in 2004 the conduct of a Disability Arts festival.

# [challenges ahead

The ACT faced a setback when the Commonwealth Government overturned its civil legislation which provided a scheme for formal recognition of same sex relationships. The ACT Government will continue to work to ensure the rights of same sex couples in committed relationships are properly respected before the law.

Following community consultations, the ACT Government will move to deliver on its commitment to establish a representative body to speak for the interests of Canberrans of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. The Government will also continue working, both locally and through the Council of Australian Governments, to address the many issues relating to Indigenous disadvantage.

In March 2007, the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services commenced a mid-term evaluation of its disability policy framework. The evaluation will assess the benefit and relevance of the policy framework and identify future measures that promote the inclusion of people with disability in all areas of the ACT community.

## Future Actions

- Progress civil partnerships legislation
- Establish Indigenous representative body, in accord with community consultation
- Implement agreed recommendations of 12 month review of the Human Rights Act







## Priority Three: A strong, safe and cohesive community<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows that one of the best ways to maintain a cohesive, strong and safe community is through creating a climate where individuals have the opportunity to engage in satisfying well-rewarded work, and have access to lifelong learning and cultural and sporting facilities. Such societies generate the resources to sustain their social systems and public services.



3

# key achievements

- Elder Abuse campaign launched
- Reduction in property crime
- Police numbers boosted
- Ngambra Circle Sentencing Court
- Construction completed on ACT Memorial
- Additional funding for community sector
- Additional funding for arts
- Over 40% of adult Canberrans volunteer
- Schools as Communities projects engaging families and neighbourhoods
- Major review of the *Children and Young People Act 1999*
- Partnership with the Institute of Child Protection to reduce child abuse and neglect



## 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

# [ progress



The Elder Abuse Awareness Campaign, launched in 2006, seeks to raise awareness of elder abuse, decrease its incidence and to advise the community of steps in relation to reporting and prevention. The campaign builds on earlier initiatives such as the establishment of a hotline to assist in the reporting of incidents of elder abuse.

The Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing advises the Government on key issues relating to the ageing of the community. The Council has released its 2006-2008 strategic plan, 'Healthy and Meaningful Ageing', with the support of the Government.

The ACT is participating in a cross-jurisdictional working party to ascertain the extent of sexual slavery and trafficking of women in Australia.

The Government works closely with a coalition of community organisations on the ACT White Ribbon Campaign, which is an annual event aimed at ending violence against women and children.

The Government has also actively supported community participation through a range of grants, including those targeting community inclusion, sport, health promotion grants, multicultural affairs, heritage, the environment and the arts. In the 2006-07 Budget the Government announced that it would streamline grant administration within Government and improve access to information about Government grants through the establishment of a grants online portal.

The *ACT Property Crime Reduction Strategy* focuses particularly on reducing motor vehicle theft and burglary. Particular initiatives include *Operation Halite* and the *Reducing Property Crime Program* targeting chronic property offenders; promotion of designing out crime principles to relevant industry professionals; and the *Turnaround* and *Right Turn* programs for 'at-risk' young people with complex needs and young recidivist offenders. The second progress report on the *ACT Property Crime*

*Reduction Strategy* indicates the Strategy's 2005 interim reduction targets have been met. Comparing the ABS recorded crime data between 2003 (base year) and 2005, there have been 436 fewer victims of burglary and 453 fewer victims of motor vehicle theft.

Efforts to improve community safety and reduce crime have been further boosted with the injection of an additional \$28.7 million to fund an extra 60 police officers for ACT Policing in the 2006-07 Budget. This is the first time since self-government that such a significant injection of funding has been provided at a single time for police resources. This investment demonstrates the Government's ongoing commitment to addressing crime and making Canberra an even safer place.

The funding complements the issuing of a Ministerial Direction, the first formal written directions given to the Chief Police Officer, outlining the Government's goals and priorities in policing. The priorities include increased priority response

# [ progress

to incidents and higher police visibility within the community; improving road safety; enhancing the Child Sex Offender Register Team and ongoing support from policy as a key player in the *ACT Government's Property Crime Reduction Strategy*.

The incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a significant issue throughout Australia. The ACT Government is working towards addressing the causes of incarceration and has provided triennial funding to the Aboriginal Justice Centre to design and deliver new programs to prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

The Ngambra Circle Sentencing Court has been operating since May 2004. The initial trial period was extended and in May 2005, the ACT Government committed funding to the Court's operation for a further five years. Its success shows the power of networking the local community involved in making decisions in the criminal justice process.

The Government provided funds in the 2006-07 Budget to deliver a 3.7% CPI/Wage Indexed increase for the community sector and to help address significant viability issues.

Construction of the ACT Memorial is complete, commemorating people associated with the ACT who have served Australia overseas and is a first for the ACT. The memorial is located in the heart of Civic adjacent to Civic Square.

