



Canberra Social Plan Progress Report 2009





MESSAGE FROM CHIEF MINISTER

Building Our Community: The Canberra Social Plan is the ACT Government's blueprint for creating a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community.

To achieve this vision the *Canberra Social Plan* identifies seven priorities supported by goals and specific actions. This report provides a snapshot of the ACT Government's achievements in each of the priority areas, building on the progress reports published in 2005 and 2007.

The ACT Government is committed to building on our achievements to address the goals we have set. It is also important that we continue to listen to the community, reflect on the challenges and renew our direction. To this end, in August 2008 the ACT Government launched *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century*.

The Canberra Plan is the guiding document for this Government as we look to the centenary in 2013 and beyond, as an inclusive, sustainable and creative city; a centre of economic growth and innovation; the national capital; and a place of great natural beauty.

The *Canberra Plan* will provide the framework for an update to the 2004 *Canberra Social Plan*. We will be building on the strengths of our community and re-focusing ourselves on both the ongoing challenges and those on the horizon.

If you would like more information about the update of the *Canberra Social Plan*, including opportunities to have your say, please check the website:
<http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/policystrategic/socialplan>

The updated *Canberra Social Plan* will be released in the first half of 2010. In the meantime I commend this *2009 Progress Report* to you as it reflects the ACT Government's commitment to our shared vision for the Canberra community.

Tom Stanbury



ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2007

The ACT Government has continued to progress Social Plan commitments and related initiatives since the last biennial report in 2007. In addition to ACT initiatives, we have also joined with the new Federal Government and other States and Territories to implement a new reform agenda through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Areas of focus include health and ageing, education, skills, early childhood development, climate change, housing and Indigenous policy reform.

Significant work has also been undertaken to implement the Federal Government's *Nation Building and Jobs Plan*, building on the base of the ACT's own substantial infrastructure and land release program.

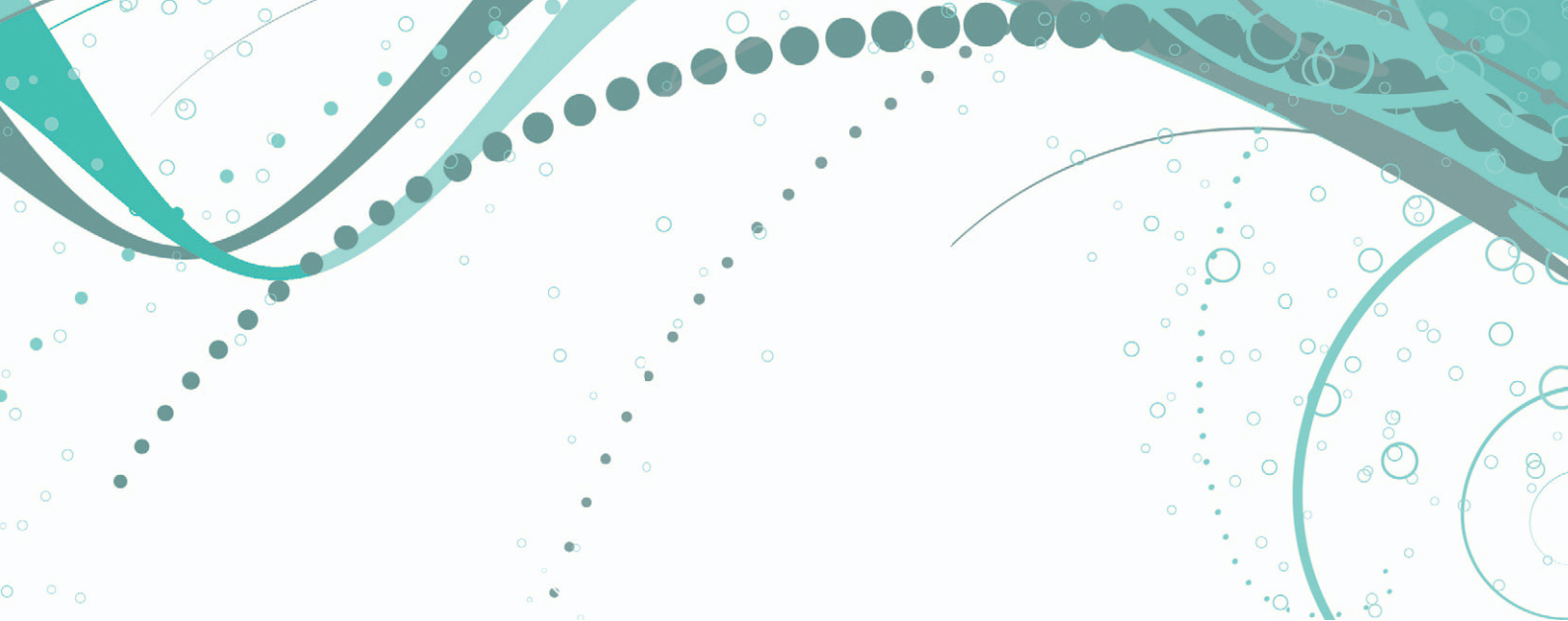
The 2008-09 and 2009-10 ACT Budgets provided unprecedented investment to build a better city and stronger community. This included a major capital injection to create a health system for the next decade, coupled with significant increases in investment on health services, which brought the total estimated annual recurrent expenditure on health services to \$980.3m in 2009-10.

