

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY GOVERNMENT'S

HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

LITERACY & NUMERACY

TYPE II DIABETES

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

APRIL 2007



COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS'
NATIONAL REFORM AGENDA

MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIC
CAPABILITY
STANDARD

MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIC
CAPABILITY
STANDARD

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Introduction

“A healthy, skilled and motivated population is critical to workforce participation and productivity, and hence Australia’s future living standards. By focusing on the outcomes needed to enhance participation and productivity, the human capital stream of reform aims to provide Australians with the opportunities and choices they need to lead active and productive lives”.

Council of Australian Governments February 2006

Australian society over the last three decades has been significantly influenced by a series of economic reform agendas. In the 1980’s the Australian economy was opened to international competitive forces and from the mid 1990’s these reforms were extended to introduce competitive principles into many aspects of government service delivery.

The ACT Government along with other jurisdictions has recognised that in a changing global environment, there must be further efforts to remove impediments to our productivity and participation, in the interest of economic performance and the wellbeing of the Australian community.

Productivity and participation will be critical to our future prosperity, particularly as the ACT population ages. Central to achieving the vision of securing higher levels of productivity and participation is ensuring that all people have both the opportunity and the capacity to be active participants in the economy and community and share in the rewards.

This vision has been articulated in the ACT since 2004 within the Canberra Social Plan, which has set the Government’s agenda for creating a Canberra where:

“all people can reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community”.

To achieve this vision the ACT Government has amongst other things set itself the priorities of improving economic opportunities for all Canberrans, creating a safe strong and cohesive community, improving our health and well-being and leading Australia in education, training and lifelong learning. This is being done in the ACT through innovative strategies and programs that focus on early intervention, integrated planning and outcomes.

First Ministers have similarly agreed that the foundation of the nation’s human capital is the health, education and skills of its people and called for a greater focus on promoting good health, preventing ill health, and achieving high-level educational outcomes among children and the working-age population.

A lifecycle perspective highlights the importance of addressing the needs and potential of all people at all stages of life – from early childhood through school to working life, family life and into retirement. Governments have an important role to play at each stage, and particularly during the key transitional points.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has therefore agreed that human capital reform will be focussed first and foremost on a series of clear outcomes, including:

- significantly improve the proportion of children that are born healthy
- significantly improve the proportion of children acquiring the basic skills for life and learning
- reduce the proportion of the working age population not participating and/or under-participating in paid employment due to illness, injury or disability
- reduce the incidence of preventable chronic disease and serious injury amongst the working age population
- reduce the prevalence of key risk factors that contribute to chronic disease
- increase the effectiveness of the health system in achieving health outcomes
- increase the proportion of young people meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and improve overall levels of achievement
- increase the proportion of young people making a smooth transition from school to work or further study
- increase the proportion of adults who have the skills and qualifications needed to enjoy active and productive working lives
- improve overall workforce participation, with a particular focus on target groups, in a manner consistent with the long-term interests of the individual and the economy, giving due regard to productivity
- increase the provision of flexible working arrangements within the workforce, in a manner consistent with the long-term interests of the individual and the economy

COAG has also set itself the subsidiary goal of reducing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes, particularly in relation to the proportion of children born healthy and who develop the basic skills for life and learning.

For the ACT, as part of the first tranche of Human Capital reforms the focus of attention will be on lifting the literacy and numeracy levels of all ACT students, making significant improvements in the management of Type II Diabetes through the provision of integrated care and support services and ensuring the high standard early childhood education and care services available in the ACT are being accessed by those who most need this support.

Jurisdictional Flexibility And Policy Diversity

The outcomes identified by COAG are supported by all jurisdictions and it is recognised that jurisdictions cannot act alone in these important policy areas.

The development of human capital involves all tiers of government, just as the issues of health, education and skills impact upon all aspects of personal and community life. Nevertheless in a country as large and varied as Australia if the outcomes are to be achieved there must be room for a diversity of approaches. A 'one size fits all' approach will not in most circumstances deliver the best outcome. Flexibility is critical in delivering solutions that reflect the context, issues and priorities of each jurisdiction and this has been acknowledged by COAG.

Jurisdictional flexibility encourages and facilitates policy diversity and innovation and it supports the transfer of successful policy ideas from one jurisdiction to another. Governments can learn from each other about what works and the opportunity for variety in policy responses is an important aspect of our federal system and the National Reform Agenda.

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HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

Literacy & Numeracy

Education is one of the principal determinants of people's economic prospects and life chances. It is the means by which people acquire and renew the skills needed for work and life. If health provides the foundation for an active and productive working life, education and training provide the tools that enable people to realise their potential.

A year 12 or equivalent qualification is rapidly becoming a prerequisite for ongoing security and success in working life. Access Economics has estimated that increasing the proportion of young people acquiring a year 12 or equivalent qualification by 10 percentage points would have a major long-term impact on both productivity and participation, raising national income by 1.1% by 2040.

Research shows that the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in improving educational outcomes for our children after the socio economic status and background of the student.

In its discussions on possible policy directions to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes, the Human Capital Working Group noted that ensuring high quality teacher services is a priority. Key elements of teacher quality include qualifications, experience, subject area knowledge and skills, an ability to diagnose student needs and design and deliver personalised learning programs.

The importance of literacy and numeracy is underscored by the Commonwealth Government's National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy which concluded that "there are significant opportunities for improvement in the preparation of teachers (including) increasing the time on reading instruction, improving the content of teacher preparation courses and school practice arrangements, together with improvements in new graduates personal literacy".

Equally important to COAG is engaging parents in their children's education and lifting the performance of those students who are below proficiency and in danger of being left behind.

One of the first outcomes COAG has therefore set for itself is to:

Increase the proportion of young people meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and improve overall levels of achievement

and is focusing on four policy directions:

Improving the quality of teaching
Developing school leadership
Engaging parents in high educational expectations
Improving the performance of students below benchmark and proficiency standards

Context

CURRENT ACT ACTIVITIES

The ACT already provides a range of universal, high standard education services to its community and consistently performs equal to, or above, other jurisdictions on literacy and numeracy performance.

The ACT will accordingly focus its additional investment under the COAG Human Capital Agenda not on incremental improvements to existing universal services, given the current high standard of service and extensive investment, but towards targeted services designed to lift the performance of those with relatively lower levels of proficiency and at supporting marginal or disadvantaged groups.

Under its Strategic Plan 2006 – 2009 the ACT Department of Education and Training (DET) provides world class education and training that is innovative, responsive and inspires all students to achieve. This accords with the Canberra Social Plan objective of leading Australia in education, lifelong learning and training and the particular goals of reducing inequalities in children's early years, improving transitions into and out of education and increasing literacy and numeracy levels for students at risk.

Dedicated Literacy & Numeracy supports have been in place within DET for some years and progressively expanded and developed to include Early Literacy and Numeracy Officers and a range of support programs. The Learning Assistance Program for example focuses on students with learning difficulties. Students performing in the bottom 20% of assessment data from the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP), or identified by schools, receive support tailored to their identified areas of need.