Arts funding was boosted with the allocation of an additional \$14.2 million for arts projects, organisations and awards through the ACT Arts Fund; for a network of community arts facilities; public art projects; and the delivery of arts services to the community through the Australian National University Community Outreach Program and the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

The 'Round Town program was also extended into the community, with a total of 21 events held across 11 locations between February and May 2006 providing entertainment to more than 25,000 Canberrans. The Government has also

invested significantly in supporting events in celebration of significant days of the year like Canberra Day, New Year's Day and Australia Day.

The *Schools as Communities* program seeks to build a more supportive and robust community by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools. It actively engages local community and business supports, in its aims to improve social and educational outcomes for at-risk children, young people and their families. Funded projects have included the establishment of community rooms in schools, family fun days, an ESL playgroup, worm farm, song writing project, workshops for fathers and children, an Indigenous program, an outdoor environment centre and a framing class for students' artwork.

The Government has also taken considerable steps to provide the community, and particular disadvantaged groups, with access to information technology and to bridge the digital divide. For example, ACT libraries provide free access to the Internet and training for those unable to afford or access such technology in their homes or workplaces, including supporting older people to become familiar with the technology.

# challenges ahead

Technological developments in communications have the potential to exclude disadvantaged Canberrans. The ACT Government is working with the Commonwealth Government to provide assistance to help disadvantaged and low-income households access a digital television service after the analogue service has been switched off.

## Future Actions

- Refocused business support
- Reduce property and personal crime
- Increase patronage of public transport
- Celebrate Centenary 2013
- Development of Core Pricing Principles in partnership with the community sector







## Priority Four: Improve health and wellbeing<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> While the health and well-being of Canberrans is comparatively good, problems remain. Changes in family structures and an ageing population also present challenges. By focusing on prevention and early intervention across the lifespan we can improve the likelihood of positive health and social outcomes for everyone.

4

# key achievements

- Additional \$0.750m investment in Access Improvement Program
- Additional \$2.9m recurrent investment in acute health services in 2006-07
- Additional \$2m recurrent investment in mental health in 2006-07
- Additional \$12.1m investment in ANU Medical School Building at The Canberra Hospital
- Additional \$ 2.5m recurrent investment in Additional Elective Surgery
- Additional \$ 1.2m recurrent investment in Critical Care Capacity
- Additional \$1.35m recurrent investment in Health Service Wide Aged Care Support
- Opening of the Older Persons' Unit at Calvary Hospital in February 2007 which includes a 20 bed older people's mental health unit and 40 beds for rehabilitation and aged care
- Construction of the Tuggeranong and Gungahlin Child and Family Centres

## 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



# [ progress



The *ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2006* gives a favourable picture of health in the Territory. Indicators show that life expectancy in the ACT is higher than life expectancy nationally. We had lower rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations compared to other jurisdictions in 2004-2005, and the lowest separation rates of any jurisdiction occur in the ACT for vaccine preventable conditions, and acute and chronic conditions.

The *ACT Primary Health Care Strategy 2006-2009*, released in September 2006, sets out a strategic direction for the delivery of primary health care services across the ACT.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Plan 2006-11* represents a significant collaboration between the ACT and Commonwealth Governments and the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. The Plan, released in July 2006, aims to close the gap between health of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and has a particular focus on families, pregnant women, children and people with a chronic disease.

The Government has allocated \$2 million over 4 years for Combating Childhood Obesity. *Be Active ACT* a physical activity plan for ACT Health will be completed in 2007.

The Newborn Hearing Screening Program has been successfully extended to Calvary and John James Memorial Hospitals so that all babies born in Canberra are screened. Statistics for 2005-06 confirm that 98.6% of eligible infants had their hearing screened.

The Government has allocated extra recurrent funding of \$0.638 million for the Child at Risk Health Unit to broaden its existing services to encompass a more comprehensive range of health services including nursing, developmental assessments and an expansion of counselling services to children and families where abuse has occurred or is suspected.

The Government has also funded up to 147 extra beds in the Territory's public hospitals since 2004-05. This includes a flexible combination of overnight acute inpatient beds and bed equivalents that can be adjusted throughout the year to correspond with peaks in demand. The Government has also invested more than \$10.34 million over 4 years from 2006-07 to reduce the number of patients waiting for elective surgery and increase the number of elective procedures.

Work was completed in February 2007 on a new \$9.75 million specialised unit for elderly patients at Calvary Public Hospital, including a 20-bed Psycho-Geriatric Unit that will care for older patients with acute mental illness and challenging behaviour.

Older people in the ACT will have improved care after a hospital stay with the provision of 35 places under the Transitional Care Program.

# [ progress

The Home and Community Care Program in the ACT has received an increase of 8.6% in funding to assist ACT's older people, people with a disability, and their carers living independently in the community.

The ACT Government continues to implement the *National Mental Health Plan* through the *ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008*. In the Strategy, the Government has enhanced funding to mental health services in the ACT. Through the 2006-07 ACT Budget the Government provided an additional \$1.2 million recurrent to increase access to specialist mental health services in both hospital and community settings.

In 2006 the ACT Government launched the *ACT Action Plan for Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention 2006-2008*. This Action Plan provides a comprehensive strategy for mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention that involves all sectors of government, community agencies and the community. This was supported by an annual allocation of \$0.76 million in the 2006-07 Budget.