Education is a crucial part of supporting all citizens to reach their potential. Investment in educational programs for students, teacher development and literacy and numeracy outcomes has been a priority of this Government. New schools have been built: Kingsford Smith School at West Belconnen and Harrison Primary School. The 2009-10 Budget allocated \$22.7m over four years to employ additional teachers to reduce class sizes and improve educational outcomes.

Four new early childhood schools have been funded to provide education, childcare and family support services. Two Child and Family Centres are now established in their communities at Gungahlin and Tuggeranong, providing targeted early intervention programs and support, and enabling families to access a range of welcoming community-based services. These services include health, family support and parenting programs in a one-stop-shop. A third centre will be established in the West Belconnen area through a joint Federal and ACT initiative under the COAG reform agenda.

There has also been strong investment in housing and services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Single access points for homelessness and social housing are being provided within ACT Housing. In 2009-10, \$1.2m was allocated over four years to assist people with mental health issues access and maintain appropriate housing. Funding was provided to support rough sleepers with outreach and support services to assist them into safe, secure and suitable long term accommodation. Additional funding was also allocated to enhance the Building Housing Partnerships initiative to assist homeless and disadvantaged individuals and families with living skills and employment.

New funding arrangements with the Federal Government mean the Social Housing National Partnership Agreements will deliver over \$7m in capital funding and 40 properties will provide long term accommodation for homeless families in the ACT. In addition, up to 300 social housing units are being constructed, as well as repairs and maintenance on 240 dwellings, under the *Nation Building and Jobs Plan*.



The ACT Government is investing \$37.4m over four years to ensure that the community sector is ready for the future. The centrepiece of this investment is \$24.6m over two years in expanding and refurbishing community facilities. This includes the establishment of three Regional Community Facilities and nine Neighbourhood Halls. The Regional Community Facilities will house community organisations on long-term tenancies, while the Neighbourhood Halls will be available for casual hire.

Non-government organisations provide a wide range of services to the community alongside government agencies. The ACT Government is reviewing community contracts and industrial conditions of people working in the community sector. This review will be completed by 2010-11.

The promotion of human rights has continued to be a focus of Government policy. The ACT was the first Australian jurisdiction to pass human rights legislation in 2004. The *Human Rights Act 2004* has since been strengthened through amendments that provide for direct duties on public authorities. A joint research project with the Australian National University is looking at the incorporation of economic, social and cultural rights into the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

The ACT Government has also introduced a range of concessions to assist eligible Canberrans to meet energy, water and sewerage charges. From 1 July 2008, the rate of concession for water was increased to 68 per cent of the fixed water supply charge. For eligible households that means around \$50 off the standard water supply charge in the first year.

In 2013 Canberra will celebrate its Centenary. Community – both local and national – will be at the heart of a year of celebrations. In the 2008-09 Budget, the ACT Government committed funding to support the official program of celebrations and preparations for this landmark event is underway. Ms Robyn Archer AO has been appointed as the Creative Director of the celebrations which will focus on building pride and ownership in the nation's capital and creating enduring benefits for the future.

A summary snapshot of the key achievements since 2007 in each of the seven priority areas identified in the *Canberra Social Plan* follows.

SNAPSHOT OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2007

PRIORITY 1 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CANBERRANS

To increase economic opportunities to reduce long-term unemployment, improve opportunities for employment and reduce poverty and exclusion.

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

Initiatives implemented under this priority have been aimed at creating opportunities for employment by encouraging creativity and innovation. These initiatives target reducing unemployment, poverty and exclusion to maintain Canberra's status as the jurisdiction with the lowest unemployment.

Policy Development

- The ACT has been working to implement significant reform initiatives aimed at addressing skill shortages and emerging skill needs by ensuring that training is flexible and responsive to the needs of industry, employers and individuals. The Government's economic plan for the ACT, *Capital Development* was released in September 2008, and is founded on strategies to make the economy more dynamic and flexible. In particular, by making investment in people a priority, the Government continues to ensure that Canberrans are the most highly educated and skilled workers in the country.
- The *ACT Skills Future: Key Initiatives in a Long Term Strategy to Address the Skills Challenge* was released in May 2008 in response to the recommendations in the *ACT Skills Commission Final Report*. A total of \$51m over 4 years was provided in 2008-09 for initiatives aimed at reducing skills shortages in the short and long term. The 2009-2010 Budget supported further initiatives to address the skills shortage.
- The *ACT Public Service Attraction and Retention Framework* was launched in 2008. This framework supports the ACT Public Service by improving leadership skills, managerial capability and by providing employees with opportunities to grow and develop.
- The paper *Development of a Poverty Impact Analysis Approach in the ACT* was released in 2008. This paper will inform the work underway on the development of a triple bottom line assessment framework.