This support is provided by specialist teachers in schools funded through extra staffing points, and involves the withdrawal for direct tuition of individuals or small groups, classroom support / team teaching with class teacher, and professional support for class teachers. Programs may focus on literacy, numeracy or the needs of individual students.

While the Learning Assistance Program extends from Kindergarten to 10, Reading Recovery (RR) occurs in the second year of schooling. Teachers work with individual students in Year 1 to raise their reading skill levels to compare with students of the same age. 90% of students in the ACT completing RR score at or above average for their age group in later assessments.

An Indigenous literacy and program manager and Indigenous literacy & numeracy consultants have also been providing intensive support to individual Indigenous students who fall below ACTAP benchmarks. Additional Level One teachers were appointed in 2005 to commence an intensive program with Year 4 Indigenous students who fell below Year 3 benchmarks. This small cohort displayed a reversal of the trend in declining results from year 3 to year 5. Home school liaison officers, whose aim is to develop and strengthen home-school links, help families to support their children's education. While Koori pre-school provides early childhood education for indigenous pre-schoolers, further developing the home-school links and providing a base for further academic and social development.

The ACT also follows national standards for teaching, as required by Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), with the selection

criteria for base level entry into government schools aligned to the National Framework. Teacher registration in the ACT Government also continues to be explored with the concept and models for a teacher registration process appropriate to the ACT currently under investigation with ongoing discussions between the employers, local universities and students about improving the quality of placements.

In respect of school leadership a draft ACT framework has been developed and identifies knowledge, skills and abilities that effective school leaders require and a professional development pathway to contribute to quality leadership outcomes. Further work on the development of this framework and its use in supporting leadership development will continue in 2007.

In relation to teacher quality, professional values are fostered by DET's practice of continuous professional learning.

Professional development programs in Literacy and Numeracy including 'Stepping Out,' 'Counting on', 'Count me in Too', 'First Steps' and 'LUAC' are being used in ACT government schools. A new program for beginning teachers in their first 3 years has also been developed in response to evidence suggesting the need for support directed towards young teachers just starting in the profession. Clusters of schools have also appointed literacy and numeracy executive teachers.

The matter of teacher education programs requires discussion with local universities, with practicums co-ordinated through the local universities to complement other aspects of the teacher education program. DET does not (nor does any other education department) establish the guidelines for pre-service education programs. However, DET and the University of Canberra have established a liaison committee to discuss matters of mutual interest and DET benefits from this productive relationship, as it does with other local and interstate teacher training institutions.

In relation to parental involvement the Parents as Tutors Program provides significant support to students and their parents for developing the literacy of students having severe literacy difficulties. The Schools as Communities program, which was introduced as part of the ACT Government's commitment to building stronger communities, also seeks to enhance educational and social outcomes for children and young people at risk by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools.

The Program has two strands. Firstly, skilled professionals work with families and communities to build resilience and foster a sense of connection and belonging in local communities. Secondly, the program supports strategic projects, where families, schools, communities, local businesses and government work together on projects that benefit children and young people. Seven community outreach workers are currently based in targeted primary schools and one high school across Canberra. The community outreach workers have a dual role involving both family support for individual families and the facilitation of community development initiatives of benefit to the school community.

Finally, the ACT Performance Indicators in Primary School Program (PIPS) meets the agreed common attributes for an effective diagnostic tool and DET provides workshops for government school teachers and school leaders in the use of PIPS as well as ACTAP assessment data. However, it is considered that greater capacity in this area can and should be developed to assist teachers in choosing classroom based interventions for students suited to individual needs.

ACT CURRENT INVESTMENTS

Teacher quality:

To attract new teachers, the ACT Government offers the highest salary in the country for graduate entry level (four year trained teachers). DET also provides teachers in the ACT with significant ongoing professional development opportunities throughout their career, and extra support in their first few years of teaching, through the Teacher's Professional Learning Fund. DET also markets directly to university graduates. In doing so, the ACT marketing programs emphasise lifestyle choices available in Canberra. This approach has reaped dividends with the ACT not experiencing the recruitment difficulties that have beset many other jurisdictions.

School leadership:

Researching and fostering best practice principles in leadership is a key priority within the ACT public education system. Existing school based investments in professional pathways for teachers are significant. DET also encourages and supports the ACT Principals Association, which provides a network for school leaders to engage in professional dialogues. The Principals Professional Learning Fund - which represents the equivalent of 1% of principals' salaries - provides ongoing funding and support for the professional development of school leaders.

Engaging parents:

Working with parents and carers in providing the best possible outcomes for children and young people is recognised as an important goal within DET's Strategic Plan. The base for this collaborative approach and partnership is the school board, with each ACT government school having a board as part of its governance structure to establish and monitor strategic directions and policies. Parents are encouraged to consider becoming a part of the school association and schools are strongly encouraged to welcome parents volunteering their time and skills to support the school. All ACT Government schools regularly communicate with parents about school programs and activities through the school newsletter and other informal means of communication. The successful Schools as Communities program supports strategic projects and also funds a range of local community development projects under the Schools as Communities grants.

Improving the performance of students below standard:

The Learning Assistance Program and Reading Recovery budgets are in the order of \$6.7 million per annum. This money is distributed directly to schools, in the form of extra staffing allocations. Funds are distributed by a formula determined by the number of students who fall below the benchmark in ACTAP assessments. Schools use these points to support literacy and numeracy student outcomes, determining for themselves how these points are used. This may take the form of a designated teacher, smaller classes, withdrawal options or in-class support. Support for students who have English as a Second Language (ESL) is provided in a similar fashion, where staffing points are determined on the ESL scales and are generally used by trained ESL teachers in withdrawal or in class support. Funding is also spent each year on Koori preschool programs. Each preschool has an Indigenous Home/School Liaison Officer who works with the Indigenous community towards achieving continued growth in Indigenous student participation.

OUR MULTILATERAL COMMITMENTS

As part of the commitment to the Human Capital Reform Agenda the ACT in collaboration with the Commonwealth, States and Northern Territory has supported a number of investigative, preliminary actions to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes, including:

The conduct of a national numeracy review

An examination into the feasibility of introducing a nationally consistent unique student identifier

A feasibility study into the use of free to air children's television programming to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes

The ACT has further agreed to support a range of multilateral actions under the Human Capital Agenda. As part of this commitment the ACT will:

Participate in the joint development of a core set of national literacy and numeracy standards by the end of 2007

Accredit university teacher education courses and registration of teachers by 2009 to meet those standards

Support a nationally consistent literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment system on entry to school

Develop a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes for school leaders

Address literacy and numeracy in the context of the MCEETYA national goals for schooling through innovative strategies targeting resources where they are most needed

Through MCEETYA monitor and report on existing intervention practices

Acknowledge the broader causes of disadvantage and their impact upon literacy and numeracy and explore options to address the specific needs of disadvantaged student populations

In fulfilment of its commitments under the Human Capital Reform Agenda it is expected that the Australian Government will:

Support FBT exemptions for teacher scholarships

Increase Commonwealth support for the English as a Second Language New Arrivals program and differential funding for humanitarian and refugee arrivals, which would increase the number of hours of teaching for school aged refugee and humanitarian entrants

Provide additional resources to universities to ensure they have capacity to enhance courses

Develop teacher practicum through increased investment in university education

New Directions

In addition to our multilateral obligations under the Human Capital Agenda the ACT has determined a series of proposed new directions - including reform actions, the better use of existing resources, organisational change, and new investments – which will further the goals of building human capital in the ACT.

