



# Celebrating Multicultural Diversity

Canberra**liberals**

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# Celebrating

## Multicultural Diversity

Canberra is one of Australia's great multicultural success stories. The Canberra Liberals recognise that Canberra is a diverse community with people from many backgrounds and that the celebration of our multicultural heritage is important not just to first generation migrants, but also to subsequent generations of Canberrans with a multicultural heritage. Our vision is to foster a harmonious, inclusive and fair community.

We are strongly committed to assisting multicultural community groups to:

- provide services to help migrants participate fully in community life,
- maintain and express their culture through educational programs, and
- share their culture through vibrant and dynamic events that involve the whole Canberra community.

A Canberra Liberal Government will boost funding in three main areas over the next four years.

1. We will seriously increase funding for Canberra's annual National Multicultural Festival with significant additional funding of \$328,000 on top of new budget funding over four years.
2. We will provide an additional \$150,000 for Languages Programs, doubling the current funding, to help new multicultural groups to maintain their rich linguistic, cultural, historical and religious traditions among the younger generations.
3. We will provide an additional \$206,000 to the ACT Ethnic Schools Association to help it support some 40 community-based language schools in Canberra.

# Growing the National Multicultural Festival

The ACT Multicultural Festival is one of the most successful in Australia and must be further developed for both community and tourist purposes.

The Spectator Survey after the 2008 Multicultural Festival found that two per cent of spectators came to Canberra specifically for the festival and a further one per cent extended their stay to attend the festival. At most, this amounts to 6,000 spectators who came or stayed longer in Canberra because of the festival. In dollar terms this would amount to around \$1.8 million contributed to the ACT economy.

We can do much better than this in attracting tourist numbers to this vibrant and activity-packed festival. The challenge for the ACT Government is to move this from being just a popular local event, to making it an event which greater national prominence and pulling power. The concept behind a *National* Multicultural Festival is that it should be an event for people from all around Australia.

**A Canberra Liberal Government will boost funding for the National Multicultural Festival by around \$100,000 per year. This money will support more events and better support services like shading and seating.**

**We will also direct some of the \$9 million additional funding we have announced for tourism marketing, to attract interstate visitors to the National Multicultural Festival.**

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Extra funding for the Multicultural Festival on top of 2008-09 Budget Increase	50	75	100	103
Increased funding for the Multicultural Festival above 2008 level	<b>150</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>211</b>

Over four years the new funding for the National Multicultural Festival will be \$328,000 over what Labor has budgeted. Moreover when we combine this additional support with funding increases flagged in the May 2008 budget, then over the next four years the festival will enjoy a total \$744,000 above the old base funding level.

# Doubling of Language Funding

There are many small community groups which consistently fail to receive grants funding although their needs are great, including in the case of some African and Pacific Islands communities, for their much needed youth programs. Language programs are vitally important for helping multicultural community groups maintain their cultural identity and heritage among younger members of their community.

Total grants funding under the Stanhope Government has been limited to \$50,000 per year, and in the last round of grants, grants for individual groups were as small as \$750 and no greater than \$3,000.

**A Canberra Liberal Government will provide an additional \$50,000 per year to double funding for the ACT Community Languages Grant Program. This will help support multicultural groups to maintain their language and cultural traditions among the younger generations.**

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Increased funding for the Languages Grant Program		50	50	50

# Broader criteria for Grants Programs

We will improve the community grants distributions process, by making more activity eligible for support. Under the rules applied by the Stanhope Government, grants cannot go to ongoing programs, or recurrent activities and projects.

**A Canberra Liberal Government will also review the multicultural grants program, in consultation with community groups, with a view to supporting some multi-year activities.**

# Support for the ACT Ethnic Schools Association

The ACT Ethnic Schools Association operates on a lean budget. This organisation is an umbrella body for 40 community-based language schools in Canberra, representing 1,500 students. The ACT does not have a critical mass of language schools to provide a strong level of private funding to the organisation.

**A Canberra Liberal Government will provide an additional \$206,000 over four years to support the good work of the ACT Ethnic Schools Association.**

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Increased funding for the Ethnic Schools Association	20	60	62	64

# Fair Treatment for Community Projects

The Stanhope Government has stuffed-around the Islamic School of Canberra, which is a small institution operating from a deteriorating temporary old school site. This school has been seeking permission for a site on which it can invest in new facilities.

The Stanhope Government has played games with the community for the past four years, offering and then renegeing on seven successive sites. The latest ploy is to promise land in the undeveloped Molonglo paddocks, which will delay progress by another four years. After countless letters from the school to the government, the Stanhope Government policy seems to be one of 'no consultation, no communication and no feedback'.

A number of other not-for-profit community groups have from time to time confronted hurdles and delays in seeking to develop projects like aged care homes, or extensions to facilities at existing churches and community sites.

**A Canberra Liberal Government will work with local community groups to identify a range of community-based projects which have been stalled by the ACT Government. We will work through the planning issues and will actively consult to advance projects that have come to a standstill because of a disinterested and prevaricating Stanhope Government.**

We will actively assist multicultural groups in their planning for the care of aged citizens in supportive community environments.

## More Accommodation for Community Groups

The Notaras Multicultural Centre was designed to accommodate selected community groups and to be a venue for community activities. The government has, since the opening of the building, gradually moved elements of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) into the building, ostensibly to improve communications between OMA and community groups but possibly also as a cost saving measure for the agency.

Smaller community groups cannot afford the rent charged to establish permanent or part time offices in the centre, to run language classes for their children or even to get together in meeting rooms from time to time.

**We will offer additional space in the Notaras Centre at very moderate costs for smaller, needy community groups to meet, undertake linguistic classes, and run other appropriate activities. We will relocate OMA staff as required to accommodate demand from qualifying groups.**

# The Stanhope Government Legacy

Multicultural policy is an area where there should be some strong bipartisan consensus. The Canberra Liberals strongly endorse support provided to multicultural community groups including through the grants programs and the Multicultural Festival.

We support efforts to help new migrants and in particular refugees and asylum seekers. We have backed efforts to break down the barriers for these marginalised groups by stemming discrimination and providing language services, housing, health services, child care support, transport assistance, work experience and other support.

Unfortunately it is the Stanhope Government that has frequently chosen to use multicultural issues for political game-playing. This Government has replaced respected and experienced office holders seen not to be explicitly sympathetic to Labor. This was often at significant detriment to their constituent communities and 'good governance' in those community organisations. Labor's interference has had consequences including loss of membership and loss of the community grants to some community groups. Labor's engagement in unnecessary political games culminated in the sacking of the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multicultural Affairs.

The Canberra Liberals recognise that the Stanhope Government has interfered in the internal politics of peak multicultural bodies and has treated some community leaders and groups as political footballs, rather than as partners in community-building. A Canberra Liberal Government will conduct itself in a principled and decent way in dealing with community groups.

**A Canberra Liberal Government will foster harmony and fairness by de-politicising the running of multicultural affairs and ensuring that divisive political issues are not allowed to intrude into the celebration of our multiculturalism and the teaching of cultural traditions. We will also upgrade the 'good governance' requirements for multicultural community groups which receive funding.**

**We will ensure that the Ministerial Advisory Council is representative of the community. We will ensure that members are chosen on the basis of skills, experience and genuine involvement in the community – we will not be picking political appointees.**

Multicultural organisations that receive ACT government funding will need to govern their constituents with fairness and equality, regardless of political, religious and ethnic backgrounds.