

## **2. THE CANBERRA PLAN**

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*The Canberra Plan* sets the strategic planning framework for the Government and the community, having been shaped and given direction by Canberrans themselves.

Its component plans, *The Economic White Paper*, *The Canberra Social Plan* and *The Canberra Spatial Plan*, were developed to guide Canberra's growth and development now and well into the future. These strategic plans should be viewed alongside annual Budget papers, which set out the Government's immediate priorities, and agency Annual Reports, which show the progress in meeting these priorities.

The 2005-06 Budget once again commits significant resources to a range of actions and measures aimed at realising *The Canberra Plan* vision:

*Canberra will be recognised throughout the world - not only as the beautiful city, uniquely designed in harmony with its environment, the seat of Australia's government and the home of its pre-eminent national institutions but also as a place that represents the best in Australian creativity, community living and sustainable development.*

Underpinned by the concept of sustainability, *The Canberra Plan* is the Government's integrated strategy to strengthen Canberra's economy and capacity to deliver services for Canberrans, whilst managing urban growth and change.

Each term the Government will measure the longer-term influence of *The Canberra Plan*, along with various other Government and community initiatives in achieving our social, environmental and economic goals. The initial *Measuring our progress* report, released in 2004, is a useful barometer by which to monitor and measure our success in living as a sustainable community over time.

### **One Year On - translating a vision into reality**

During 2004-05 many of the goals and objectives expressed in *The Canberra Plan* were realised through the implementation of key initiatives to invest in our people, improve our economy, and protect and enhance our environment.

The establishment of a Child and Family Centre in Gungahlin is a prime example of the Government's commitment to support Canberra's children and focus on early childhood development. The Centre is a hub for developmental programs, health and education services and parenting and family support services. The Child and Family Centre program will be extended to Tuggeranong in 2005-06.

The Community Inclusion Board was established in early 2004. The Board advises the Government on strategies for dealing with issues of social exclusion, and has already identified personal and household debt as a major social exclusion issue and has established the Pilot Household Debt Project to help low income families break free from the debilitating cycle of consumer debt.

The Canberra Gold Awards were introduced in March 2005 to recognise residents who have lived in Canberra for 50 years or more and to acknowledge their valuable contribution to the community. An expanded program of community events and celebrations also took place that included 'Christmas in the City'; New Year's Eve celebrations; Australia Day festivities; and 'Celebrate in the Park', an unrivalled birthday party for Canberra. These events and celebrations encourage social inclusion and enable Canberrans to gather and celebrate in their city's dynamic heart.

The Government invested \$10m in a new School of Health Science at the University of Canberra, and supported a new Construction Industry Training Centre. Both of these initiatives will turn ideas and knowledge into assets for the Territory by investing in Canberra's knowledge future and building upon its strength as a well educated community.

The establishment of the Canberra Partnership Board, bringing together business, researchers and Government to identify opportunities for growth and export enables the sharing of expertise and ideas to create new business opportunities. Similarly, a \$30m Super Venture Capital Partnership formed in February 2005 will take innovative local ideas and turn them into commercial realities and jobs, forging even stronger partnerships for growth.

A Central Canberra Taskforce was established to lead the revitalisation of Canberra City, with a landmark agreement signed with the Australian National University to redevelop a large area of Canberra's City West. This represents an important step forward in re-energising Civic as a source of pride and creativity.

The Government's commitment to promote living harmoniously with the bush capital environment was advanced during 2004-05 through achievements such as the development of the Sustainable Transport Plan and the establishment of a Bushfire Abatement Zone.

### ***The Canberra Plan and the 2005-06 Budget***

During the 2005-06 financial year, many new initiatives will be supported as *The Canberra Plan* continues to set the direction for Canberra's future growth and development.

This Budget has a strong focus on promoting collective health and wellbeing within our community by investing in our people. It provides significant funding to strengthen early childhood development programs across health, education and family services, through initiatives such as the extension of the Child and Family Centre program to Tuggeranong, and an expansion of the Kids at Play Program, which provides opportunities for children to be involved in active play in after-school settings.

The importance of individuals and community organisations that care for, and provide critical support services for, the elderly and people with a disability is also recognised and supported, with significant funding allocated for community-based services through ACT Health's Home and Community Care Program, and the Community Support and Crisis Intervention initiative.

In order to build on Canberra's strength as a well-educated community, funding has been allocated to increase the hours of free preschool education for eligible four year olds, to upgrade Canberra's school buildings, and increase the levels of support for students with a disability, including those with complex needs.

