

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACT

ACT Council of Social Service Inc.

ACTCOSSA

BUDGET INITIATIVES WILL STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY

In response to the announcement of the ACT Budget, ACTCOSS Director Ara Cresswell welcomed a number of initiatives that will address disadvantage in the ACT and build the capacity of community organisations so they can help those who need it most.

"Today's budget provides welcome resources across a range of areas of social need. In particular, there are a number of initiatives to help assist community organisations to be viable into the future, including:

- \$24.6 million for investment in community facilities over 2 years, which will in part address the need for affordable and appropriate community space for providing social assistance
- \$3.6 million for improving the capacity of community organisations, particularly through the partial funding of a portable long service leave scheme for community sector workers, which will help organisations retain a skilled workforce
- 4% indexation for funding agreements with community sector organisations that recognises the cost increases of providing services"

"We also welcome the focus on health in the Budget, particularly with funding of over \$8million over 4 years for community mental health services, and more than \$1million a year to help prevent chronic diseases", commented Ms Cresswell.

"There has been a significant investment in the Alexander Machonohie Centre, and we are particularly pleased with over \$10million in funding for rehabilitation services in the prison to help prisoners transition to the world outside when they leave."

"In the ACT, while educational outcomes remain high, there is a large disparity between high- and low-achieving students. We welcome a number of initiatives to help overcome this difference, including nearly \$1million over 4 years for improvements in literacy and numeracy, continued funding for the SPICE volunteer tutoring program, increases in student equity funds for low socio-economic status schools and specific funds to help learning for students with a disability", Ms Cresswell continued.

"Finally, we also welcome significant investment into new buses to boost our public transport system, and which will also improve access for people with a disability", Ms Cresswell concluded.

**For more information, please contact Ara Cresswell, Director
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