During 2006 a number of tobacco control initiatives were implemented. On 1 September 2006 tobacco vending machines were banned in the ACT; smoking was prohibited in all enclosed public places from 1 December 2006 and legislation was passed to enable controlled purchase operations to prevent the sale of tobacco products to minors. The Government continues to investigate new initiatives to minimise the public's exposure to the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

The Canberra Hospital is the principal teaching hospital for the ANU Medical School. The faculty includes the School of Clinical Medicine and the School of General Practice, Rural Medicine and Indigenous Health who between them will supervise the activities of the students in their third and fourth years of the course. The ACT Government provided \$12.1 million for the new School of Clinical Medicine and Library at the Canberra Hospital which opened in 2006.

The Calvary Hospital Campus of the ANU Medical School has opened at Calvary Hospital providing specialized in-hospital clinical training for 3rd and 4th year medical students. The ACT Government has provided \$1.75 million to refurbish the area at Calvary in order to house the new ANU School.

These developments significantly enhance the capacity of the ANU Medical School to recruit and train doctors, many of whom will ultimately work in Canberra and the region, in time alleviating workforce shortages. Additional funding of \$3.55 million has been allocated for medical staff specialists to staff the medical school, and strengthen training of medical students.

The Medical Appointments and Training Unit (MATU) was established in 2006 to manage a range of functions associated with the ACT medical and dental workforce including the appointment and credentialing of medical staff. The MATU will play a significant role in the ACT's ability to attract and retain senior medical and dental staff.

The ACT Government committed \$10 million to build new teaching facilities for allied health students to undertake studies in an expanded range of disciplines at the University of Canberra. The facility was opened in February 2007.

# [challenges ahead

Health expenditure has been growing at a rate that is not sustainable. The Government will ensure health expenditure continues to grow for health services, but at a more sustainable rate, and that resources are better targeted to ensure that patients receive the most appropriate care, in the most appropriate setting and that Government is able to respond to areas of emerging pressure, including acute care, mental health, cancer service and aged care.

The ACT, like the rest of the country, has specific health issues and trends of concern, including an increase in the level of obesity and one of the highest prevalence rates of diabetes in Australia. The health issues and opportunities for health gain identified in the *ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2006* will be used as a map to guide future health care provision and policy in the ACT. Health workforce recruitment and retention are significant issues in the ACT as in the other States and Territories. The Government has committed \$4.2 million to develop strategies for dealing with workforce shortages.

The Council of Australian Governments' National Reform Agenda also provides a unique opportunity to work with other jurisdictions and secure Commonwealth funding. An identified priority under the National Reform Agenda is combating the rise of Type II Diabetes and other chronic diseases.

## Future Actions

- Continue to invest in health services, at a sustainable rate
- Respond to emerging pressures such as the ageing population and the increased demand for services including acute care, aged care, cancer and mental health services
- Implement *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Plan 2006-11*
- Reduce the waiting times for elective surgery and increase the number of elective procedures performed annually in the ACT
- Develop and implement a Chronic Disease Strategy
- Implement the Workforce Plan 2005-2010







## Priority Five: Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning<sup>5</sup> and training

<sup>5</sup> The capacity of our community is enhanced whenever high levels of school completion and educational outcomes are achieved. To meet the needs of the community in the 21st century we must ensure education is contemporary, relevant and challenging, that there are flexible learning pathways and we promote lifelong learning.



5

# key achievements

- 80% of students attained a year 12 Certificate or equivalent in 2005
- Sustained outcomes regularly above national averages in literacy and numeracy for Years 3, 5 and 9 students
- Increased free preschool hours for eligible 4 year olds to 12 hours per week
- Established ANU Secondary College
- Maintained highest school retention rates in the country
- Increased the number of apprenticeships and traineeships
- Increased funding for school maintenance
- Developed the 'Every Chance to Learn' Curriculum framework

## 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



# [ progress



The ACT Government has provided almost \$11.5 million since 2002 to reduce year 3 class sizes to facilitate better educational outcomes for primary students, particularly those with a range of challenging life circumstances.

The ACT Government and ANU have also collaborated to establish the ANU Secondary College, a college that enables ACT's most academically able secondary college students to study courses that count toward their future university qualifications.

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

ACT students continue to maintain high levels of performance against the numeracy benchmarks and the nationally agreed years 3, 5 and 7 literacy benchmarks.

In 2004, the Government increased literacy and numeracy support for Indigenous students in government schools through the *Indigenous Student Support Initiative*. The first group of students who received this additional support is now in Year 5 and has achieved excellent results. The sustained improvement in results for Indigenous students against national benchmarks has been a very significant achievement for the ACT.

# challenges ahead

Data from the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services indicates that the ACT has relatively high costs when compared with other jurisdictions. Recurrent expenditure per student in government schools in the ACT is 17% higher than the national average - the second highest in the country.

