

INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY

The 2014-15 ACT Budget will invest \$26.3 million in new initiatives to provide easily accessible, high quality services to support vulnerable Canberrans and build a stronger community.

The announcement was made today by Minister for Community Services Andrew Barr, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People Joy Burch, and Minister for Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Ageing, Shane Rattenbury.

This package will transform disability services, support children in out of home care, simplify the way people access human services, deliver targeted support for housing and homelessness services, address family and sexual violence and provide further support through the concessions program.

More than \$8 million to transform disability services

The ACT Government is committed to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and has committed additional funds to support people with disability during the ACT NDIS trial and beyond, including capital funds to replace existing respite facilities.

- The funding includes \$1.6 million over three years to continue the Therapy Assistants program, fulfilling an election commitment.
- \$2.8 million over two years to provide emergency responses in disability services for those who urgently require a greater level of care and support. A further \$555,000 will supplement the ACT's contribution to the NDIS trial in the ACT and will be allocated to areas of highest priority in the ACT disability care system.
- Over \$1 million in 2014-15 will enable the construction of a new purpose-built respite home that will provide modern respite services for children and their carers with disabilities in the ACT.
- An additional \$2.2 million in 2014-15 will fully fund indexation for community sector disability service organisations so they may continue providing support to their clients prior to the transition to the NDIS.

More than \$9 million for housing and homelessness

The 2014-15 Budget will deliver evidence-based and targeted support for housing and homelessness services. Initiatives include:

- \$5.8 million to build public housing for around 20 older tenants, allowing them to downsize into housing that is more suitable to their current housing needs, freeing up their larger homes for other families. This work will be delivered over four years and will be phased in from 2015-16.
- \$1.4 million to build five units specifically to meet the housing needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants. This work will be delivered over four years and will be developed in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and organisations.

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- \$1.5 million has been allocated in 2014-15 to match the Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.
- A further \$156,000 in 2014-15 will be provided for Common Ground and will see the first tenants to move into this flagship initiative supporting Canberrans experiencing long-term homelessness. This amount increases to \$321,000 in 2015-16 and goes towards the cost of providing support and assistance they require to stay housed, achieve stability and improve their health and live independently. This will provide access to greater opportunities to participate in the benefits of living in the community, and training and education.
- \$150,000 will be provided to evaluate homelessness sector reforms.

Out of Home Care Strategy

An investment of \$4.1 million to support children and young people in out of home care is among the centrepieces of the ACT Government's commitment to meeting the needs of vulnerable Canberrans in the 2014-15 Budget.

Funding will be provided to meet the increasing demand for out of home care services and lay the groundwork for the implementation of the *Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020* which provides for an innovative approach to the government's support for children, carers and service providers. The initiatives funded in the one-year commitment include:

- Piloting of therapeutic assessments and planning for children and young people in care.
- Training for foster and kinship carers, service providers and care and protection staff to support the implementation of a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system.
- Establishing an accreditation and monitoring system for out of home care.

These initiatives represent the first deliverable of the government's new direction for out of home care.

Better Human Services

The *Better Human Services* \$2.1 million trio of initiatives will simplify the way people access and are supported by human services such as housing, family support and disability. These three initiatives have one common aim – to ensure that people are supported with the right service, at the right time and for the right duration.

- A two-year, \$1.3 million Local Services Network Launch in West Belconnen will trial new ways to better integrate local services in line with the Human Services Blueprint, including local governance, flexible funding arrangements, enhanced service coordination, and data sharing.
- The one-year, \$445,000 expansion of Strengthening Families program to work with up to 50 vulnerable families to develop and implement an agreed family plan, supported by a tailored support package to best meet their needs.
- The one-year, \$322,000 establishment of a Human Services Gateway for people to improve access to information and self-support options, connecting individuals and families with the right support services.

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Funding to address family and sexual violence

The ACT Government will continue to support the ongoing provision of sexual assault counselling and crisis support and court support victims of domestic violence.

- The Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) will receive \$153,000 in 2014-15.

Taxi Subsidy Scheme

The ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) provides financial assistance to ACT residents with a disability or significant mobility restriction that prevents them from using public or community transport.

- \$596,000 over four years will fund an increase in the Taxi Subsidy Scheme by 9 per cent, from \$22.50 to \$24 for ordinary taxis and from \$34.50 to \$37 for wheelchair accessible taxis. This change reflects increases in taxi fares since 2011, the last time the rate was increased.

Increasing funding to the ACT Concessions Program

- \$2 million over four years will be provided to expand eligibility for the Sewerage rebate to 4215 holders of the Centrelink Low Income Health Care Card.
- The current Spectacle Subsidy Scheme rebate will be capped at \$200 every two years, and this will provide a saving to the budget of \$107,000 per annum.