

# Multicultural

ACT Labor is committed to building a better city and a stronger community that recognises and celebrates our cultural diversity and fosters social cohesion.

In December 2005 the *Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre* was opened and this innovative initiative of the ACT Labor Government now accommodates over 35 multicultural groups.

ACT Labor has improved services and representation for the multicultural community by promoting participation in the community life of the ACT through its three multicultural grants programs – the Multicultural Radio Grants Program; the Community Languages Grants Program; and the Multicultural Grants Program.

The National Multicultural Festival has been expanded to become the premier community cultural event in the ACT and Labor has assisted with the creation of the *Canberra Multicultural Communities Forum Inc*, as well as reformed the peak body structure to make sure that funding goes to projects that directly benefit members of local multicultural community groups.

To address issues of racism and discrimination, the ACT Labor Government developed and implemented the *Facing Up to Racism Strategy* and has increased the capacity of the Work Experience and Support Program to cater for more migrants who are long-term unemployed in need of Australian workplace experience and training;

ACT Labor knows that some members of the multicultural community, such as refugees and asylum seekers, require special support and services. That is why ACT Labor has significantly expanded the assistance provided to former temporary protection visa holders and asylum seekers through the ACT Refugee Coordination Committee and through free hospital services, English language classes, child care, temporary short-term housing, concessions for spectacles and transport

ACT Labor has been able to do all this – and can deliver much more – because of our strong economic management which has allowed us to invest in our community and celebrate our cultural diversity.

**Jon Stanhope**  
Chief Minister

**John Hargreaves**  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

## **A Proud Record of Supporting Canberra's Multicultural Community**

The Canberra community comprises people from a rich variety of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. The ACT is, and will remain, a dynamic and diverse multicultural society.

ACT Labor is committed to social inclusion. We celebrate and value our cultural diversity and the benefits this brings to our collective lives and to the fabric of our society. And we believe Canberra should cultivate its fresh and vibrant multicultural community by boosting migration levels and providing top quality settlement programs throughout the ACT.

We also know the importance of supporting those who are vulnerable and in need in our community, in order to meet their full potential. People of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can experience a range of barriers to participating in our community and the response we provide in Government promotes inclusion and support.

The ACT Labor Government was the first jurisdiction in Australia to pass a Human Rights Act. This Act provides for equality for all citizens and the right to participate in all parts of society without distinction or discrimination of any kind.

The Human Rights Act also ensures that anyone who belongs to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority must not be denied the right to enjoy their culture, to practice their religion, or to use their own language.

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## **Our Record of Achievement**

Since 2004, the ACT Labor Government has:

- provided opportunities for direct engagement with the multicultural sector through a series of Ministerial community forums;
- developed the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2006-2009*;
- provided support for multicultural groups to promote participation in the community life of the ACT through the three multicultural grants programs – the Multicultural Radio Grants Program; the Community Languages Grants Program; and the Multicultural Grants Program;
- supported the significant expansion of the National Multicultural Festival as the premier community cultural event in the ACT;

- reformed the multicultural sector by encouraging the creation of the *Canberra Multicultural Communities Forum Inc* and the subsequent redirection of peak body funding to projects that directly benefit members of local multicultural community groups;
- established the *Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre* which opened in December 2005 and accommodates over 35 multicultural groups;
- established the ACT Ministerial Muslim Advisory Council and funded projects that promoted the Muslim community to the broader ACT community;
- developed and implemented the *Facing Up to Racism Strategy – A strategy addressing racism and unfair discrimination 2004-2008*;
- increased the capacity of the Work Experience and Support Program to cater for more migrants who are long-term unemployed in need of Australian workplace experience and training;
- continued to help migrants with overseas qualifications into appropriate employment;
- significantly expanded assistance to former temporary protection visa holders and asylum seekers through free hospital services, English language classes, child care, temporary short-term housing, concessions for spectacles and transport;
- established the ACT Refugee Coordination Committee to help refugees, former temporary protection visa holders and asylum seekers access community and government services and programs; and
- established the *Migrant Transitional Housing Program* to assist refugees with short-term (up to six months) accommodation until more permanent housing can be found;

In the *2008-09 Budget*, the Government:

- increased the funding to the National Multicultural Festival by \$400,000 over four years;
- increased the funding for each of the three multicultural grants programs by 20% (from \$250,000 in 2007-08 to \$300,000 in 2008-09);
- provided an additional \$20,000 for the *ACT Ethnic Schools Association Inc* for general operation costs; and
- provided \$70,000 for the replacement of equipment at 2XX radio station.

## **Moving Forward**

ACT Labor will promote the outcomes of the 2008 Multicultural Community Summit to develop a new ACT Multicultural Strategy for 2009 – 2012. This Strategy will guide funding and help develop better services and programs for the multicultural sector.

In addition ACT Labor will:

- continue to support community projects that enhance social harmony through the existing Multicultural Grants Program;
- examine ways to further enhance the National Multicultural Festival as a premier community cultural event;
- fund a campaign in the multicultural community to reduce community stigma associated with mental health issues experienced by young people;
- fund a program to assist refugees in our community with living skills;
- fund a campaign to increase awareness of consumer protection among multicultural youth to reduce exploitation and debt levels;
- fund an orientation program for multicultural youth to learn about Australia's legal system with an emphasis on road use;
- establish a program to assist young multicultural women to understand their identity in the context of a cross-cultural environment;
- explore the viability of establishing a central multicultural senior citizens club in the ACT;
- fund cross-cultural training for aged care workers and relevant service providers;
- fund the translation of information about aged care services and programs;
- explore the viability of establishing a Languages Learning Centre to enhance resources for the face-to-face learning of community languages.

## **Extra Support for the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT**

ACT Labor will increase funding for the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT by \$200,000 over the next four years to expand its care and support services to refugees choosing to live in Canberra.

## **Increased Funding for the ACT Community Languages Grant Program**

ACT Labor will provide an additional \$100,000 for the ACT Community Languages Grant Program over four years to help community language schools with their programs that assist multicultural community groups to maintain their cultural identity, language and heritage.

### **Youth Services Program**

ACT Labor will provide a one-off \$100,000 for a multicultural youth services program to assist young people in the Canberra multicultural community who are at risk of social isolation or delinquency. This program will build vital outreach connections to young citizens from our multicultural communities and ensure that they have positive outlets for their activities

### **Multicultural Representation**

ACT Labor will establish and promote a register of persons from the multicultural community who are interested and qualified for appointment to government boards and authorities.

### **A New Multicultural Strategy for the ACT**

The Multicultural Community Summit was held on 30 August 2008 and was attended by over 300 leading members of the multicultural community. A range of ideas about the future of multicultural services and promotions were canvassed at the Summit and it demonstrated ACT Labor's commitment to grassroots consultation with Canberra's multicultural community.

ACT Labor will use the outcomes of this community forum to develop the *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2009 – 2012* and will be the framework for practical promotion of multicultural activities by community groups, individuals, government agencies and peak bodies.

### **Improved Housing Services**

ACT Labor will provide \$400,000 over four years to enhance the Migrant Transitional Housing program to support newly arrived migrants and refugees. This funding will allow the program to expand from 8 dwellings to 16 dwellings, and will include additional outreach support and material assistance for refugees once they move into longer-term housing arrangements.

The Migrant Transitional Housing program is a partnership between the ACT Government, through Housing ACT, Companion House and Centrecare. Housing ACT stock that is earmarked for sale or re-development is contributed to the program to be used as transitional accommodation for refugees. The Migrant Transitional Housing program has been operating since April 2008 and has been highly successful in providing short-term housing for new arrivals while they adjust to their lives in Canberra.