POLICY DIRECTION 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

LAN 1. Teacher Registration Project

The ACT does not currently have a teacher registration body but carries out pre-employment checks to assess qualifications and ensure the suitability for employment of prospective teachers in an ACT Government School. The establishment of formal teacher registration procedures is currently being explored with preliminary work including the establishment of a reference group and the examination of registration models employed in other jurisdictions. Consultation will occur through 2007 and inform the model's development.

Timeframe: Consultation in 2007.

LAN 2. Improved Strategic Use of Data

Using soundly based research, the ACT will develop teaching practice and school policy to make the most effective use of available student performance data. To this end in February 2007 DET released a discussion paper 'Teachers and school leaders: making a difference through evidence-based practice' along with a detailed research paper. This work builds on the Department's Schools Excellence Framework which is intended to foster each school's capacity to provide quality education for its students, through a focus on continuous improvement, integrated and enhanced school planning, evaluation and reporting procedures. From 2007 additional funding will be directed from the Teachers Professional Learning Fund for targeted professional learning on the strategic use of data.

Timeframe: From 2007.

LAN 3. Learning Assistance Teachers

Students in the ACT with problems in literacy and numeracy are assisted through the Learning Assistance Program and learning assistance teachers in primary and high schools. These teachers network with colleagues at cluster meetings and central meetings, liaise with system Learning Assistance Coordinator and school counselors, regularly update their knowledge of curriculum innovations in the area and increase staff awareness of curriculum content, strategies, resource and activities which are appropriate for Learning Assistance Program students. To further develop this program and ensure quality support is provided to students in need, the Government has developed a new course in partnership with the University of Canberra and has offered scholarships to teachers to build their capacity in this area.

Timeframe: From 2007.

LAN 4 . 'Every Chance to Learn' Curriculum Framework

The ACT's newly developed draft Curriculum framework for P-10 'Every Chance to Learn' provides the basis for essential learning of skills, content, understandings and values, with a major focus on the principles which emphasise that every child can learn, including the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills.

A trial of the framework in 22 schools is being undertaken and will lead to the development of sample school curriculum plans and teaching units that can be shared with other schools. The framework will be subject to an independent evaluation by the Australian Council for Educational Research. Curriculum materials to support the new framework will be sourced from 2007.

Timeframe: From 2007.

LAN 5. Refresher Training/Recruitment

While the ACT does not experience the same difficulties in attracting teachers as do other jurisdictions, the ACT is researching the concept of career enhancements for general entry into the profession. DET is continuing to build strong working relationships with the local universities providing teacher education programs and this is enabling work to be undertaken on maintaining the relevance and adaptability of teacher education programs.

In recent years DET has undertaken refresher training programs in the areas of mathematics and counselling services and is awaiting the outcome of a research program it participated in during 2006 in which the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training explored issues on career change into the teaching profession. With the recent release of the House of Representatives' Standing Committee report on teacher education DET will work with local universities in considering the suggested options.

Timeframe: From 2008.

LAN 6. Smart Schools – Smart Students

The ACT's \$20 million four-year IT initiative 'Smart Schools – Smart Students' will supply the necessary ICT infrastructure to improve student outcomes, including literacy and numeracy skills. School bandwidth upgrades and wireless networks will address the pressure placed on the current bandwidth connecting schools to the Internet and to each other. Wireless networking capability will also be rolled out to all schools. Renewal of school IT infrastructure will ensure that students can enjoy all the opportunities that state-of-the-art access to the Internet and cutting edge technology can provide.

Students will be able to carry multimedia portfolios of their work throughout their schooling as a result of the Student Digital Passkey project. Equally, parents will be able to participate in online discussions and lessons, to check online what homework has been set, and engage with their child's teacher through online video conferencing.

Timeframe: 2006/07 to 2010/11.

LAN 7. Maths and Science – ANU Secondary College

Students from across the ACT government secondary college system have since May 2006 been given the possibility of attending special extension units at a new ANU Secondary College, which gives students and their college teachers access to the resources and skills of Australia's pre-eminent research university.

Academically promising students - and their teachers - at no extra cost to their families, now have access to leaders in their field of shared academic interest. In 2006, these fields were mathematics, chemistry and physics but there are plans to expand the number of courses on offer to also include amongst other things languages.

Timeframe: 2006 ongoing.

LAN 8. Early Childhood Schools

The Government will establish four new stand alone early childhood schools and from 2008 will amalgamate all preschools with primary schools, providing better educational transitions including the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The four new early childhood schools will cater for children from preschool through to year 2 and will focus on early childhood education and early intervention, providing a solid foundation for learning in the future.

The School Renewal project commits \$90 million over four years in capital works such as classroom upgrades and new playground equipment. Following investigation into best practice early childhood schools, DET will be able to significantly upgrade the schools to meet the needs of the early childhood model.

Timeframe: Commencing 2009.

LAN 9. Preschool Primary Links

From 2008, all preschools in the ACT will be amalgamated with a primary school in order to streamline pathways for children. Some primary schools will have more than one preschool annexed to them. These amalgamations will improve the continuity of learning and ensure children can access an integrated education curriculum. In addition, the ACT's new curriculum renewal framework will have a strong focus on teaching and learning in the early years.

Timeframe: Commencing 2008.

LAN 10: Teacher Professional Learning

The ACT Teacher Scholarships program was established under DET's Teaching Staff Certified Agreement 2004-06 to support outstanding teaching practice and achievement. In 2007, thirty-two new scholarships will be offered to teachers to pursue postgraduate study.

Commencing: From 2007.

POLICY DIRECTION 2: DEVELOP SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

LAN 11. Teacher Leadership / Mentoring – Professional Pathways

The existing professional pathways program is currently embedded across the ACT public education teaching workforce and encourages staff to be involved in professional learning activities that develop mentoring and leadership capabilities. The program is designed to align individual and school development needs with departmental priorities and goals.

A process of identifying better practices and processes that enhance individual performance and collaborative work practices will be undertaken during 2007.

Timeframe: From 2007.

LAN 12: New Educators Program

The New Educators program, which supports new teachers in their first three years of professional growth has been further developed, and begun with an additional induction day. Under the program new teachers are matched with mentors and a Professional Development package focusing on curriculum issues, literacy and numeracy instruction, student welfare, assessment and reflection.

A new educators support group has also been established to act as a conduit to the Department, while support teachers who have a role as mentors have also been offered a targeted Professional Development program.

Timeframe: Commencing 2007.

POLICY DIRECTION 3: ENGAGE PARENTS IN HIGH EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

LAN 13. Parent School Partnerships

'Schools as Communities' funding has been available since 2001 and many projects are continuing to strengthen the community today. Preschools, primary schools and high schools have formed many partnerships to establish activities such as community workshops, coffee mornings, training programs, an educational resource kit, supported playgroups and parent rooms.

Through the 2007 grants, support will be targeted at a range of people within the community in particular refugee and immigrant students and their families, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other special needs, at risk boys and young males and parents of young children needing to better engage with schools.

