

2 October 2008

## **ACT LABOR HELPS OLDER CANBERRANS STAY ENGAGED — FOR LESS**

A re-elected ACT Labor Government would provide \$60,000 to enable the Council on the Ageing to publish a print version of the Seniors Card Directory.

The funding is an element of ACT Labor's comprehensive policy on ageing. A re-elected ACT Labor Government will deliver a home for the Tuggeranong 55+ Club, a locum medical service for Canberrans in aged-care facilities and greater support for grandparents who are primary carers of their grandchildren.

"ACT Labor is committed to building a better city and a stronger community and that means a city that holds out opportunity to people of all ages," Chief Minister and Minister for Ageing Jon Stanhope said today.

The Seniors Card Directory lists more than 300 local businesses that provide discounts to Canberrans aged over 60 who are not in paid employment for more than 20 hours a week. A directory of discounts is currently printed online.

More than 40,000 Canberrans already enjoy the benefits of the card — including discounts on spectacles, registration fees, movie tickets and restaurant meals. The program is managed by the Council on the Ageing on behalf of the ACT Government.

Chief Minister and Minister for Ageing Jon Stanhope said engagement in the life of the community was crucial for older Canberrans, and the Seniors Card helped older Canberrans not in full-time work do more, engage more and enjoy more, for less.

The one-off \$60,000 this financial year would enable COTA to print a paper version of the Seniors Card Directory, benefiting those Canberrans who do not have access to the internet, or who are more comfortable reading a paper document.

Highlights of ACT Labor's ageing policy include:

- \$1.6 million for a permanent home for the Tuggeranong 55+ Club – Canberra's newest Seniors Club and the only Seniors Club currently without a permanent clubhouse;
- A priority list for future capital works on other Seniors Clubs, to ensure that they are able to serve their growing memberships;
- Legislation to protect the rights of Canberrans buying into retirement villages. The law will build on community consultation already begun by ACT Labor MLA Ms Mary Porter;
- A focus on affordable accommodation for older Canberrans, in the second phase of ACT Labor's nation-leading Affordable Housing Action Plan. Labor will explore options such as 'virtual villages', group houses, and other options for ageing in the community;

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- \$800,000 over four years for a service to support grandparents who are carers for their grandchildren — and an additional \$120,000 to work with the local Indigenous community to design and implement a program to support Indigenous grandparents who are primary carers for their grandchildren;
- \$60,000 over three years to record oral histories of selected recipients of the Canberra Gold Awards, which honour Canberrans who have given more than 50 years to the Territory. These oral histories will build to create a lasting repository of Canberra's early decades for future generations of Canberrans to treasure; and
- \$484,000 a year for an “in-hours” locum medical service to provide home visits by doctors to older Canberrans in aged care accommodation.

Since it was elected, Labor has:

- Funded a 48-bed dedicated unit for older patients at Calvary Public;
- Released land for 900 aged-care beds;
- Boosted elective surgeries to nearly 10,000 a year – an increase of 40%;
- Established a highly successful Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing;
- Extended half-price bus travel for seniors to peak periods;
- Extended free bus travel to Canberrans aged over 75;
- Introduced grandparental leave for ACT public servants;
- Compensated ACT public servants aged over 70 for the loss of compulsory employer superannuation contributions;
- Introduced a stamp duty exemption for pensioners downsizing their homes;
- Funded the purchase of over 100 wheelchair-accessible buses;
- Funded a new cardiac catheter laboratory;
- Extended palliative care, with a focus on those Canberrans in residential aged care facilities; and
- Extended water concessions to Centrelink Health Care cardholders.

Statement Ends

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