The ACT public education system has long been renowned for its high quality, with a strong philosophy of meeting the diverse needs of all students and helping all students reach their potential. This includes addressing the challenge of improving Indigenous students' results against the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

A demographic shift, an ageing and mobile population, and a slight drift of students from government to non-government schools, have caused enrolments to decline in some suburbs and a surplus capacity across government schools in the ACT.

The ACT Government is committed to maintaining the ACT's public education sector as the best in Australia. In 2006, the ACT Government undertook major reform of the public education system in order to ensure high quality public schools for all Canberra's students now and into future. These reforms saw the maintenance of the schooling models previously available, and a renewed focus on early childhood education. The Government announced new P-2 schools to concentrate on early years of schooling and also announced the amalgamation of all pre-schools into primary schools, to streamline learning pathways. As part of this major reform, the Government is also investing over \$175 million for building new state of the art schools in Gungahlin, Harrison, West Belconnen and Tuggeranong, \$90 million for upgrading existing schools and \$20 million for new information technology for schools.

In the 2006/07 financial year alone over 223 separate projects will be undertaken to improve more than 72 schools across Canberra, enhancing learning environments for students and teachers. For example the exteriors of schools and their grounds, as well as facilities such as science and computer laboratories and kitchens, will receive extensive improvements.

With new investments in IT parents will be able to participate in the online discussions and lessons, check online their childrens homework and be able to engage with their child's teacher through online video conferencing. The Government will also introduce electronic roll marking and an SMS service for parents to alert them to their child's absence.

Four new early childhood schools will be established catering for children from preschool through to year 2 and providing a solid foundation for learning into the future. The Government has also outlined initiatives to increase linkages between schools, colleges, CIT will also assist students to make the transition from school to employment and help address the skills shortage.

## Future Actions

- Implement reforms to ensure high quality, sustainable public education system
- Address causes of drift to non-government education sector
- Continue to address gap in Indigenous education outcomes
- Build new school at West Belconnen (P-10)
- Build new school at Harrison
- Build new college in Gungahlin
- Build new school at Tuggeranong (P-10)
- Establish early childhood schools (P-2)
- Forge strong partnerships between ACT Government schools Canberra's universities, the Canberra Institute of Technology and industry.
- Host Pacific School Sport Games in December 2008



## Priority Six: Housing for a future Canberra<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Housing provides individuals in a community with the basis for a stable, healthy and productive life. It also provides a sense of belonging and dignity. Housing affordability is a critical issue and rental costs and mortgages in the ACT are significant. With demographic changes, responsive and creative solutions will be needed to meet changing demand.

6

# [key achievements

- \$33m capital injection for social housing
- Continued accommodation support for most vulnerable
- Assistance to people moving from crisis accommodation to sustainable housing options
- 207% increase in Government funding for homeless families compared to an increase of 18% nationally
- Launch of ACT Affordable Housing Action Plan



## 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 for community housing
- Strengthen the links between crisis accommodation services and long-term housing options
- Reduce homelessness

# [ progress



The Real Estate Institute of Australia's Home Loan Affordability Indicator for June 2006 ranks the ACT first in terms of affordability in Australia, with the Territory's indicator of 52.0 almost double the NSW indicator.

There are, however, still members of the community in need of supported accommodation in the form of public housing or through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. To help address this need, the ACT Government allocated \$10 million per year over three years in the 2006-07 Budget to expand public housing stock - funding which should provide housing for an additional 90 families most in need.

The Government has also implemented measures to expand the community housing sector and ensure it remains a viable and growing source of affordable housing. In addition, the Government has provided a \$33.2 million capital injection for social housing, of which \$6.2 million was allocated for expanding the community housing sector. This builds upon significant capital investments made since 2002-03 towards the community housing sector, reforms at Ainslie Village, the provision of increased access and choice for Indigenous people, energy efficiency initiatives, as well as the need to respond to the Canberra bushfires.

The *ACT Homelessness Strategy Progress Report*, released in November 2005, demonstrates the Government's commitment to lessening the causes, impact and incidence of homelessness in the ACT.

Expenditure in 2006-07 on the Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) and the ACT's response to homelessness totalled \$21.4 million and will fund a range of accommodation and associated support services such as refuge and crisis accommodation, food, information and referral services and outreach and supported accommodation services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The *Building for Our Ageing Community* Strategy provides the framework for a mix of housing options for older Canberrans. So far 17 projects are under development across the ACT. Concessions have been granted on the sale price of aged care sites to provide affordable aged care and accommodation. Strategies are being further developed to ensure that aged people have access to affordable accommodation in convenient localities.

These projects will deliver over 900 beds and a similar number of Independent Living Units. Ten blocks have been sold to aged care service providers with another four in the pipeline. The land bank is being extended to provide sites for bed care and independent living over the next five years and beyond.

In April 2007 the Chief Minister launched the ACT Affordable Housing Action Plan which includes:

- new house and land packages priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000;
- regular englobo land sales;
- over-the-counter sales of affordable housing blocks;
- a major expansion of community housing that will deliver an additional 480 affordable dwellings over five years;
- an initiative to increase the supply of private rental dwellings by 200-400 homes in the first instance;
- land rental and shared equity schemes, including for public and community housing tenants; and
- targeted stamp duty concessions.