Timeframe: From 2007.

LAN 14. School Boards' Annual Reports.

From 2007, one of the agreed methods of communicating for all ACT government schools under the Australian Government's School Assistance Regulations 2005 will be the production of School Board annual reports. These reports will provide the school community with an overview of the activities and performance of the school/college over the year. All school board reports will be made available on individual school websites and will be a key communication tool with parents. The reports will include information on professional engagement, key student outcomes and satisfaction. These are reported against the four domains of Learning and Teaching, Student Environment, Leadership and Management and Community Involvement. This initiative complements the Department's new policy, 'Reporting to the Community on School Programs and Performance', which outlines the Department's commitment to transparent and meaningful reporting to the community.

Timeframe: Commencing 2007.

LAN 15. Educational Seminar Series

In 2006, the Department held its first annual educational seminar series for parents and school communities. The seminars are designed to challenge thinking about important educational issues that influence the way public education is delivered into the future. The seminars were well attended by teachers and members of the community. Guest speakers included Dr Allison Elliott, Research Director Early Childhood Education and Professor Phil Foreman Head of School of Education, University of Newcastle. This program will continue through 2007 with a focus on literacy and numeracy development and how parents can assist.

Commencing: Annually from August 2006.

POLICY DIRECTION 4: IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS BELOW BENCHMARK AND PROFICIENCY STANDARDS

LAN 16. Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The new early literacy and numeracy officers program supports schools to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes through the provision of sustained in-school mentoring and coaching and support for professional learning teams within schools. The Indigenous literacy and numeracy teams also work with schools and identified Indigenous students who are below the benchmark in year 3. A newly developed Literacy and Numeracy strategy will provide a framework for schools to deliver quality literacy and numeracy outcomes through these programs. Professional development for primary and secondary schools will also be linked to the strategy.

Timeframe: Implementation in 2008.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Policy Directions	Multilateral Commitments	ACT Commitments	Commonwealth Actions
Teacher quality	<p>A core set of national literacy and numeracy standards by the end of 2007</p> <p>Accredit university teacher education courses and registration by 2009</p> <p>Nationally consistent literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment systems on entry to school</p> <p>Innovative strategies targeting literacy and numeracy resources where they are most needed</p> <p>Monitor and report on existing intervention practices</p>	<p>Teacher Registration Project</p> <p>Improved Strategic Use of Data</p> <p>Learning Assistance Teachers</p> <p>'Every Chance to Learn' Curriculum Framework</p> <p>Refresher Training / Recruitment</p> <p>Smart Schools / Smart Students</p> <p>Maths and Science – ANU Secondary College</p> <p>Early Childhood Schools</p> <p>Preschool Primary Links</p> <p>Teacher Professional Learning</p>	<p>Provide additional resources to Universities to ensure they have capacity to enhance courses</p> <p>Develop teacher practicum through increased investment in university education</p> <p>FBT exemptions for teacher scholarships</p>
School leadership	<p>Develop a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes for school leaders</p>	<p>Teacher Leadership / Mentoring – Professional Pathways</p> <p>New Educators Program</p>	
Engaging parents		<p>Parent School Partnerships</p> <p>School Boards' Annual Reports</p> <p>Educational Seminars Series</p>	
Improving the Performance of Students below Standard	<p>Address causes of disadvantage and their impact upon literacy and numeracy amongst disadvantaged student populations</p>	<p>Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</p>	<p>Support for ESL New Arrivals program</p> <p>Differential funding for humanitarian and refugee arrivals</p>

NEW DIRECTIONS - FUNDING

The ACT has already committed \$6,800 to a number of investigative, preliminary actions to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes under the Human Capital Agenda, including:

The conduct a national numeracy review

An examination into the feasibility of introducing a nationally consistent unique student identifier

A feasibility study into the use of free to air children's television programming to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes

Additional multilateral commitments in the order of \$24,800 are expected to support:

Developing a core set of national entry literacy and numeracy standards

Developing and distributing school leadership materials

Under its own Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan total funding of \$26.3 million will be committed by the ACT Government over four years.

HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

Type II Diabetes

Good health enables people to lead active lives and determines their capacity to participate and be productive in the workforce. Poor health outcomes are highly correlated with lower workforce participation rates. Too many Australians fail to reach their potential because of disability and/or debilitating disease, which, in many cases, could have been better managed or even prevented.

Projections of people living in the future with diabetes continue to increase as the effects of the ageing of the population, changes in lifestyle and the longer survival of people with diabetes take effect. If it is assumed that 7.5% of the ACT population has diabetes then projections for people diagnosed with diabetes are:

	2005	2010	2015	2020
Population	330,176	344,505	357,301	368,573
Projection based on 7.5% population	24,763	25,838	26,798	27,643

Most of the main chronic diseases are caused by modifiable risk factors. By focusing on a small number of common risk factors, a significant impact can be made on the long-term incidence of many of the chronic diseases. Moreover, applying the lifecycle approach to health leads to a clear focus on preventing chronic disease, addressing risk factors and improving the effectiveness of the health system.

Accordingly, COAG has set itself the following objectives:

- Reduce the proportion of the working age population not participating and/or under participating in paid employment due to illness, injury or disability**
- Reduce the incidence of preventable chronic disease amongst the working age population**
- Reduce the prevalence of key risk factors that contribute to chronic disease**

and is focusing on three policy directions:

- A multi-faceted approach to primary prevention**
- Improving cost-effective early detection and intervention for those at-risk or undiagnosed**
- Strengthening integrated health care arrangements for recently diagnosed or those with established Type 2 diabetes**

Context

CURRENT ACT ACTIVITY

The ACT Health Diabetes Service is the major provider of specific diabetes services to people with diabetes in the ACT. The service currently caters for approximately 11,640 people. On the basis of these figures, the potential increase in the number of people with diagnosed diabetes in the ACT in 2020 is 130% of the 2005 figure.

Needless to say a twofold increase in the number of people accessing diabetes services will place an enormous strain on the existing workforce and service.

Diabetes Australia (ACT) reports that approximately 100 people in the ACT develop diabetes every month. In addition, the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (AusDiab) conducted in 1999 and 2000 also showed that for every known case of diabetes, there was one undiagnosed case. The AusDiab study also suggests that 16.4% of the national population had impaired glucose metabolism in 2000 and were therefore at high risk of developing diabetes in the future.

These points have led to some estimates that indicate that there may be as many as 28,000 people in the ACT with diabetes today and many more who are at high risk of developing diabetes in the future. A costing study released in 2003 estimated that the direct health care costs for each person with diabetes was \$5,360 per annum.

The focus of ACT Government efforts in primary prevention has been contributing to, and coordinating its strategies with, the national platform and the directions articulated in the National Chronic Disease Strategy. Accordingly, the ACT has continued with implementation of current health promotion messages such as the “Go for 2 and 5” campaign and childhood obesity initiatives and it is appropriate that it continue to coordinate with the national effort under the Human Capital Agenda.