Opportunities for Participation

- At 3.7 per cent in October 2009, the ACT's unemployment rate remains the lowest nationally. The national average is 5.8 per cent. The ACT also retained its AAA rating, in spite of the economic downturn.
- A portable long service leave scheme for the ACT community sector is now being implemented.
- Extended paid maternity leave in the ACT Public Service to 18 weeks.
- Attracted 565 skilled workers in 2007-08 and 807 skilled workers in 2008-09 to Canberra through the *Live in Canberra* campaign in conjunction with the *Skilled and Business Program*.
- As at March 2009, 80 *ACT Return to Work Grants* had been approved providing up to \$1,000 in funding for women to return to work through support for purchase of equipment, clothing, and attending short courses.

Improvements in Educational Pathways and Skills Infrastructure

- Provided funding in 2008-09 for CIT for an additional 35,000 hours per year of training.
- Accelerated apprenticeships were introduced in hairdressing, cooking and panel beating, with another in spray painting introduced in 2009.
- Simplified the processes for applying for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and access to Certificate IV through the *ACT Skills Recognition Project*.
- Established an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EEO Program* to support the *Indigenous Traineeship Program*.
- Allocated funding to build and maintain the ACT's Public Service capacity and leadership.

- Funded 36 courses through the Priority Support Program targeting people returning to the workforce.
- Provided \$1.037m over four years for CIT Vocational College to expand educational and support services.
- Commenced building the CIT Learning Centre in conjunction with the new Gunghalin College, to be opened in 2011.
- Allocated funding of \$9.943m in the 2009-10 ACT Budget for the relocation of CIT's Electro-technology Program to the Fyshwick Trade Skills Centre.
- Provided funding to expand CIT's scholarship program to provide assistance for up to 1000 extra students per year through the 2009-10 ACT Budget.
- Allocated \$1.5m over four years for Australian School-Based Apprenticeships in schools, through the 2009-10 ACT Budget, for students to achieve recognised vocational education with paid work and training as part of the educational program, contributing towards their Year 12 Certificate.
- Provided \$0.540m for capital upgrades at CIT's Reid Campus in 2009-10 ACT Budget.
- Established an *"Out of Trade Register"* for Australian Apprentices and employers to register their details to encourage apprentices to stay in work and continue their studies where they are at risk of losing their job.



Support for Innovation

- Invested \$26m in the National Information Communication Technology Australia (NICTA) Laboratory Facility in City West.
- Allocated \$1.1m in funding for the Trade Connect Small Grants Program to support innovative and emerging exporters in the 2009-10 Budget.
- Provided funding of \$12m over four years for a Civic refurbishment package to lift business activity in the 2009-10 Budget.
- Allocated funding of \$11m over four years to enhance Canberra as an innovation city through the 2008-09 Budget.

Initiatives under this priority are aimed at protecting the rights of all Canberrans through the promotion of fairness, equity and inclusion across the community, reconciliation with the Indigenous community and maintaining an environment that welcomes migrants and refugees.

Promotion of Human Rights

- Established the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, supporting a representative voice for the ACT Indigenous community.
- Passed the Human Rights Amendment Bill 2007 to introduce a statutory right of action and an obligation on public authorities to act consistently with the *Human Rights Act 2004*.
- Commenced a joint research project between the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Australian National University in May 2009. The project looks at the incorporation of economic, social and cultural rights into the *Human Rights Act 2004*.
- Opened the first ACT prison, the Alexander Maconochie Centre and the new Youth Detention Centre, Bimberi. Both centres are operating in accordance with human rights principles.
- Introduced and passed the *ACT Civil Partnerships Act 2008*. In November 2009, amending legislation was passed to provide for legally binding ceremonies for same-sex couples.

PRIORITY 2 RESPECT, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

To protect and promote human rights, and to encourage equity and freedom from discrimination for all members of the community

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.

Equitable Expectations, Experiences and Opportunities

- Developed and launched *Future Directions; Towards Challenge 2014*, the ACT Government's Framework to improve opportunities and outcomes for people with a disability.

- Introduced the Companion Card for people with a disability and their carers.
- Provided children and young people with a disability with access to equipment through a specialised equipment loan service.
- Drafted the new *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013*.
- Completed consultation on the *ACT Women's Plan 2009-14*.
- Prepared for a gender analysis pilot and phasing in of a gender impact statement.
- Extended paid maternity leave for ACT Public Service employees to 18 weeks.
- Introduced the ACTION Gold Card for free travel on buses for older people.
- Established the Homeless Persons' Legal Service.
- Commenced a review of community contracts and development of an improved industrial relations framework for non-government organisations in the ACT.
- Continued to coordinate the Life Reflections Photographic Competition to promote the benefits of positive ageing, the importance of healthy, active lifestyles and the value of inter-generational relationships for older persons.
- Continued to fund opportunities to support older Canberrans to participate in community activities, learn new skills and maintain their wellbeing through the Seniors Grants Program.

PRIORITY 3: A STRONG, SAFE AND COHESIVE COMMUNITY

To build an inclusive community where the contributions of all members are valued, all are encouraged to participate and everybody feels safe and secure.

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 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.

