

# Emergency Services

Protecting our community and ensuring Canberrans are prepared for an emergency is an essential role of Government.

The ACT Labor Government has substantially invested in our emergency services with the Territory's emergency services officers among the best trained and resourced in the country.

Labor's vision is to ensure that our emergency services are as well prepared as possible to respond to threats to the community.

Since coming to office the ACT Labor Government has increased the operating budget of the ACT Emergency Services Agency by 120% to \$79 million and has overhauled the ACT Ambulance Service fleet, putting 10 new Ambulances on the road and recruiting an extra 10 Intensive Care Paramedics. ACT Labor has also invested heavily in firefighter training and has recruited 16 extra firefighters for the ACT Fire Brigade.

ACT Labor knows that our emergency services depend on the support of volunteers to be ready to protect our community in times of crisis. That's why ACT Labor has provided \$50,000 for the recruitment of an additional 50 ACT Rural Fire Service volunteer firefighters and 80 SES volunteers.

To make sure emergency responses are able to happen quickly in the areas where they are needed, ACT Labor has established 38 Community Fire Units across the Territory with more than 900 CFU members signed up.

ACT Labor has also invested in crucial emergency equipment, including a multimillion dollar trunk radio network and a computer-aided dispatch system as well as making sure there are standby arrangements for water bombing aircraft when they're needed.

And to make sure there is quick communication with the community in times of emergency, a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the Emergency Services Agency and local media outlets has been signed so warnings can be issued any time of the day or night, seven days a week.

ACT Labor is committed to building a safer community by ensuring our emergency services receive the funding and support they need to respond to emergency situations.

**Jon Stanhope**  
Chief Minister

**Simon Corbell**  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

### **A Proud Record of Building a Safer Canberra**

The ACT Labor Government has substantially invested in our emergency services with the Territory's emergency services officers among the best trained and resourced in the country.

ACT Labor has ensured that our frontline emergency services are well-resourced and that our volunteers and personnel are well-trained and equipped to assist the Canberra community in times of emergency or crisis.

ACT Labor is making sure our vital emergency services are better able to respond to new threats caused by our changing environment.

### **Our Record of Achievement**

Since it was elected the ACT Labor Government has:

- Increased the operating budget of the ACT Emergency Services Agency by 120% to \$79 million;
- Overhauled the ACT Ambulance Service fleet, putting 10 new Ambulances on the road and recruiting an extra 10 Intensive Care Paramedics;
- Recruited 16 extra firefighters for the ACT Fire Brigade and invested heavily in firefighter training with \$644,000 (over four years) announced in 2007/2008;
- Provided \$50,000 for the recruitment of an additional 50 ACT Rural Fire Service volunteer firefighters and 80 SES volunteers;
- Invested in excess of \$200 million on recovery programs for the environment and community;
- Established the ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT State Emergency Service as separate services within the Emergency Services Agency;
- Established 38 Community Fire Units across the Territory with more than 900 CFU members signed up;
- Introduced the Farm FireWise program, an initiative specially developed by the ACT Rural Fire Service to support and assist our rural community in their bushfire prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions and capabilities;
- Introduced the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan to ensure that bushfire management is integrated with existing and future plans for the ACT, and will shape the strategic direction of bushfire risk mitigation in the ACT in the medium to long term;
- Invested \$320,000 in 2006/2007 for personal protective equipment for our bush fire fighters;
- Implemented standby arrangements for water bombing aircraft in accordance with seasonal conditions for fire detection, intelligence and firebombing;
- Implemented targeted community awareness campaigns for the threat of bushfire;
- Introduced new multimillion dollar trunk radio network communications system and computer-aided dispatch system;

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- Implemented targeted community awareness campaigns across a range of hazards including bushfire, storm and home fire safety;
- Put arrangements in place via MOUs between ESA and local media outlets to ensure adequate community warnings can be issued any time of the day or night seven days a week;
- Established Memoranda of Understanding and Mutual Aid Agreements with NSW counterparts – namely, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Fire Brigades, NSW State Emergency Service and the Ambulance Service of NSW.
- Developed and implemented new legislation that governs how emergency services operate in the ACT (Emergencies Act 2004);
- Created the ACT Emergency Plan which sets out operational and coordination of arrangements between ACT Government agencies in a major emergency; and
- Provided the ACT Fire Brigade with \$1.34 million over four years to improve, maintain and store vital specialist equipment including chemical, biological, radiological and urban search and rescue specialist equipment.