ACT maintains a series of community health based supports in partnership with the ACT Division of General Practice and Diabetes Australia. These include consultation and counselling, therapeutic and lifestyle education; foot assessment; management reviews; self-management supports in relation to home blood glucose monitoring and a meter loan service. From time to time a person with diabetes may need access to podiatrists, endocrinologists, psychologists, ophthalmologists, cardiologists or dentists, generally provided through ACT Health.

ACT Diabetes services can be improved through appropriate and efficient information flow between agencies, professionals and individuals and addressing several workforce shortages. Traditionally services have been labour intensive and focused on one-on-one care with limited information sharing between those involved in their care. The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends a team of health care professionals assist in the management of diabetes condition.

The draft ACT Diabetes Service Plan 2006-2009 predicts that the number of people in the ACT with diabetes will increase by 27% between 2002 and 2021. The Services Plan focuses on a general practice centred model of care for people with diabetes.

A number of activities identified within the draft Diabetes Services Plan fit broadly under the Policy Direction 1 and Policy Direction 2 streams, including a comprehensive whole-of-government and inter-sectoral health promotion and prevention program and clear referral pathways to assist at risk people to engage in improved physical activity and nutrition.

However, it is considered that the best return from the ACT's investment can be made in the improved care and management of persons diagnosed with Type II Diabetes, complementing the Australian Government's capacity to take a national approach to primary prevention and the identification and education of those at risk of developing Type II Diabetes.

ACT CURRENT INVESTMENT

Primary prevention:

Current ACT contributions towards a multi-faceted approach to primary prevention include approximately \$4 million over four years towards the Australian Better Health Initiative (ABHI).

An estimated 20% of this is directed towards chronic disease prevention and management, while the ACT is also currently contributing through ABHI towards national health promotion social marketing campaigns and consistent school canteen guidelines.

In a related initiative, \$2 million over four years was recently committed to Combating Childhood Obesity, including the promotion of fruit and vegetables through the successful Go for 2&5 campaign, the development of Be Active ACT (a framework to promote the health benefits of physical activity), a schools health promotion funding round and school nutrition programs run in collaboration with the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Another related activity from the 2003-04 Budget was the provision of close to \$1 million over four years to support government and non-government schools to improve students' nutrition and increase fitness and physical activity. The initiative includes a number of activities to enhance health and fitness outcomes for students, including the School Canteen Accreditation program, the Feat 4 Feet - a primary school physical activity program and Tuckatalk in Schools.

The ACT Government schools policy on Health, Physical Education and Sport includes mandated hours for each student in years K-10. The ACT schools curriculum also provides a wide range of opportunities to learn about improving health and wellbeing.

Under the new curriculum framework from 2008, schools will be required to provide learning opportunities to ensure that all students are physically skilled and active, that they can take action to promote health and well being and can manage themselves and relationships.

Early detection and intervention / support for the diagnosed:

Current ACT contributions towards improved early detection and intervention for those at-risk or undiagnosed are focused on strengthening integrated health care arrangements through various community health self management programs. Funding for these programs are based on the Lorig model from Stanford University.

OUR MULTILATERAL COMMITMENTS

As part of the commitment to the Human Capital Reform Agenda the ACT in collaboration with the Commonwealth, States and Northern Territory has supported a number of investigative, preliminary actions to reduce the impact of Type II Diabetes, including:

Review of available workplace-based prevention initiatives

A business case study into development of a national diabetes monitoring system

The ACT has further agreed to support a range of multilateral actions under the Human Capital Agenda. As part of this commitment the ACT will:

Build on and realign existing initiatives to strengthen primary prevention efforts to reduce the causes of Type II Diabetes

Consider possible actions related to improving food choices, including food content labelling and food advertising

Develop by mid 2008 a nationally agreed risk assessment tool, program standards and accreditation arrangements for programs and providers looking to help people at risk of developing Type II Diabetes, as well as those who have been diagnosed with the disease

Ensure that existing initiatives improve referral pathways, self-management programs and integrated care for those with established or newly diagnosed Type II Diabetes

In fulfilment of its commitments under the Human Capital Reform Agenda it is expected that the Australian Government will:

Implement recruitment strategies to programs for the newly diagnosed focusing on general practice, pharmacies and workplaces

Support a national diabetes monitoring system

Develop an appropriate evaluation framework

New Directions

In addition to our multilateral obligations under the Human Capital Agenda the ACT has determined a series of proposed new directions - including reform actions, the better use of existing resources, organisational change, and new investments – which will further the goals of building human capital in the ACT.

In the ACT there is to be a greater focus on health promotion and prevention. All members of the community will be encouraged to have a regular health check with their GP. If diabetes is diagnosed, their GP will have continued involvement in their care throughout the progression of the disease. This approach is consistent with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioner (RACGP) guidelines. Those identified as being at risk or who have been diagnosed will be provided with tools to enable them to undertake a self management approach to their care. Medical management of diabetes will increase as required as secondary and tertiary health care interventions are needed.

Beyond any jurisdictional contribution towards multilateral actions under Policy Direction 1 and Policy Direction 2, the ACT has a number of activities identified within the Draft Diabetes Services Plan that are complementary to the Policy Direction 3 stream and could constitute a jurisdictional-specific contribution, including:

POLICY DIRECTION 1: A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO PRIMARY PREVENTION

DIAB 1. Undertake Health Promotion Activity

ACT Health now administers the former Healthpact health promotion grants. This program includes in all funding agreements with Non Government Organisations the requirement to undertake health promotion activity. Consideration is also being given to extending this requirement to all NGO service providers contacted by ACT Government and consultations will be undertaken with grant recipients over the feasibility of this proposed new requirement.

Timeframe: To be considered as part of new 3-year funding agreements from July 2007.

DIAB 2. Promoting Physical Activity, Good Nutrition and Healthy Weight.

The prevention of weight gain in early childhood offers the most effective means of achieving healthy weight in the population and so supporting healthy and productive lifestyles through the life cycle. Declining physical activity and sedentary behaviour are putting ACT children at risk of childhood obesity and developing chronic diseases in later life, including diabetes. At present only 1 in 4 ACT children eat the minimum recommended daily serve of vegetables. As part of its commitment to obesity prevention under the ACT Children's Plan this project will build on the success of the Sport and Recreation Services' Kids at Play physical activity program by combining active play with health eating messages. The project will involve offering information, practical advice and skills development to parents and carers. It will also target early childhood centre staff to increase their knowledge and skills, given the large numbers of ACT children who attend these services.

Timeframe: Commenced early 2007.

POLICY DIRECTION 2: IMPROVE COST-EFFECTIVE EARLY DETECTION AND INTERVENTION FOR THOSE AT-RISK OR UNDIAGNOSED

DIAB 3. An ACT Primary Care Diabetes Service

Investigate the establishment in phase 2 of the Diabetes Services Plan of a fully integrated primary health care service for people in the ACT with diabetes through a provider pooling Australian Government and Territory funds to provide health promotion, education and allied health care to patients whose care is coordinated by general practice.

Timeframe: Research in 2007/08.