Initiatives under this priority focus on increasing safety through preventing crime, promoting inclusion through access to public transport and community facilities, and recognising and encouraging the contributions made by community organisations, volunteers and businesses to the life of the community.

Inclusive Community Initiatives

- Opened the first ACT prison, the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). The AMC provides a unique opportunity to break the cycle of re-offending and reintegrate offenders into the ACT community.
- Opened the new Youth Detention Centre Bimberi, which provides opportunities for creating lasting change in the lives of young people in custody.
- Allocated \$24.6m over two years for expanding and refurbishing community facilities. This initiative includes the establishment of three Regional Community Centres and nine Neighbourhood Halls.
- Developed a policy platform to support community inclusion and address disadvantage, which builds on the work of the Community Inclusion Board, and in 2009-10, appointed four Community Inclusion Advocates to continue work in listening to the community. Information on Community Inclusion and the work of the Board can be accessed on <http://cmd.act.gov.au/community-inclusion/home>.
- Released a draft Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing for community consultation over August and September 2009, based on feedback from the initial community consultations held in March and April 2009. The final Plan is scheduled for release in December 2009.
- Developed a range of recommendations under Phase II of the *Affordable Housing Action Plan* to create more affordable housing options for older Canberrans. These include initiatives to increase the supply and diversity of housing for the aged, the level of appropriate public housing and community housing for older tenants, and the establishment of community access networks to support older Canberrans living at home.
- Established six regional community buses in July 2008 for older people and others with limited transport options.
- Funded a Seniors Centre in Tuggeranong in the 2009-10 Budget, with construction commenced by December 2010.
- Allocated \$3.5m to vulnerable families, carers and volunteers prior to Christmas 2008.
- Introduced the ACTION Gold Card which allows people 75 and older to use the Action Bus Services free of charge
- Implemented initiatives under the *Sustainable Transport Plan 2004* and the *Integrated Transport Framework 2008*. Work has started on developing the *Sustainable Transport Action Plan 2010-2016*. A number of public consultation events have been held and further ones are planned.
- Provided funding for trialling REDEX, a new high frequency, limited stops, rapid service from 16 November 2009 to 30 June 2010.

Safer Community Initiatives

- Reduced property and personal crime. Since 2007, the incidence of burglaries, robberies and the number of sexual assault victims has declined.
- Provided \$8m over four years to upgrade the Civic CCTV network, expand the CCTV network to the Kingston and Manuka entertainment precincts, Manuka Oval and Exhibition Park in Canberra.
- Since 2006-07, 106 new police have been funded. This includes funding in 2009-10 for 24 police officers to operate the Gungahlin Police Station 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Passed the *Crimes (Murder) Amendment Bill 2009* to broaden the definition of murder, to include death occurring where the intention was to inflict serious harm.

- Established the Nightlink Taxi scheme to improve late night public transport and public safety in Civic.
- Provided funding to establish a Working With Vulnerable People Checks Screening Unit and completed consultation on a screening system in the ACT.
- Introduced a Companion Card for people with a disability and their carers.

Stronger Community Initiatives

- Completed Mawson Park'n'Ride.
- Staged a wide range of events, including Floriade, the Multicultural Festival, Australia Day celebrations.
- Hosted the Olympic Torch relay in Canberra in 2008.
- Hosted the UCI Mountain Bike and Trials World Championship in September 2009.
- Funded new libraries in Gungahlin and Kingston.
- Commenced preparations for celebrating Canberra's Centenary in 2013.
- Upgraded shopping centres such as Red Hill and Lyons.
- Provided funding for expanding cycling infrastructure and repairing community paths and footpaths.
- Provided funding to carry out additional repairs and maintenance for urban open spaces and infrastructure.
- Developed a Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.

PRIORITY 4 IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

To improve the health and wellbeing of the community and narrow the health gap between the general community and the poor and disadvantaged.

GOALS

- 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.

Initiatives under this priority are aimed at implementing measures across the government and community sectors that meet the diverse health needs of all parts of the community. Whole of government approaches to health service delivery are being implemented focused on prevention and early intervention and initiatives that support people through their lifecycle.

Capital Investments

- Committed \$300m over four years in the 2008-09 ACT Budget and \$148m in the 2009-10 Budget for the implementation of the Capital Asset Development Plan (CADP). Funding included \$38m for mental health facilities, \$90m for the Women's and Children's Hospital and \$51.3m for the Belconnen Community Health Centre.
- Completed a new operating theatre in Calvary Hospital.
- Provided funding for:
 - refurbishment of Tuggeranong Community Health Centre;
 - an additional 24 hospital beds at the Canberra Hospital;
 - a Mental Health Assessment Unit at the Canberra Hospital;
 - the first Walk-in-Centre for the ACT;
 - the purchase and installation of the PET/CT;
 - digital mammography; and
 - the installation of e-health technology.

Service Delivery Improvements

- Reduced the waiting times for elective surgery. By the end of June 2009, the number of people waiting for more than 12 months had fallen by 24 per cent.
- Implemented a range of initiatives under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Plan*, including the Integrated Service Delivery project, the Aboriginal Midwifery Access program, the Bush Healing Farm, and a Palliative Care Project.
- Provided funding of \$11m over three years for Prevention Health Initiatives in the 2009-10 ACT Budget.
- Released the 2009-14 *Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Plan and Suicide Prevention Strategy*.