# [challenges ahead

The Government announced a number of reforms to public housing in the 2006-07 Budget aimed at better supporting members of the community most in need, better managing waiting lists, better matching tenants to housing stock, speeding up the upgrade or replacement of older stock and reducing costs. These reforms include the introduction of efficiencies with Housing ACT, increasing the housing stock, reviewing the security of tenure policy, changing eligibility criteria for public housing and examining options for managing the portfolio.

The Government is also undertaking a range of reforms to the homelessness sector to improve service responses and ensure greater coordination of services for people experiencing homelessness or moving from homelessness into greater independent living. These reforms will be implemented with no overall reduction in service levels although there will need to be serious consideration given to implementing alternative service delivery models and options to improve the overall efficiency of the sector.

The Transitional Housing Program (THP) is an ACT Government Initiative of the 2006/07 Budget. Housing ACT will provide 20 properties from stock that is hard to let, waiting redevelopment or waiting for sale, to Anglicare Canberra Emergency Accommodation Service (CEAS) to manage the tenancies for short term transitional housing for homeless clients. The objective of THP is to provide a transitional accommodation option to homeless clients and free up homelessness crisis accommodation places, by maximising the usage of short-term available Housing ACT stock. The homelessness service will provide outreach support to these clients while they wait for their long term housing option.

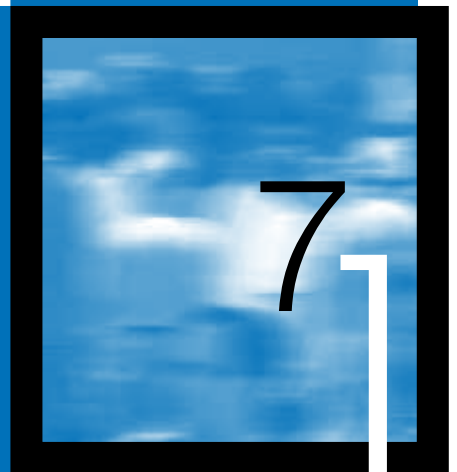
Responding to Canberra's rapidly ageing population is a challenge that the Government is meeting by acquiring, as well as adapting properties for older people. The construction of 46 public housing units in Turner specifically for older Canberrans will provide high quality, modern, secure housing located close to amenities. More than 10% of public housing stock in the ACT is designated as suitable for older people.

## Future Actions

- Implement major housing reforms
- Reform housing and homelessness services to increase access to safe, secure, affordable housing
- Develop additional options for affordable housing



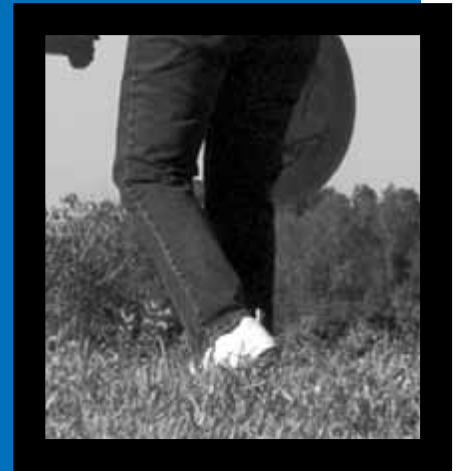
## Priority Seven: Respect and protect the environment<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Apart from its inherent value, protecting the natural environment in and around Canberra helps ensure that it can be enjoyed by future generations. A well managed environment is also important to our physical and psychological health.

# key achievements

- Community adoption of water conservation measures
- Declaration of new nature reserves at Callum Brae and Gorooyarroo
- Environmentally responsive design principles guiding new suburb of Forde
- The securing of a Green Star 4 rating for the Alexander Maconochie Centre
- New bicycle parking guidelines



## 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

# [ progress

In its first term of office the Government increased funding to the environment by 47%. The extra funding covered additional nature conservation measures, a captive breeding program for the Northern Corroboree Frog, threatened species research, new walking trails, a water management strategy and greenhouse gas reduction projects. The Government also invested significantly in bushfire recovery to help repair the damage done to the environment following the 2003 fires.

The implementation of the Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy has resulted in the declaration of more than 1400 ha of new nature reserve at Callum Brae and Gorooyaroo and the allocation of \$1.4 million for its management and protection.

The Government is developing a new Climate Change Strategy and Energy Policy in recognition of the fact that climate change and energy science are swiftly evolving areas where dynamic responses from the government, business and community are necessary. This strategy will be released in mid 2007. As a further sustainability measure, the Government introduced mandatory requirements that will ensure all new dwellings in the ACT meet five-star energy ratings and thus reduce energy consumption, helping to tackle climate change.

The Government has joined other states and territories in signing a Declaration on Climate Change which endorses a set of principles and a series of actions to respond to the challenge of climate change. The Premiers and Chief Ministers have called upon the Commonwealth Government to adopt these principles as the basis for a national approach to climate change.