DIAB 4. GP Centred Care Model

Examine options for ACT Health, in partnership with the Division of General Practice (ACT) to encourage the implementation and enhancement of a GP centred care model. A GP centred model of care is advocated by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners guidelines, and involves providing continuity of care for the individual. ACT Health is also currently working with the ACT Division of General Practice to provide support for GPs issuing lifestyle prescriptions to people with, or at risk of, diabetes, to assist patients make lifestyle changes to reduce their risk and improve their outcomes.

Timeframe: Research in 2007/08.

DIAB 5. Increase Primary Care Service Capacity

Consider possible options for ACT Health to develop agreements with Non Government Organisations to deliver services to increase primary care service capacity, for example through employing Diabetes Educators through Diabetes Australia.

Timeframe: Research in 2007/08.

POLICY DIRECTION 3: STRENGTHEN INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RECENTLY DIAGNOSED OR THOSE WITH ESTABLISHED TYPE 2 DIABETES

DIAB 6. Establishing a Register for People who have Diabetes, including reminders for regular check ups.

Investigate the feasibility of ACT Health implementing a strategy to improve information management, including the introduction of the My Health Record system and Diabetes Register.

Timeframe: Research in 2007/08.

DIAB 7. Improved Self-Management Resources, including information updates on best practice in self-management

Options are currently being explored to offer chronic disease self-management “online” using web based coaching programs.

Timeframe: From July 2007.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Policy Directions	Multilateral Commitments	ACT Commitments	Commonwealth Actions
Primary Prevention	<p>Realign existing primary prevention efforts</p> <p>Improve food choices, including food content labelling and food advertising</p>	<p>Undertake Health Promotion Activities</p> <p>Promoting Physical Activity, Good Nutrition and Health Weight</p>	<p>Support a national diabetes monitoring system</p> <p>An evaluation framework</p>
Early Detection and Intervention	Nationally agreed risk assessment tool, program standards and accreditation arrangements for programs and providers	<p>Integrated ACT Primary Care Service</p> <p>GP Centred Care Model</p> <p>Increased Primary Care Service Capacity</p>	Recruitment strategies to programs for the newly diagnosed focusing on general practice, pharmacies and workplaces
Support for the Diagnosed	Ensure that existing initiatives improve referral pathways, self-management programs and integrated care for those with established or newly diagnosed Type II Diabetes	<p>Diabetes Self-Care Register</p> <p>Improved Self-Management Resources</p>	

NEW DIRECTIONS - FUNDING

The ACT has already committed \$2,400 to a number of investigative, preliminary actions to reduce the impact of Type II Diabetes under the Human Capital Agenda, including:

Review of available workplace-based prevention initiatives

A business case study into development of a national diabetes monitoring system

Additional multilateral commitments in the order of \$15,200 are expected to support:

Developing a risk assessment tool, accreditation and standards

Under its own Type II Diabetes Action Plan total funding of \$1.5 million will be committed by the ACT Government over four years.

HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

Early Childhood Education & Childcare

There is a strong evidence base that investment in early childhood offers exceptional economic and social returns in terms of the development of human capital and increased workforce participation and productivity.

Key research findings are that the foundations for life and learning are determined in the early years (prior to school entry), and that socialisation skills are as important as cognitive skills in determining future patterns of behaviour. Economic evidence supports action in the early stages of life with very high benefit-cost ratios evident for effective programs aimed at both the general population (universal programs or services) or specific sub-groups (targeted programs or services).

Labour market participation rates for women have increased by over 50 percent in the last three decades, with the majority of this increase being among partnered women with dependent children. Australian mothers are also returning to work sooner after the birth of their children. In 2002 over 49 percent of women with children under five were participating in the workforce. Policies to ensure that the children of working parents receive appropriate support, child care and education are extremely important.

Accordingly, COAG has set itself the outcomes of:

Significantly improve the proportion of children born healthy

Subsidiary outcome: The gap between the proportion of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous children born healthy is closed

Significantly improve the proportion of children acquiring the basic skills for life and learning

Subsidiary outcome: The gap between the proportion of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous children acquiring the basic skills for life and learning is closed

and is focusing on four policy directions:

Improving Antenatal Care

Strengthening the Health, Development and Learning of 0 – 5 Year Olds

Enhancing the Provision of Early Childhood Education and Care Services

Improving the Early Years Workforce

Context

CURRENT ACT ACTIVITY

The ACT already provides a range of universal, high standard services for children and across agency efforts are guided by the vision of the ACT Children's Plan 2004 – 2014, which is concerned with making Canberra a great place for children and the goals of the Canberra Social Plan, which include investing in children and young people and promoting a better balance between work and families.

ACT investment in free preschool education is the second highest of Australian jurisdictions (and increased in the 2005-06 budget) and participation rates are the highest in the country. Significant capital and service investment in early intervention and integrated service delivery to children and families is also evident in the recent establishment of the Gungahlin and Tuggeranong Child and Family Centres.

The ACT's additional investment under the COAG Human Capital Agenda will not be incremental improvements to existing universal services, given the current high standard of service and extensive investment, but the provision of more intensive and effective targeted support for at-risk children and marginalised families.

The ACT Child and Family Centres are the new hub for universal and targeted developmental programs, health and education offerings and parenting and family support services. Staffed by social workers, psychologists, child and maternal health nurses and early childhood educators, they provide an integrated service that is tailored to meet the particular needs of their community. They also reflect a strong commitment to outreach and the building of partnerships with community and professionals. Amongst other things the Centres run monthly parent education sessions on a wide range of topics; the evidence based Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) that strengthens relationships between parents and children to build a platform for positive behavior management strategies; and facilitated playgroups for more vulnerable families such as parents with a mental illness, young parents and, parents in the child protection system. The majority of programs are run in collaboration with other government and non-government agencies.

The Parents as Teachers home visiting program is also based at the Child and Family Centres and provides families with information on child development and early literacy development through regular visits and group information sessions. Each centre has a Community Child Protection worker aiming to offer a pathway for families out of the statutory child protection system and into services with a prevention and early intervention framework such as the Child and Family Centres. There are also outreach playgroups such as Paint and Play conducted in local parks enabling staff to provide parenting tips and put families in touch with local services.

The Child and Family Centres are well on the way to being a 'one stop shop' for families. An increasing number of services provided by other agencies are now available for families and include: Maternal and Child Health clinics; physiotherapy and speech pathology drop in clinics; relationship counseling; Child Health Medical Officer clinics; nutrition clinics; and sign ups for public housing for families. Existing programs around ante-natal and 0 to 3 years include those based around the Canberra Hospital Antenatal Clinic, the Midwifery Program, Maternal and Community Health nurses, and specific programs for mothers at-risk including the Canberra College Cares program, support for the Karinya Home for

Mothers and Babies program, the Winnunga Aboriginal Midwifery Program and ear health programs. Under the Government's New Born Screening program 99% or 5,234 babies received screening tests in 2005/06.

Sustained home visiting (health, development and family support focused) for vulnerable families is provided in the ACT through Maternal and Child Health nurses and through the New Beginnings program.

In addition to these investments, a review of current childcare licensing practices and policies will be undertaken in 2007 with a review of the Children and Young People Act 1999 which is intended to ensure a robust and transparent regulatory system is sustained in the ACT. Planning efforts are also focused on more targeted service provision in the children's services sector through the ACT Government's review of the Children's Services Sub-Sector Funding Plan.