- Developed the *Chronic Disease Strategy 2008-11*.
- Developed models of care for: the Women and Children Hospital, the Surgical Assessment and Planning Unit, the Calvary Intensive Care Unit, the Mental Health Assessment and Planning Unit and the Adult Mental Health Unit.

Workforce Initiatives

- Implemented initiatives under the *Workforce Plan 2005-10*, including the establishment of the Prevocational General Practice Placements Program, the provision of scholarships in Allied Health and Nursing, establishment of four new Nurse Practitioner positions and support for recruiting to general practices
- Provided funding:
 - to establish a range of new positions and scholarships in various health professions in the 2008-09 Budget (\$8m over four years);
 - for an in-hours locum for residents of aged care facilities;
 - to conduct mental health training for emergency service workers and teachers; and
 - \$12m over four years for initiatives to grow the local GP workforce in the 2009-10 ACT Budget.

PRIORITY 5 LEAD AUSTRALIA IN EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND TRAINING

To increase education participation and achievement, raise literacy and numeracy levels and improve the transition between school, further study and the workforce.

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.

The initiatives implemented under this priority are aimed at reducing inequalities in early childhood by improving transitions from home to early childhood settings and increasing participation and achievement in education with a view to promoting life-long learning.

Capital Investments

- Established four Early Childhood Schools at Southern Cross, Isabella Plains, Narrabundah and Lyons. These schools operate as early learning and development centres providing integrated services for children from birth to age eight and their families.
- Built the new Kingsford Smith School at West Belconnen and Harrison Primary School.

- Commenced planning to build a secondary campus at Harrison, a new school in Tuggeranong and a new College at Gungahlin.
- Provided funding to implement the Virtual Learning Environment to provide 24 hours, seven days a week access to an on-line learning environment.
- Allocated \$4m additional funding over four years in 2009-10 to non-government schools to assist students with learning needs, socio-economically disadvantaged students and special education students.
- Provided \$90m funding over four years for the Schools Infrastructure Renewal program to refurbish and upgrade school environments.
- Provided a further \$12.3m in the 2009-10 Budget for capital upgrades at schools and preschools.
- Provided \$5.6m over four years for the ongoing costs associated with the Australian Government Building the Education Revolution (BER) initiative in the 2009-10 Budget. The BER program is providing for the building or refurbishment of school infrastructure.

Program Initiatives

- Provided funding to implement the new curriculum framework *Every Chance to Learn* in all ACT schools.
- Implemented the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-13*.
- Allocated \$1m for the *In Pursuit of Excellence* program in 2009-10.
- Provided funding to implement the *Quality Teaching* initiative to improve the quality of teaching in ACT public schools.
- Increased free pre-school hours to 15 hours per week.
- Provided funding to implement the *Languages Support Plan 2008-10*.

- Implemented measures to address the gap in Indigenous educational outcomes.
- Provided additional staffing in all high schools and colleges, including pastoral care workers.
- Provided funding of \$691,000 over 4 years to increase Indigenous teachers and teacher's assistants in the ACT Public Schools and for Indigenous students who aspire to continue on to higher education.
- Hosted the Pacific School Sport Games in December 2008.
- Allocated \$1.45m to schools to undertake industry based training under the Australian School Based Apprenticeship program, and \$3m to improve outcomes of learning English as a Second Language in the 2009-10 ACT Budget.
- Allocated \$28.7m over four years in the 2009-10 ACT Budget to lower class sizes.
- Provided education and support to young carers, parents and pregnant students through the CCCares program.

Initiatives implemented under this priority are aimed at meeting the needs of the community by increasing the supply of public and community housing, providing specialist housing and support services to reduce homelessness and implementing strategies aimed at making housing more affordable.

Affordable Housing

- Announced the *Affordable Housing Action Plan* in April 2007 including 62 initiatives designed to accelerate land supply, increase the supply of affordable housing and rental accommodation, and support the community housing and private rental supply.
- Implemented the initiatives of the Action Plan with record land releases of 3,470 sites in 2007-08, and 4,339 blocks released in 2008-09; implementation of the land rent scheme; introduction of the requirement of 15 per cent affordable housing in all new developments; stamp duty concessions for first home buyers and pensioners; and transfer of \$40m in assets to CHC Affordable Housing together with a \$50m loan facility to enable 1,000 new affordable dwellings within 10 years.
- Developed 21 new recommendations as part of Phase II of the *Affordable Housing Action Plan* to address homelessness, and create more affordable housing options for older Canberrans. This included a number of homelessness initiatives to be implemented as part of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and Social Housing*; initiatives to increase the supply and diversity of housing for the aged; more appropriate public and community housing for older tenants; a review of planning requirements for the construction of granny flats; the development of universal design guidelines for housing to encourage ageing in place and increase the level of appropriate public housing for older tenants; and community access networks to support older Canberrans living at home.

