

# Children and Young People

ACT Labor has sought to create a community that encourages and supports children and young people to reach their full potential – not just now but into the future.

We have talked with children and young people and actively sought their opinions on decisions about the future of our city, and we have sought to create a place where children are active and respected citizens.

We have worked hard to make sure that Canberra is safe for children and that we provide great places for children and young people to learn, to grow and to play.

Our support for children and young people does not come from one agency alone – it works across the community, government and non-government – to ensure that our services, our policies, our plans for the future put our youngest citizens right at the forefront of all decisions.

We have a rich, diverse and high-quality children's sector and young people's sector. Across government and non-government services, we all work together to deliver the best possible environment for children and young people.

We have prioritised early intervention and prevention, and child-centred and inclusive responses to the needs of this population. The establishment of the first two Child and Family Centres for the ACT is a concrete example of the new initiatives we have implemented to support children, young people and their families.

Significant reforms have been made including the overhaul of the child protection system, the creation of the first Office for children and young people, the complete rewrite of the laws relating to children and young people and the increase in resources for the system that seeks to protect our most vulnerable members.

Over the next four years ACT Labor will continue to build on this work by creating a community which values children and young people by continuing to talk to children and young people, and by delivering services and responses that encourages them to reach their full potential.

**Jon Stanhope**  
Chief Minister

**Katy Gallagher**  
Deputy Chief Minister  
Minister for Children and Young People

### Achievements to date

ACT Labor has:

- Increased funding to the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support by 86%, to Child Protection by 167% and to Youth Justice by 96%
- Invested \$110 million into support and protection services since 2001
- Led Australia with the building of two Child and Family Centres operating in Gungahlin and Tuggeranong at a cost of \$13 million
- Invested \$42.59 million to construct Bimberi, the first human rights compliant youth detention centre
- Supported foster carers by increasing the foster care payment from \$140.75 per week in 2001-02 to \$193.45 per week in 2008-09 (12 – 14 year old rate)
- Reformed the laws relating to children and young people by passing a new Children and Young Persons Act
- Invested \$4 million in building a single therapy service including the redevelopment of existing Therapy ACT sites to provide better support to families and children requiring therapy services
- Provided \$2.4 million to establish the first equipment loan service for children and young people with a disability
- Provided over \$5 million annual funding to a range of non-government youth providers to provide services to young people between 12-25 years at risk of jeopardising their physical, emotional or social development or becoming disconnected from the community
- Created a Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Invested \$900,000 for the country's first mental health young person's step-up, step-down facility
- Invested \$2 million over 4 years for *Combating Childhood Obesity* to support physical activity projects focusing on children and families
- Invested \$2 million over 4 years to Anglicare's Junction Youth Health services in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin to employ two Youth Health Nurses and two Youth Health Workers to improve the health and well-being of young people in these areas
- Invested \$1.4 million for a Youth centre in Civic
- Invested \$2.1 million over four years to develop the innovative IMPACT Program (Integrated Multi-agencies for Parents and Children Together) that aims to improve responses to vulnerable families
- Invested \$2.5 million over four years in an Integrated Indigenous Family Support service
- Introduced the *Go for 2&5* fruit and vegetable campaign to reinforce the idea of healthy eating, and *Find Thirty. It's not a big exercise* to encourage physical activity
- Released land for new purpose-built childcare centres in Yarralumla, Belconnen and Forde
- Built a new \$1.65 million Weston Creek child care facility

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- Established the ACT Children's Forum in 2007 to inform a sustainable, flexible and responsible ACT children's services sector
- Provided \$3.9 million to fund 14 youth homelessness services. This investment has included the innovative *Couch Surfing*, *Transitional Support for Young People Existing Detention* and the *Outreach Support Young People Transition to Independence* projects to support young homeless people
- Provided \$90 million for the new Women's and Children's Hospital
- Invested \$775,000 to investigate a Young Persons Mental Health Facility
- Invested \$4.1 million over four years for a Screening Programme for Vulnerable People
- Provided \$250,000 on a feasibility study for the location of a third child and family centre in West Belconnen
- Upgraded 68 play-spaces including those in Turner, Isaacs, Ainslie, Spence, Latham, Evatt, Flynn, Kambah, Fadden, Florey, Weetangera, Bruce and Chifley
- Installed the ACT's first liberty swing for children with a disability at Black Mountain Peninsula
- Restored and improved the Sanctuary @ Tidbinbilla
- Mapped out a four year program of expenditure of \$2.2 million to upgrade local and district parks across the Territory, including:
  - New BBQs and picnic facilities to be installed at various district parks, including Yerrabi Pond Park, Glebe Park, Lennox Gardens, Eddison Park, Fadden Pines and Point Hut Pond Park with landscape improvements to John Knight Park BBQ areas;
  - \$1.6 million towards renewal of 16 playspaces in local and district parks in Belconnen, Inner North, Oaks Estate, Woden and Tuggeranong;
  - The installation of two new Liberty Wheelchair Swings –in North Canberra and Tuggeranong;
  - New fitness trails to be installed at Eddison Park and John Knight Park, as well as a new flying fox for John Knight Park;
- \$390,000 to improve the Belconnen Skate Park;

## **What ACT Labor will do over the next four years.**

### **Allocate \$4 million to build two new child care centres in areas of high demand**

In parts of our city there is increasing demand for childcare centres as our demographics change and new areas of Canberra are established. There are currently 47 government-owned child care centres which are operated by the community.