As part of its reforms, the ACT will look to engage with the children's services community to ensure its approach is responsive to their needs and informed by the latest evidence and best practice. A newly established forum will inform a sustainable, flexible and responsive ACT children's services sector through an advisory and working group approach to current and specific sector challenges. The forum will respond to public interest in, and provider concerns over, the ongoing challenge of balancing supply with demand for licensed children's services in the ACT. The forum will also have a broader role to focus on issues that impact on the delivery of quality children's services in the ACT. Similarly, a conference scheduled for August 2007 will examine early childhood development education and prevention issues broadly and the specific theme of inter-sectoral collaboration and cooperation. The conference will explore policy, practice and research aspects of early childhood services where the objectives are the integration and co-ordination of non-parental care, health, pre-school education and family support service sectors.

The identified multilateral reform proposals include a number of initiatives which will assist in furthering current ACT services and systems, particularly the possible development of a universal child development check between 18 months and 3 years, leading to the identification of children at risk of not meeting developmental milestones and establishing of appropriate referral pathways. The recent Murray-Mackie Study on deaths and near deaths of children has also identified the need for improved coordination and integration of service efforts for children 'at risk' across ACT Government agencies.

The issue of support for the early years workforce has been recognised as an important component in the provision of early childhood education and care and will be considered by COAG following the 13 April 2007 meeting with a view to developing appropriate policy responses. The ACT similarly recognises that early childhood education and care programs are delivered throughout centre based children's services, in many cases by tertiary qualified teachers, however staff recruitment and retention to the sector remain a critical issue. The context of the 10 year Human Capital Reform Agenda provides the opportunity to look at new methodologies for the delivery of early childhood programs regardless of setting.

The ACT is also cognisant that while it compares favourably with other jurisdictions in relation to access for children of Non-English speaking backgrounds, there is a relatively lower representation of children with disabilities and/or children from Indigenous backgrounds participating in formal early childhood settings. Inclusion Support Funding provides inclusion support to Child Care Benefit approved children's services in the ACT. The ACT Government also provides funding to those licensed child care services that are not eligible for Child Care Benefit (independent preschools and playschools). In addition, the ACT Government provides funding for the provision of flexible child care places and a range of programs to meet the special support needs of children and their families.

ACT CURRENT COSTS / INVESTMENTS

The ACT Government total investment in early childhood education and care is substantial. According to the 2007 Report on Government Services the ACT Government in 2005-06 spent \$427.03 per child aged 0-12 years on children's services, which is the second highest of any jurisdictions after the Northern Territory and well above the national average.

The services offered in the ACT are equally evident in the participation rate of children aged 0-12 years participating in child care in 2005-06, which at 31.3% is the highest in the country, and the provision of 12 hours free universal preschool to all 4 year olds.

This expenditure complements the extensive increased investment of the ACT Government since 2004 in care and protection, adoption and support services to young people at risk.

Antenatal services:

The ACT invests significantly in the provision of antenatal services. Approximately \$10 million is spent each year in support of services provided through The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Hospital, as well as specific services targeting disadvantaged groups. This includes the Indigenous Midwifery program, the highly successful Hearing Health Program, as well as support for substance using parents and the provision of perinatal services for persons with mental health issues.

0-5 years health, development and learning:

The ACT Child and Family Centres program involves significant annual expenditure, providing amongst other things 80 parenting sessions and 80 community development and education programs annually.

ACT Health has similarly significant investments of around \$6 million per annum, providing amongst other things for the Child at Risk Health Assessment Unit within the Community Health area, Community Paediatricians, Community Child Health Medical Officers, Allied Health in Community Health, and Maternal and Child Health nurses.

Moreover under the Child Youth and Family Support program increased funding has been spent on the provision of services to assist children, young people and families to participate in a range of community activities; prevention/intervention services, including Parents as Teachers Program and the Schools as Communities program.

Provision of ECEC services:

There are currently 66 preschools in the ACT accommodating approximately 3,400 students. That is close to 80% of all eligible children in the ACT. Early intervention programs are located at 10 preschool sites across the ACT and a total of 433 children attended early intervention programs in 2005–06. The 2006-07 ACT Budget provided funding of over \$16.5 million in Early Childhood and Preschool services, including the provision of 12 hours free access per week for children aged 4 years.

The ACT Government also licenses and monitors ECEC services, with around \$2 million per annum provided through the Children’s Services Sub-Sector Funding Plan per annum to increase access to emergency and occasional child care services. Recent capital upgrades to community based child care facilities include the new Weston Creek Early Childhood Centre at a cost of \$2.6 million and significant investments in the repair and maintenance of child care centres, owned but not operated by the ACT Government.

Early years workforce:

The development and support of the workforce within the early childhood education and care sector has been identified as an issue within the ACT if the necessary reforms are to be accomplished. The ACT Government is looking forward to exploring policy responses at both a national and local level in the next phase of the Human Capital reform process.

OUR MULTILATERAL COMMITMENTS

As part of the commitment to the Human Capital Reform Agenda the ACT in collaboration with the Commonwealth, States and Territories, has already supported a number of investigative, preliminary actions to improve early childhood and education outcomes, including:

A feasibility study into the development of a child development and health assessment tool for 18 months to 3 year olds.

A statistical consultancy into a sampling framework for using the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

The ACT has further agreed to support a range of multilateral actions under the Human Capital Agenda. As part of this commitment the ACT will:

By the end of 2008 helped to have implement a set of national, evidence-based guidelines for antenatal care based on the work of the National Health and Medical Research Council

Provide training and support to professionals working in all antenatal settings in assisting pregnant women at risk, including those who smoke, use alcohol or other drugs

Require preconception and antenatal specific messages to be incorporated into future public health campaigns

Assist in developing and delivering targeted information strategies for groups of disadvantaged women promoting healthy pregnancies and building upon the Australian Better Health Initiative

Encourage better linkages and exchange between Commonwealth funded and Stated funded Aboriginal medical services

Look to integrate local services through joint planning and co-location of services

Implement nationally agreed core competencies for professionals working with young children and their families

Enhance health, development and learning for disadvantaged children and their families by providing targeted, evidence-based programs, including parenting programs, home visiting and playgroups

Assist in the development of an intergovernmental agreement on a national approach to quality assurance of regulation of early childhood education and care services by 2008

In fulfilment of its commitments under the Human Capital Reform Agenda it is expected that the Australian Government will:

Support the integration of ECEC services through joint planning, co-location and collaboration

Help build resilience amongst the very disadvantaged 0 to 5 year old cohort through family support, enhanced child and maternal health services and playgroups

Broadening the eligibility criteria for special Child Care Benefit to include families experiencing very serious economic disadvantage

Support the introduction of a birth to five learning framework

Increasing child care places for under 2 year olds by providing incentives to services through the CCB and other mechanisms

Expand the Raising Children Network to include antenatal and preconception information and build on its success using its resources to provide high quality and consistent information through a variety of channels

Extend promotion of the Indigenous Health Check

New Directions

In addition to our multilateral obligations under the Human Capital Agenda the ACT has determined a series of proposed new directions - including reform actions, the better use of existing resources, organisational change, and new investments – which will further the goals of building human capital in the ACT.