PRIORITY 6 HOUSING FOR A FUTURE CANBERRA

To improve access to quality safe and affordable housing for all and to ensure that the type, size and location of housing meet the changing needs of the community.

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.

- Designed a Mortgage Relief Fund to provide short term assistance to homeowners who are at risk of repossession of their home due to an unforeseen change in their circumstances.
- Commenced development of 20 additional properties under the *National Partnership on Social Housing*.
- Worked with the Australian Government to deliver the *National Rental Affordability Scheme* and *Housing Affordability Fund*.

Reducing Homelessness

- Funded *Street to Home*, a community outreach program for rough sleepers.
- Provided funding to expand the *Managed Accommodation Program* by 15 places for people exiting Corrections.
- Funded the *Stay at Home* project to investigate options to support victims of domestic violence to stay in their homes.
- Commenced implementation of initiatives under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and Social Housing*.
- Commenced implementation of *A Place to Call Home*, which will provide 20 additional properties over five years to house the homeless.
- Under the *Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative*, provided funding for ten integrated support packages of housing and mental health support, to assist in creating sustainable tenancies for people with moderate to severe mental health issues.
- Commenced implementation of ACT initiatives under the national policy framework for homelessness, *Which Way Home*.
- Created a central access point for social housing with three components: a central intake service for homelessness services; a common waiting list for community and public housing; and redevelopment of the housing shop front.

- Established the *Transitional Housing Program* to provide flexible accommodation options for homeless people who do not need supported accommodation. The 2009-10 ACT Budget provided funding to expand the program by ten properties.

PRIORITY 7 RESPECT AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

To enhance Canberra's liveability by implementing measures that recognise the importance of the environment for the overall health of the community.

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.

Initiatives under this priority are aimed at protecting our natural environment for future generations by reducing water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and waste and by caring for our parks, landscapes and remote areas.



Protecting the Environment

- Established the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water (DECCEW).
- Implemented *Think Water, Act Water*. Potable water consumption has reduced by over 46 per cent as a result of several years of temporary restrictions, permanent water conservation measures, substitution measures, and education and behaviour change programs.
- Launched *Weathering the Change*, a comprehensive climate change policy and action plan.
- Implemented the ACT waste strategy *No Waste by 2010*, which achieved an improvement in material recovered and recycled from 42.3 per cent in 1995-96 to 75 per cent in 2008-09.
- Implemented *Switch Your Thinking* programs to encourage reduction of water usage, energy consumption and waste across the community.
- Established roundtables of business and academic representatives to develop and promote actions focussing on climate change outcomes and adaption.
- Completed a study on the social impacts of climate change.
- Included water sensitive urban design in new developments such as Kingston, Bonner, Harrison and Forde.
- Implemented measures to increase uptake of renewable energy.
- Commenced planning for establishment of a solar facility in the ACT.
- Committed to plant 62,500 new trees and all shrubs along suburban roads over the next 10 years.
- Commenced program of replacing stormwater drains with urban creek and wetland systems.
- Shifted the focus of waste reduction to commercial waste, with \$483,000 allocated in the 2009-10 ACT Budget for a Commercial Waste Scheme over the next two years.

Capital Investments

- Following on from the work of the Water Security Taskforce, approved the enlargement of the Cotter Dam, the Murrumbidgee to Googong transfer and the purchase of high security water from NSW.

PROGRESS ON THE CANBERRA SOCIAL PLAN TARGETS

Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan incorporated a number of long term targets to assist in reviewing the effectiveness of the Plan and its implementation. The targets are:

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

Meeting these targets is timed to coincide with Canberra's Centenary in 2013. The current status of targets is outlined below.

Reduce long-term unemployment

For the period from November 2008 to October 2009, the number of people in the ACT who had been out of work for 12 months or more averaged 471 people per month. This is a reduction compared to 760 per month for the period January 2004 - December 2004. (Source: *ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Sep 2009, Catalogue No. 6291.0.55.001*)

Between November 2008 and October 2009, long-term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment was approximately 7.8 per cent in the ACT, compared with a national average of 14.2 per cent. By comparison, between January 2004 and December 2004, long term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment was 20.7 per cent nationally. For the same period, the monthly

average for the ACT was 11.3 per cent.


It needs to be noted that as ACT numbers are small they are subject to sampling error. (Source: *Labour Force Australia, Detailed, Electronic Delivery, Aug 2009 Data Cube UM2, ABS 19 November 2009 (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)*).

The ACT has the lowest unemployment in Australia. In August 2009, the official unemployment rate in the ACT was 3.6 per cent, compared with a national average of 5.8 per cent. The ACT is the only jurisdiction with a rate below 4 per cent. (Source: *Labour Force — August 2009, ACT Treasury, 10 September 2009.*) (<http://www.treasury.act.gov.au/snapshot/LABOUR.pdf>).