We have already built a new childcare centre in Weston, and we have released land for childcare centre's in Yarralumla, Forde and Belconnen,

ACT Labor will build two new childcare centres—one in the north and one in the south of Canberra. Our current demand projections would indicate a strong need for childcare centres in Dunlop/Charnwood in the north and in Rivett in the south. Before finalising

the preferred sites for these new centres we would speak with the childcare sector and with local communities about their preferences.

### **\$620,000 over four years to create an Online Childcare Information and Vacancy Portal**

One of the challenges for many families with young children is being able learn about available options for childcare across the city. There are a wide variety of options for formal childcare – including centre-based, family day care and occasional care.

This portal will bring information from right across the system into one location so that parents and carers are able to access up to date information quickly. This information could cover, for example, the different types of care available, licensing arrangements, regulatory requirements, minimum staffing levels, quality assurance processes, and other useful information.

The second part of this initiative will be to establish an online childcare vacancy register to provide parents with centralised information on where casual, short term and long term child care vacancies are across the ACT. We will encourage both community and private providers to work with us to establish this service.

ACT Labor wants to create a system where parents and carers can quickly see where appropriate vacancies are, and allow them to secure a childcare place.

### **\$400,000 over four years for the Creation of 'Virtual' Child and Family Centre Online**

Families in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin already benefit from the one-stop range of services provided at Child and Family Services. However, ACT Labor understands that not all parents and families are able to visit these centres in person.

The Canberra community is most technology savvy with the highest levels of connectivity in the nation along with the highest of proportion of broadband internet access at 58% of our population.

A number of the information sources and educational programs currently provided by the Child and Family Centres can be delivered in a virtual world.

The Virtual Child and Family Centre will provide parents with parenting and support resources at their fingertips in their homes. The online centre will also have the capability to answer questions, make appointments and allow parents to communicate with experts.

We will involve children, families, key stakeholders and professionals in the design and structure of the Virtual Centre.

### **\$800,000 over four years for community outreach for young rough sleepers**

There are a range of support services for young people who are experiencing difficult times. Youth services, schools, parents, carers and community providers are all providing care and attention to young people in need.

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ACT Labor understands that for some young people navigating the system, understanding the system and being linked into the right supports can sometimes be difficult to achieve. This is particularly so for those young people sleeping rough.

ACT Labor wants to provide more outreach support to young people who are homeless. Building on the innovative work already underway from our youth and community services. This initiative will fund two community outreach workers to travel around the city to known 'hang-outs' of young people sleeping rough. These 'hang-outs' could include shopping centres, libraries and nature reserves.

We will work with existing providers of youth outreach services to implement this initiative.

### **\$100,000 seed funding for Kids Under Cover Model**

ACT Labor currently provides \$3.9 million every year to fund 14 youth homelessness services to assist those young people without a home. Nonetheless, recent data shows 46% of the total population of clients assessing homelessness services was aged between 10 and 24. This is 11% above the national average.

Kids Under Cover won the 2008 Victoria Day Award for Community and Public Service. They provide an early-intervention model to assist families in crisis stay together with temporary accommodation for young people and the provision of support services.

ACT Labor will provide \$100,000 seed funding for a local hub to work with local businesses and examine how the model could be used to assist families in Canberra.

### **Young Drivers Advisory Panel to consider a range of measures aimed at stopping this loss of life**

ACT Labor recognises that more can be done to make our roads safer for young people and other drivers alike. ACT Labor will follow the innovative approach adopted by NSW and create a 'Young Drivers Advisory Panel' to look policy measures that can be taken to assist young drivers. Key stakeholders invited to participate will include young people and the NRMA.

### **Provide an annual budget of \$20,000 to the Youth Advisory Council**

The Youth Advisory Council brings together a broad section of young people aged 12-25 to inform the government on key pieces of policy relevant to young people. They do this through engaging with Canberra's youth using a number of consultation mechanisms. ACT Labor will support this work through providing the Council with an annual budget to hold forums, conduct online consultation and engage with young people who might otherwise not be heard.

### **\$1.9 million over four years for new Playgroups at Therapy ACT (Already announced)**

Therapy ACT provides a vital diagnostic and therapeutic role for children and young people diagnosed with a disability. ACT Labor recognises that children with disabilities and their families need more support, and that playgroups provide an opportunity for parents to learn and play with their children at the same time.

ACT Labor will respond to these increases and provide \$1.9 million to provide additional playgroups sessions for pre-school aged children referred to Therapy ACT.

### **\$800,000 support for grandparents (Already announced)**

ACT Labor knows that grandparents play a vital role in their grandchildren's upbringing and we are seeing more and more grandparents taking on primary care responsibilities for children.

ACT Labor will create a dedicated service run by a non-government organisation to provide information, advice and support to grandparents and kinship carers who are caring for children. This new service will help grandparents navigate the service system across governments and across the community sector.

This funding is in addition to and complements the \$120,000 allocated to support Indigenous older Canberrans. In particular, grandmothers with primary care responsibilities

### **Redirect \$2 million "contingency fund" straight to foster carers (Already announced)**

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will increase the base payments to our foster carers depending on the age of the child and their particular needs, to ease the financial burden of their important work. This increase seeks to recognise that there are costs in caring for children which are additional to the current base rate.

Currently, foster carers have to apply for extra financial support for special costs. ACT Labor will remove this red tape and redirect the current \$2 million contingency budget straight to carers.