POLICY DIRECTION 1: IMPROVING ANTENATAL CARE

ECEC 1. Prenatal Reporting

In 2007 the Children and Young People Amendment Act 2007 introduced pre-natal reporting to give effect to one of the key recommendations of the Murray-Mackie study into the deaths and near-deaths of five children known to Care and Protection Services. The legislation allows for pre-natal reporting for Care and Protection to work voluntarily with families in the antenatal period addressing risk factors. This legislation enables, if required, pregnant women and other family members to receive help and support, thereby reducing the likelihood that the unborn child will need statutory care and protection intervention after birth.

Timeframe: Legislation introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 12 December 2006.

ECEC 2. Antenatal Care for Mothers at Risk

This project was developed in response to the Murray Mackie study into infant deaths and near deaths in the ACT and is a partnership between Child Protection Services (CPS) and ACT Health looking at pre-birth and post-birth risks to babies whose mothers are on Opiate Replacement Therapy and/or have a significant mental illness. It will examine ways in which risk to children can be identified as early as possible and if necessary statutory action taken. Whether or not legal action is taken, the aim is to enhance the safety of children and improve health and development outcomes for children and families. A key focus of the project is on strong communication and collaboration between key agencies when a mother is receiving antenatal care, tight planning when she is to be discharged with the baby and assertive follow-up until the youngest child in the family is two years old.

Timeframe: Commencing 2007.

ECEC 3. Birth to Two Project

A pilot project between the Child and Family Centres and Care and Protection Services to provide a seamless, wrap around, integrated and strengths based model of service delivery to families with children aged between birth and 2 years old living in Gungahlin and Tuggeranong. It is a new initiative to research, pilot and implement a prevention and early intervention collaborative practice model for working with high-risk and vulnerable children and their families.

Timeframe: Implementation commenced late 2006.

POLICY DIRECTION 2: STRENGTHEN THE HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING OF 0 – 5 YEAR OLDS

ECEC 4. Integrated Indigenous Service Delivery

An integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery across identified health, education and family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. It includes the development of strategies to facilitate smooth transitions between early childhood services and primary schools for Indigenous children by improving the way the ACT Government services work in partnership with families.

Timeframe: Implementation to commence first half 2007.

ECEC 5. Integrated Family Support

A bilateral project under National Agenda for Early Childhood to improve outcomes for vulnerable and at-risk children and their families. This project involves building a co-ordinated service delivery model to meet the needs of high risk families across the ACT.

Ten non government services and three government departments have come together to reform and strengthen the human service delivery system across the universal, primary and secondary prevention and tertiary continuum, and across these sectors. A pilot group of families from the target group have agreed to participate and chosen their key workers for the trial.

Timeframe: Commenced late 2006.

POLICY DIRECTION 3: ENHANCING THE PROVISION OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

ECEC 6. Early Childhood Schools

Four new early childhood schools catering for students from Preschool to Year 2 (P-2) will be established under the ACT Government's School Renewal project. The early childhood schools will focus on quality early childhood education and early intervention, providing a solid foundation for learning for the future. A number of early childhood services will be co-located at the P-2 schools.

The School Renewal project commits \$90 million over four years in capital works such as classroom upgrades and new playground equipment. Following investigation into best practice early childhood schools, the Department will be able to significantly upgrade the schools to meet the needs of the early childhood model.

Timeframe: Commencing 2009.

ECEC 7. Preschool Primary Links

From 2008, all preschools will be amalgamated with a primary school in order to streamline pathways for children. Some primary schools will have more than one preschool annexed to them. These amalgamations will improve the continuity of learning and ensure children can access an integrated education curriculum. In addition, our new curriculum renewal framework will have a strong focus on teaching and learning in the early years.

Timeframe: Commencing 2008.

ECEC 8. Licensing for Preschool Children in School Age Care Services

Children's Services, OCYFS is currently considering issues for the attendance of preschool age children in licensed school age care programs. This represents a policy response to demand from the ACT community for more flexible child care provision that meets the needs and interests of children, families and services and a matter where Commonwealth support through changes to the Child Care Benefit could facilitate improved access.

Timeframe: Implementation from mid 2007.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Policy Directions	Multilateral Commitments	ACT Commitments	Commonwealth Actions
Antenatal services	<p>A set of national, evidence-based guidelines for antenatal care</p> <p>Training and support to professionals working in all antenatal settings in assisting women at risk</p> <p>Preconception and antenatal specific messages incorporated into public health campaigns</p> <p>Targeted information for disadvantaged women promoting healthy pregnancies and building upon the ABHI</p> <p>Better linkages and exchange between Commonwealth and State Aboriginal medical services</p>	<p>Prenatal Reporting</p> <p>Antenatal Care for Mothers at Risk</p> <p>Birth to Two Project</p>	<p>Expand the Raising Children Network to include antenatal and preconception information and build on its success using its resources to provide high quality and consistent information through a variety of channels</p>
0-5 years health, development and learning	<p>Integrated local services through joint planning and co-location</p> <p>Nationally agreed core competencies for professionals working with young children and families</p> <p>Enhanced health, development and learning for disadvantaged children by providing targeted, evidence-based programs</p>	<p>Integrated Indigenous Service Delivery</p> <p>Integrated Family Support</p>	<p>Help build resilience amongst the very disadvantaged 0 to 5 year old cohort through family support, enhanced child and maternal health services and playgroups</p> <p>Support the introduction of a birth to five learning framework</p> <p>Extend promotion of the Indigenous Health Check</p>

Provision of Early Childhood Education and Care services	An intergovernmental agreement on a national approach to quality assurance of regulation of early childhood education and care services	Early Childhood Schools Preschool Primary Links Licensing for Preschool Children in School Aged Care Services	Support the integration of ECEC services through joint planning, co-location and collaboration Broadening the eligibility criteria for special CCB to include those experiencing very serious economic disadvantage Increasing child care places for under 2 year olds by providing incentives to services
Early Years Workforce	To be developed after the April 2007 COAG meeting		

NEW DIRECTIONS - FUNDING

The ACT has already committed \$1,340 to a number of investigative, preliminary actions to improve early childhood and education outcomes under the Human Capital Agenda, including:

A feasibility study into the development of a child development and health assessment tool for 18 months to 3 year olds

A statistical consultancy into a sampling framework for using the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

Under its own Early Childhood Education and Care Action Plan total funding of \$6 million will be committed by the ACT Government over four years.

Concluding Remarks

The actions and initiatives identified within these three plans represent the potential ACT investment towards the first tranche of the Human Capital stream of the National Reform Agenda, within current financial limitations and without the provision of additional support.

The Human Capital reform agenda is intended as a collaborative exercise, dependent on both multilateral and integrated actions. Given that the Productivity Commission has estimated that roughly 60% of long-term benefits from implementation of the reform agenda will flow to the Commonwealth and 40% to States, Territories and local government, it is fair to expect the Federal Government to contribute accordingly.

The ACT looks forward to this contribution, as well as the second tranche of reforms with a focus on increasing workforce participation through assistance in smoothing young people's transition from school to work and a focus on updating adult skills.