The long term unemployed in the ACT are typically male and aged between 25 to 54 years. Self reported barriers to employment are that they are either too old or young, lack the necessary skills or education, believe the job market is too competitive, or that they have insufficient work experience. A lack of post-school qualifications also appears to have an impact on the likelihood of a person being a long-term unemployed individual. Demographic and other research on long term unemployment in the ACT shows that it is geographically concentrated. (Source: *Labour Force Australia, Detailed, Electronic Delivery, Aug 2009 Data Cube UM3, ABS 17 September 2009 (cat. no.6291.0.55.001)*).

Addressing long term unemployment in the ACT will require a co-ordinated response from Federal and ACT Government services. The challenge is to improve the integration of employment and support services so that the systems are user-centric and contribute to sustainable outcomes for people who are long-term unemployed.

The Chief Minister's Department will use the findings of research, commissioned in 2009, to explore options for implementing a place based trial of service delivery for people who are long term unemployed.



Five years on from the release of the *Social Plan*, long term unemployment in the ACT has reduced, however, following on from the *Global Financial Crisis*, it may be useful to focus also on measures such as underemployment (underemployment = people who want more work). Over recent times, the number of hours worked has decreased and the number of part-time jobs has increased, leading to higher rates of underemployment.

Decrease income inequality

Residents of the ACT have the highest average weekly ordinary time earnings (AWOTE) of all States and Territories at \$1384.10 compared with the national average of \$1195.50. There is still considerable gender disparity in that men are earning on average 15.1 per cent more than women. This is considerably lower than the national average of 21.1 per cent. This gap has closed considerably since 2003 when men earned 21.7 per cent more than women in the ACT. (Source: *Full-Time Adult Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings — May Quarter 2009, ACT Treasury, 13 August 2009* (<<http://www.treasury.act.gov.au/snapshot/AWOTE.pdf>>)

In 2007-08, low income households in the ACT had a mean weekly income of \$551 per week, the highest in Australia and 34.7 per cent higher than the national average of \$409 per week. (Source: *Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia – Detailed tables, 2007-08, ABS, 20 August 2009* (cat. no. 6523.0).


The number of ACT households who received their main source of income from Government pensions and allowances decreased from 16.7 per cent in 2004 to 11.7 per cent in 2008. This is the lowest percentage of all Australian jurisdictions and well below the national average of 23.3 per cent. (Source: *Australian Social Trends, Data Cube – Family and community, Table 2 Family and community, State Summary, ABS, 23 July 2008* (cat. no. 4102.0).

Income distribution is measured by an indicator called the Gini coefficient. The value of the Gini coefficient may fall between zero (0) and one (1), where zero (0) corresponds to perfect household disposable income equality (everyone has the same equivalised disposable household income) and one (1) corresponds to perfect income inequality (one person has all the disposable income, while everyone else has no disposable income). It is generally considered that relatively homogenous distribution of equivalised disposable household income (indicated by a Gini coefficient of zero) is most desirable.

In 2007-08, the ACT Gini coefficient was 0.311, almost 6.0 per cent lower than the national value of 0.331, and the third lowest Gini coefficient in Australia. This however represents an increase from 2000-2001, when the ACT had the second lowest Gini coefficient in Australia, at 0.26 compared with the national average of 0.31. Further inspection of household data indicates that lower income households' income rate is increasing at a slower rate than for all other groups, whilst the highest income households' income rate is increasing at the highest rate, thus increasing the disparity. It is worth noting that it is difficult to assess changes in income distribution over this period due to methodological changes¹. Some of the change in the income distribution measures also reflect changes in personal income tax thresholds (Source: *Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia – Detailed tables, 2007-08, ABS, 20 August 2009* (cat. no. 6523.0).²

Reduce primary homelessness

There were 78 people sleeping rough in the ACT on Census night 2006 (primary homelessness). This represents approximately 5.7 per cent of people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness (well below the 15.6 per cent experienced nationally). While readily comparable primary homelessness



Census data is not available for 2001, the *Needs Analysis of Homelessness in the ACT 2002* estimated the number of people sleeping rough each night at between 120 and 315, or approximately 10 per cent of people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

In the 2006 Census, the number of homeless people in the ACT was 1,364 (up from 1,229 in 2001). In addition, there were 42 people recorded as marginal residents in caravan parks (a decrease from 110 people in 2001). The homeless comprised approximately 0.4 per cent of the ACT population, the lowest of all states and territories, with the rate of homelessness rising marginally from 40 to 42 persons per 10,000 population over the 2001-2006 period. (Source: *Counting the Homeless 2001 and 2006, ABS, Cat 2050*)

The profile of accommodation types for homeless people in the ACT is different to that of the rest of Australia. There are more people proportionally in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in the ACT, at 39 per cent, than nationally at 19 per cent, with fewer people in boarding houses or sleeping rough than the national averages. The largest proportion of ACT homeless people at 47 per cent, reported that they were staying with relatives or friends on Census night in 2006.

It should also be noted that methodologies around counting homelessness, and locating homeless people to be counted, are improving. This is an important step and will contribute positively to the development of strategies to address homelessness.

The Government has implemented a range of programs to reduce homelessness in the ACT and continues to make addressing homelessness a priority. To this end the Affordable Housing Steering Group was reconvened at the end of 2008 to provide further focus on the issue of


homelessness. This led to Phase II of the Affordable Housing Action Plan which makes 10 recommendations, predominantly focused on an across government approach to addressing homelessness. Implementation of these recommendations is commencing.