State Premiers and Territory Ministers have also indicated in principle support for the introduction of an emissions trading scheme.

Another key plank of the sustainability platform was the adoption by the Government of permanent water conservation measures in March 2006 following the very positive community response to mandatory water restrictions

over the preceding years. The measures are in keeping with the ACT's water management strategy, *Think Water, Act Water*, which contains the goal of reducing water consumption by 12% by 2013. To provide community incentives, the strategy includes a water tune-up program which has seen the repair of more than 2,000 leaky taps and the installation of more than 200 dual-flush toilets at minimal expense to participants.

The Commonwealth Government has recognised the hard work and great achievements of the ACT in the area of water reform, with the allocation of the ACT's full entitlement of national competition payments, following the final crucial assessment of its reforms, by the National Water Commission. The ACT has indicated its in principle support for the Prime Minister's national plan for the Murray-Darling Basin and will continue to ensure that the concerns of the ACT are being addressed. As the largest urban centre within the basin, and as a very efficient water user, the national capital has an important contribution to make to the national conversation regarding this most crucial contributor to our water supply.

Construction of the ACT's newest residential area has begun in the suburb of Forde. Located between Mulligans Flat and Horse Park Drive, the Forde community is expected to contain more than 1,000 homes and an anticipated population of 2,500 residents by 2013. More than 29% of the suburb will be dedicated to open space, with every home planned within 200 metres of a landscaped park, wetland or nature reserve.

To further protect the environment and enhance public space, the Government has released a new master plan for Nature Discovery Zone at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve which will set the reserve apart as one of the most innovative in Australia. A \$7.5 million mountain bike facility and events pavilion have been opened at Stromlo Forest Park. This facility includes a criterium cycling circuit and a grass cross country track and there are also trails suitable for use by horse riders, runners and bushwalkers. Planning has commenced for the renewal and management of Glebe Park and Black Mountain Peninsula, two of Canberra's most visited urban parks.

# challenges ahead

The Government remains committed to protecting and enhancing the natural environment and to minimising our 'ecological footprint'. The Government and community, however, face considerable challenges in conserving water resources and reducing greenhouse gas consumption.

There is no higher priority for the Government than securing Canberra's water supply, drought proofing the Territory and reducing dependence on unpredictable rainfall. Our dam levels, at less than 32 per cent, are at their lowest ever. In 2006 inflows into ACT dams were 90 per cent below the long term average, having declined by over 60 per cent in the last six months.

It is for these reasons that the ACT Government must consider all options including a comprehensive community consultation on water purification and other water options, and investigating the purchase of water from Tantangara Dam in NSW.

The Government's 2004 *Think water, act water* policy provides long term guidance for the management of ACT water resources. A host of initiatives have been pursued to conserve water and reduce demand including the introduction of permanent water conservation measures and the introduction of new environmental flow guidelines to better reflect the flows of the waterways and make more water available for urban use.

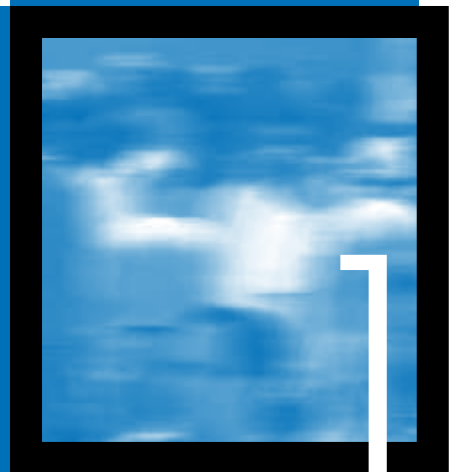
The Government remains committed to reducing waste. The Government will support the Canberra community to continue making good use of kerbside recycling, and support Canberra businesses to meet the challenge of waste minimisation.

The ACT Government is seeking to implement a more integrated approach to land management across the Territory, and has moved to establish a single land management agency within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services.

## Future Actions

- Achieve *Think Water, Act Water*
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and building community capacity to adapt to climate change
- Continue to reduce waste to landfill





LONG TERM TARGETS



# targets

The *Canberra Social Plan* incorporates a number of targets to assist in determining if the Plan's implementation is having an effect.

## Reduce long-term unemployment

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

In the ACT the long-term unemployed are defined as those persons actively looking for and available to start work but there has been at least 52 weeks since their last reported full-time or part-time job.

The absolute number of long-term unemployed in the ACT has progressively fallen over recent years to levels around 800. Numbers are small and subject to significant sampling errors, although a downward trend is clearly apparent.