## **Moving Forward**

Building on the measures the Government has already put in place, a re-elected ACT Labor Government will invest \$640,000 in extra community fire units to ensure full coverage of high risk suburban areas, as identified by the ACT Fire Brigade.

Volunteers are vital to the work of our emergency service agencies. That is why ACT Labor will work within the principles of the ESA Volunteer Charter, to support volunteers and consult with them on the issues and decisions that affect them.

For the Canberra community, having highly-skilled paramedic staff in our ACT Ambulance Service fleet is reassuring. ACT Labor will recognise these dedicated staff as health care professionals – a first for any Australian jurisdiction.

ACT Labor will also complete the revision of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and complete the replacement of ACT Emergency Service vehicles.

### **An Extra 12 Community Fire Units**

The Community Fire Unit Program was established in 2003-2004 by the ACT Labor Government to encourage community members to be trained in the protection of their homes against bushfire.

The program was established in response to the ACT Government's acceptance of recommendations contained in the McLeod Report. Since it was established more than 900 volunteers have signed up as CFU volunteers.

There are currently 38 Community Fire Units established in the ACT.

The program empowers local residents in high risk areas on the edge of the urban area to protect their properties from fire. It provides residents with 20 hours of formal theory and practical fire fighting training as well as supplying basic personal protective equipment and a purpose-built trailer containing fire-fighting equipment.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will expand the program by a further 12 units over two years. ACT Labor will commit \$640,000 over four years to set up and maintain these new units.

This will ensure complete coverage across all high risk areas as identified by the ACT Fire Brigade.

The units will be established, subject to sufficient interest from residents, in the following suburbs:

- Gordon - 2 Community Fire Units
- Deakin - 2 Community Fire Units
- Bonython - 2 Community Fire Units
- Urambi Hills - 1 Community Fire Unit
- Weetangera - 1 Community Fire Unit
- Cook West - 1 Community Fire Unit
- Duffy - 1 Community Fire Unit
- Fadden - 1 Community Fire Unit
- Mount Stromlo - 1 Community Fire Unit

### **Recognising the value of ACT Ambulance officers**

In early March 2007 the ACT Labor Government agreed to a specific collective agreement for ACT Ambulance Service employees outside of the 'whole of government' negotiations.

As part of negotiations, it was proposed that ambulance officers be moved to a new ambulance specific professional classification, to provide parity with allied health professionals in the Territory.

ACT Labor agrees that our highly valued and skilled Intensive Care Paramedics should be recognised as healthcare professionals and will participate in hearings before an independent arbitrator to confirm the details of this change to paramedics' status

ACT Labor is proud that this recognition of Ambulance Intensive Care Paramedics as health care professionals will be an Australian first.

### **Revision of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan**

Funding for the revision of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan was announced in the 2007-2008 ACT Budget. Core Principles for the document have been developed following extensive consultation with the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan steering group. The project's plan and schedule for implementation has been developed and is well underway.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will ensure the final plan will incorporate contemporary findings in fire behaviour and management and will make the plan publicly available through a range of interactive multimedia resources.

ACT Labor commits to developing the revised Strategic Bushfire Management Plan with a strong focus on an integrated "whole of government" approach, not only for bushfire management but for wider emergency management in the ACT.

### **ACT Emergency Services Vehicles Replacement**

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will complete the delivery of the \$6.5 million vehicle replacement program funded in previous ACT Budgets.

The program involves the replacement of vehicles for the ACT Ambulance Service, ACT Fire Brigade, ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT State Emergency Service.

It tackles the legacy of inadequate funding for fleet replacement left by previous Liberal Governments and ensures our emergency services have a modern vehicle fleet ready to respond in an emergency.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will commit to replacing eight heavy tankers, nine command vehicles, a Super Striker tanker and between six and ten light to medium units, along with a range of other vehicles.

### **Working with Volunteers**

The ACT Labor Government has demonstrated its commitment to working better with Emergency Service volunteers and including them in decision making through the signing of the ESA Volunteer Charter.

The Charter commits the Government and volunteers to a consultative and constructive approach and recognises the roles and responsibilities of all the parties to the Charter.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will reaffirm its commitment to the principles of the Charter and to an ongoing and regular process of meeting and consulting with volunteers on the issues and decisions which affect them.