Increase the proportion of young people successfully completing secondary school or equivalent

The proportion of 20-24 year olds who had completed Year 12 or equivalent in the ACT in 2008 was 90.4 per cent, compared with 84.2 per cent nationally. In 2001, the ACT rate was 89.5 per cent, compared with 79.1 per cent nationally. (Source: *ABS cat. no. 6227.0 Education and Work, May 2008. Table 1.8 6227.0-2008*)

ACT completion rates for Year 12 only (i.e. not including an equivalent attainment) were 76 per cent in 2007, compared with 75 per cent in 2004. (Source: *Productivity Commission. Report on Government Services 2009. Table 4A.128*).

This indicates a slight progress towards the long term target of 95 per cent, although it should be noted that when starting at such a high base, significant increases in rates are slower to occur. Through the COAG Reform Agenda, the ACT is implementing a range of new initiatives to support participation in education and training, youth transitions, skill development, and the up-skilling and re-skilling of the workforce. The Government introduced a new law in November 2009 requiring ACT students to be either at school, in training or work until age 17 from 2010. This will assist the Government's commitment to lift the completion rate to 95 per cent by 2013.



Increase the proportion of adults with post school qualifications

People in the ACT have the highest level of educational attainment in Australia. In 2008, 71.5 per cent of the ACT population aged between 25 and 64 had a post-school qualification (up from 69.5 per cent in 2006), compared to the national average of 61.0 per cent.

The ACT also has the highest proportion of people in the 25 to 64 year age group with a Bachelor degree or above (42.4 per cent in 2008, up from 39 per cent in 2006), compared with the national average of only 25.5 per cent (up from 23.8 per cent in 2006). (Source: *ABS cat. no 4102.0 Australian Social Trends, Data Cube – Education and Training, Indicator 15, Tables 2 and 2.8*).

1. The ABS notes that it is difficult to assess changes in income distribution over longer time periods due to methodological changes.

2. Changes to the personal income tax threshold improve the coverage of income by:

- incorporating non-cash benefits provided to employees, which adds \$43 per week to average gross household income in 2007-08 (\$18 and \$15 respectively to the 2005-06 and 2003-04 weekly household incomes);
- incorporating termination payments and lump sum workers compensation payments, which adds \$5 per week to average gross household income in 2007-08;
- incorporating irregular overtime payments, which adds \$9 per week in 2007-08;
- measuring all bonuses rather than just the bonuses captured in previous surveys indistinguishably as part of the standard response to the question on regular wages and salaries, which contributes to higher average household income from this source in 2007-08 (up from \$19 per week in 2005-06 to \$32 per week in 2007-08); and
- incorporating a broader range of inter-household transfers, which contributes to higher average household income from this source in 2007-08 (up from \$4 per week in 2005-06 to \$15 per week in 2007-08).



NEXT STEPS

The *Building Our Community: the Canberra Social Plan* was launched by the ACT Government in 2004 after extensive consultation with the community. This progress report highlights the many achievements and substantial progress towards achieving the vision and goals of the 2004 *Canberra Social Plan*. Five years out it is time to look ahead and identify the challenges we as a community will need to meet over the coming years.

An update to the 2004 *Canberra Social Plan* is underway. The update, scheduled for release in 2010 will retain its ongoing focus on health, education and municipal services and commitment to well-being, safety and equity in the community. Importantly, the update will respond to a number of current and emerging pressures and issues, to map a way forward for the future.

The ACT Government's forward social policy agenda will need to take into account a number of contextual issues - a growing population, an ageing demographic and the possible longer term impact of the *Global Financial Crisis*, particularly on unemployment and household debt. In addition, the social impacts of emerging issues, notably climate change and water security, also need consideration. Research commissioned by the Chief Minister's Department in 2008 shows that climate change will have disproportionate consequences for vulnerable and low income households.

The Canberra Plan - Towards our Second Century also identifies housing affordability and skills shortages as new challenges that have gained prominence since 2004.

The ACT's role as a regional centre is also important to consider. The ACT provides many important services and opportunities for residents in south-east New South Wales, in particular, transport, education, health, retailing, tertiary industry and cultural facilities. The strong growth of the surrounding region will increase economic and business opportunities in the ACT, but is also likely to present a range of planning, service delivery, infrastructure provision, and budgetary challenges.

The Government will continue its focus on community inclusion and addressing disadvantage. Reform to housing and homelessness services to increase access to safe, secure and affordable housing remains a priority. This issue and others such as long term unemployment, where there is no single, simple solution, require the involvement of a range of agencies and organisations working together in creative and responsive ways to make a difference.

Ongoing engagement between the ACT Government, the community sector and the Canberra community in decision making are also priorities the *Canberra Social Plan Update* will take forward.

As part of the *Canberra Social Plan Update*, the Government is seeking the views of the community. Details of community engagement activities are posted on the Chief Minister's Department website at: http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/policystrategic/socialplan/developing_an_update