The unemployment rate in the ACT has fallen from 4.3% in June 2004 to 2.6% in October 2006. Consequently, while in absolute terms long-term unemployment has been trending

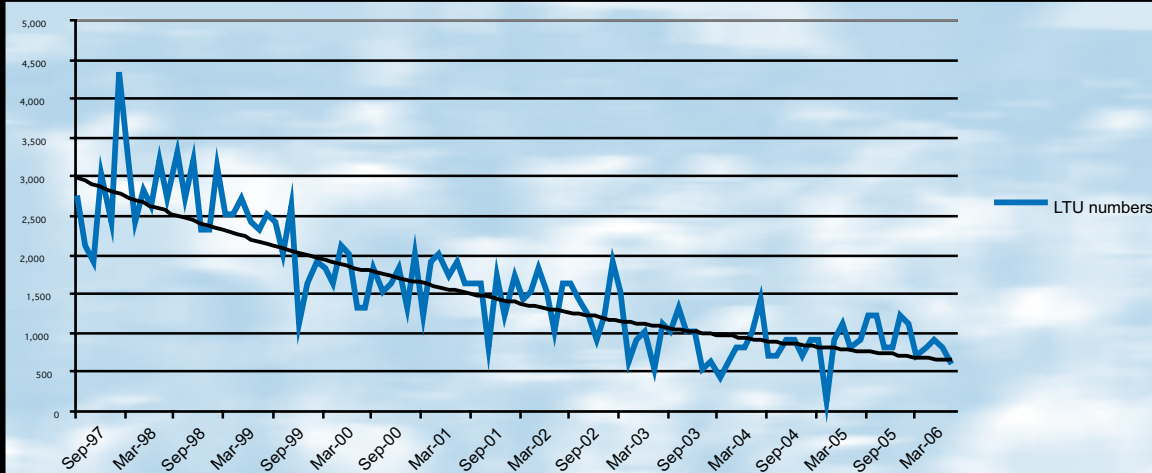
downwards, by virtue of the recent significant falls in total unemployment, the percentage of long-term unemployed to total unemployed has varied at just above or below the 12.5% target.

The long-term unemployed are typically male and aged between 25 to 54 years. Self reported barriers to employment are that they are (i) either too old or young, (ii) lack the necessary skills or education, (iii) believe the job market is too competitive, or (iv) that they have insufficient work experience. A lack of post-school qualifications also has a marginal impact on the likelihood of a person being employed for the long-term.

The negative outcomes of long-term unemployment are generally well established and include poor physical and mental health; an increased risk of drug use amongst children of the unemployed; increased risk of suicide; poor educational outcomes for children; and family breakdown.

Beyond the formal definition of long-term unemployment, there are also around 17,000 people in the ACT who are considered to be under-utilised in the labour market. That is, people currently working but looking to do more hours, people who are looking for work but are not available to start and discouraged job seekers.

### Long-Term Unemployment in the ACT



ABS Labour Force Australia, Detailed, July 2006 (6291.0.55.0001)

The Community Inclusion Board has recently commissioned research into the detailed characteristics of long term unemployment in the ACT to assist in assessing appropriate policy responses.

## Decrease income inequality

*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.*

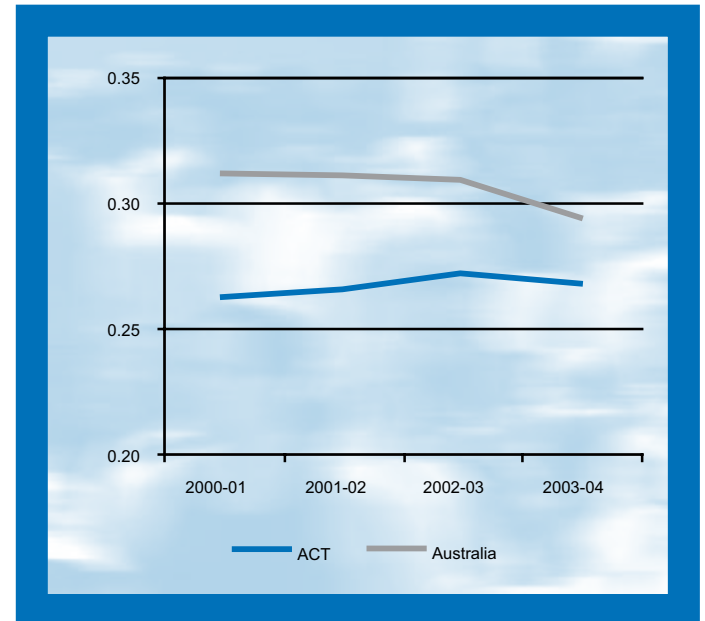
An indicator called the Gini Coefficient measures income inequality. It translates into a number that indicates the difference between a perfectly even distribution of all income and the actual distribution of income throughout the population. The larger the figure is, the more disparity there is in income distribution.

The Gini Coefficient has held relatively steady between 0.26 and 0.27 since the introduction of the *Canberra Social Plan*. Other measures of income distribution - means and medians, frequency distributions, percentile ratios and income shares – have shown some variations but no clear patterns when methodological changes are taken into account.

The Gini Coefficient provides a long term target for Government, aimed at assisting the development of policy direction. In the short term, the coefficient is unlikely to be sensitive to measures introduced under the *Canberra Social Plan*.

Demographic changes in the population and changes in the labour force can also significantly impact upon results. For example, income at younger ages can be much lower with many participating in full-time study. Conversely as people age their incomes tend to fall as they withdraw from the labour force or reduce their working hours. This does not necessarily lead to increased financial stress but it does contribute to greater levels of income inequality.

