

ACT Budget on target for mental health

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Significant investment in the ACT's 2018/19 budget targets areas of need across the population span.

Mental Health Community Coalition ACT (MHCC ACT) congratulates the ACT Government on a large investment in mental health in the 2018/19 Budget. The new initiatives will improve access to support across age groups and levels of need.

“From much-needed supported accommodation for those with the most complex needs to outreach services to meet young people where they are, these initiatives will make a real difference for vulnerable Canberrans”, said Simon Viereck, Executive Officer of MHCC ACT.

\$22.8 million over four years will go to build and operate new residential supports, including 24 hour supported accommodation places for 15 people with severe, enduring and complex needs.

“This initiative will also fund a new Step Up/Step Down facility, which will provide intensive support to people who would otherwise be heading towards admission to the acute inpatient unit, or transitioning back into the community after a hospital stay”, said Mr Viereck, “it’s great to see this investment in supporting people to stay in the community where they experience better outcomes and the costs to the health system are lower. It’s a win-win situation”.

Both types of accommodation will be based in suburban neighbourhoods and be designed to blend in with other houses on the street.

“An added benefit of these programs is that they help to normalise mental health issues for people in the community”, Mr Viereck said, “Residents will just be people in the local community like everyone else”.

The Budget also provides \$2.158 million over two years to establish an Assertive Outreach Program targeted at 12-18 year olds. This service will be staffed and run by ACT Health, but will work collaboratively with youth services and other community agencies.



“This means the service can now come to the young people instead of relying on them to come to the service”, Mr. Viereck said. “The model is based on working closely with community agencies who have built relationships of trust with those young people, who aren’t going to go looking for a service themselves and often don’t trust clinicians”, he continued. “Building on existing relationships can be particularly important when working with young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, so this initiative has potential to make a real difference to some very vulnerable young Canberrans.”

The budget also provides additional funding for Headspace and 15 additional school psychologists, improving access to supports for children and young people.

For an adult target group, the Budget provides \$889,000 for establishment of a Recovery College. Recovery Colleges are innovative projects which use an educational approach to supporting people with mental health issues to build their capacity to live the lives they want.

“A Recovery College is a place for people to learn, with and from each other, what helps you to take control of your life and achieve your goals”, Mr Viereck said, “it’s giving you hope that you can live the life you want, because the people around you are on that journey too”.

“There is still plenty to do to build a comprehensive mental health system for everyone, but this budget eases pressure across the spectrum and provides a very good foundation”, Mr Viereck said.

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MHCC ACT is the peak body for community mental health services in the ACT

