



MEDIA RELEASE: ACT Budget 2018-19

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Welcome investment into mental health services, but nothing to address housing insecurity and youth homelessness

The Youth Coalition of the ACT welcomes the 2018-19 ACT Budget and its investment in mental health support, assertive outreach and improving public and community spaces, but maintains that there are parts of the community that have been overlooked in this Budget.

Dr Justin Barker, the Executive Director of the Youth Coalition of the ACT, congratulated the Treasurer on delivering a balanced Budget, but said more needed to be done to ensure Canberra's young people also benefited from the Territory's strong economic performance.

"The Youth Coalition of the ACT has been calling for funding for mental health initiatives focusing on early intervention for young people for many years, and we are very pleased to see it included in this Budget," Dr Barker said. "The investment in the Assertive Outreach Service for 12-18 year olds is a clear recognition of the need to improve access to mental health supports for vulnerable young Canberrans. Alongside the other significant investments in mental health including ongoing funding for headspace, we hope these measures will ease the pressure on mental health services in the ACT."

Unfortunately the jobs growth and a strong local economy highlighted by the Treasurer in his Budget speech are not reflected in the experiences of many young people in the ACT.

"We're concerned that we didn't see anything in this Budget for early intervention and prevention into the root causes of social disadvantage and vulnerability. This budget does not deliver on addressing insecure housing and employment for young Canberrans, which undermines their stability and ability to invest in their futures. We have seen yet another example this week in the media of young people unable to find accommodation in Canberra. Young people in our city should not have to sleep in libraries, cars, or couchsurf because they are unable to find accommodation in Canberra."

The Youth Coalition commends the much-needed investment in homelessness services for women and children, but wants to know where the funds are for addressing youth homelessness.

"We need to invest in services and initiatives that will address the risks and vulnerabilities that cause homelessness in the first place," Dr Barker said. "It is not acceptable to see this huge gap between those who thrive in this prosperous city, and the young people who don't have a safe place to live."

For further comment please contact Dr Justin Barker on 02 6247 3540