The Budget delivers on the Government's commitment to improve access to acute hospital services and to reduce waiting times in emergency departments. Funding has been provided for 300 extra elective surgery allocations in 2005-06, rising to 400 in 2006-07 through the *Elective Surgery Reform Program*. Discharge lounges at both Calvary and The Canberra Hospital will improve bed management and the timely transfer of patients awaiting hospital discharge. Additional funding has also been provided for medical and occupational health and safety equipment, and dental services for high-risk and special needs groups have been expanded.

Canberra has a great sense of community and it is important that we continue to encourage people to be involved in **building a stronger community**. In 2005-06 funding has been provided for the creation of a new *Human Rights Commission*, which will incorporate several existing statutory oversight functions and provide a framework for inclusion of similar new functions in the future.

A new Northside community-based learning and life skill development program will also be funded to support young people with a disability, and increased funding has been allocated for domestic violence crisis services.

Canberra has an ageing population and there is an ongoing requirement to adapt community services and housing to meet the needs of our older citizens. The 2005-06 Budget provides for the development and implementation of "falls prevention programs" in ACT residential care facilities. The successful *Intermittent Care Services* pilot, supporting older people returning home following hospital stays, will also be expanded.

In promoting **a city for all ages** we also need to ensure that the potential of our young people is recognised. To ensure that we continue to work towards increasing the proportion of young people successfully completing secondary or vocational studies, a review of the ACT Government college system will be undertaken to ensure that Canberra's flagship colleges remain relevant and meet young people's educational needs. There will also be an increase in the number of traineeship and apprenticeship places in the ACT in line with the Government's commitment to Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Investing in **Canberra's knowledge future** is a key theme within *The Canberra Plan*. In capitalising on the Territory's research and innovation strengths, the Government has committed to continue funding support for the *Knowledge Fund*, assisting institutions and innovation-based firms to commercialise their ideas and develop new partnering approaches.

Through *Priority Industry Sector Support Funding*, Government, community, business leaders and academia will be able to work together to build competitive strength and achieve sustainable growth and development in the ACT. **Partnerships for growth** will be formed through a range of cluster development activities, including enterprise capability development and critical mass building of firms across the nine priority industry sectors identified in the *Economic White Paper*.

The 2005-06 Budget provides significant funding towards the major transformation of the City West area in line with enhancing Canberra's **dynamic heart**. As part of ongoing efforts to make Canberra City a vibrant hub of activity and a focal point for all Canberrans, the public space in Childers Street will be redesigned to accommodate and encourage a range of pedestrian and festival activities between the city and the Australian National University and create a cosmopolitan 'eat and meet' area.

As part of an improved program of events and entertainment in the Territory, a national commemorative event to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII in the Pacific will be held near Lake Burley Griffin, with Veterans invited to attend from Canberra and throughout Australia.

Additional funding has been allocated for initiatives that will enhance Canberrans' experience in **living with the environment – our bush capital**. Priority Government projects that will support the restoration, recovery and re-establishment of non-urban areas of the ACT after the 2003 bushfires include the re-development of the rural villages; the enhancement of recreational facilities at Stromlo Forest Park; the re-establishment of the Cotter area and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve; and the creation of the new Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens.

The Government's decision to allocate ongoing funding to the Planning System Reform Project demonstrates a firm intent to substantially improve planning processes and practices within the ACT. Likewise, the Government continues to provide funding for the implementation of strategic directions arising out of both the *Canberra Spatial Plan* and the *Sustainable Transport Plan*, including the further investigation of the Molonglo Valley for future urban development, the Belconnen to City Busway and Canberra Central initiatives.

To ensure Canberra remains bushfire and emergency ready, funds have been allocated for additional emergency response and support vehicles and the operation of the Snowy Hydro SouthCare helicopter service. Furthermore, in recognising the importance of the ACT Bushfire Memorial to the Canberra community, additional monies have been allocated to meet the memorial design specifications resulting from community consultation in 2004-05.

## **The Future**

It is important to recognise that while some of the goals outlined in *The Canberra Plan* are already being realised, other goals have a longer-term focus and will take a number of years to achieve.

As outlined above, the implementation of *The Canberra Plan* to date has resulted in significant social, economic and environmental investments and both short and long-term benefits for the Canberra community.

In looking forward the 2005-06 Budget provides funding for many initiatives, both new and ongoing, which continue to support *The Canberra Plan* vision of making Canberra a place that represents *the best in Australian creativity, community living and sustainable development*.