## Gini Coefficient



ABS Survey of Income and Housing (6541.0)

## Reduce homelessness

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

The *2002 Needs Analysis of Homelessness in the ACT* estimated that there were between 1265 and 1570 homeless people at any one time. However, homelessness is a complex and challenging issue. The homeless are not a homogeneous group and different factors affect different sub groups of the homeless population.

Neither is homelessness static, with people flowing in and out of homelessness over time. Point in time estimates such as those based on the five yearly Population Census can therefore only provide a snapshot of homelessness and do not allow for the calculation of how many people might experience homeless in any given year.

The 2006 Population Census will be the next and most accurate measure of the homeless population in the ACT.

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

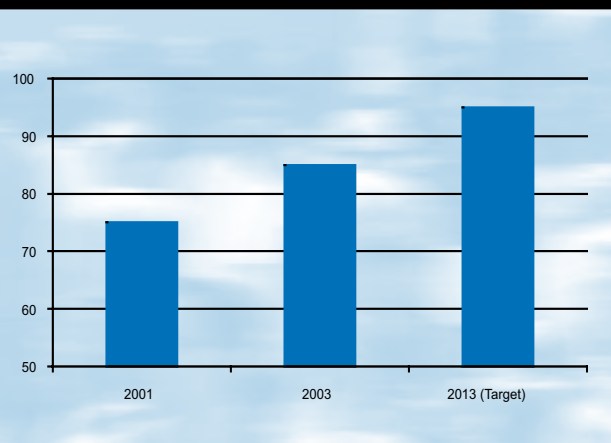
*The Government's target is to increase to 95% the proportion of 19 year olds with a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent by 2013.*

As the *Canberra Social Plan* used 2001 data from the Census to calculate the proportion of 19 year olds with a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent an updated figure (for 2006) will not be available until June 2007.

However, the ACT continues to lead the country with high rates of school completion. The ABS Survey of Education and Work provides an indication of the underlying trend in 19 year olds with a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent and is broadly consistent with the figures obtained from using Census data.

This survey shows the proportion of 19 year olds with a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent continues to increase in the ACT. In 1998, 67% had a year 12 Certificate or equivalent and this had risen to 80% in 2003.

### Proportion of 19 yr Olds with Year 12 Certificate or Equivalent in the ACT



ABS Australian Social Trends 2006 (4102.0)

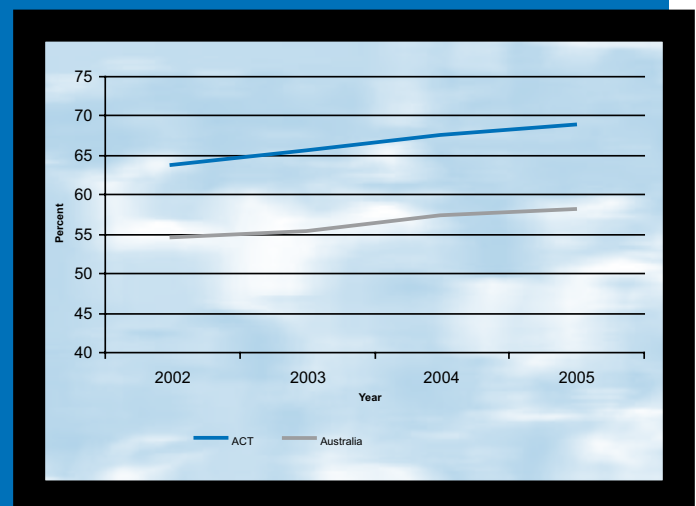
## Increase the proportion of adults with post school qualifications

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

The proportion of ACT people aged 25-64 years with post school qualifications has increased since the release of the *Canberra Social Plan* and the ACT is on track to meet this target. In 2005, 68.7% of the target group had post school qualifications.

The work of the ACT Skills Commission is expected to contribute toward the fulfilment of this target.

### Post School Qualifications



ABS Australian Social Trends 2006 (4102.0)

# [sources



ABS 2001 Census Quickstats: Australian Capital Territory

ABS Australian Social Trends 2006 (4102.0)

ABS Demographic Statistics March 2006 (3101.0)

ABS Population Projections, Australia 2006 (3222.0)

Australian Capital Territory Population Projections 2002 – 2032 and Beyond

ABS Australian Labour Market Statistics July 2006 (6105.0)

ABS Labour Force Australia, October 2006 (6202.0)

ABS Labour Force Australia, Detailed, July 2006 (6291.0.55.0001)

ABS ACT in Focus 2005 (1307.8)

ABS Australian National Accounts, State Accounts 2004-05 (5222.0)

ABS Survey of Employment, Earning and Hours May 2004 (6306.0)

ABS Survey of Income and Housing (6541.0)

REIA Home Loan Affordability Report, June Quarter 2006-08-07

ABS Building Approvals Australia September 2006 (8731.0)

ABS Housing Finance, Australia September 2006 (5609.0)

Report on Government Services 2006

ACT Chief Health Officers Report 2006