

# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

## INTRODUCTION

Every child, adolescent, and young person has the right to good mental health.

The ACT Greens want a society that is structured around healthy environments that promote individual and family wellbeing.

This is a vision for Canberra where supportive communities help children and young people to feel safe, secure, empowered and optimistic about their future.

Almost one third of Canberrans will need support with their mental health at some stage in their lives, and the COVID-19 pandemic has seen a huge increase in need.

For young people in particular, providing early support to build resilience, coping strategies and mental health literacy is vital and can help prevent mental health issues manifesting later in life.

We need to provide more accessible, affordable and engaging services, fill gaps in the system, and ensure our mental health services are equipped to provide early intervention.

With an ACT Greens Mental Health Minister **we established the ACT's first Office For Mental Health and Wellbeing**. This has made significant improvements in the sector, but has also revealed the scale of the need.

**THAT'S WHY THE ACT GREENS WILL PROVIDE OVER \$11.6 MILLION ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. THIS WILL FOCUS ON:**

1. establishing a **\$2 million psychologist subsidy scheme for young people and people on low incomes**
2. employing **10 additional child and adolescent mental health clinicians**
3. **boosting community counselling, mentoring, home visits, advocacy and case management for 10-25 year olds**
4. a **Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Program** in primary schools
5. free **mental health training for parents and carers** and peer support groups
6. **more funding and funding certainty for community sector delivery of youth mental health services**

## 1. PSYCHOLOGIST SUBSIDY SCHEME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES

The Greens will improve access to psychological therapies by allocating \$500,000 per year for a psychologist subsidy scheme for mental health care plan sessions, equating to around 13,000 psychological sessions per year.

We know from talking to the community that a barrier to seeking mental health support is affordability, particularly for young people and for those who are vulnerable or on a lower income.

The Medicare Benefit Scheme (MBS) rebate for psychology sessions is insufficient and does not support nor encourage people to access the psychological support they may need. This is particularly evident amongst already vulnerable and less financially well-off people and groups.

The Greens will create a psychologist subsidy scheme for young people and low income earners. Canberrans of 25 years and under, and healthcare card holders with a mental health plan will be eligible for this. The ACT Government will subsidise up to \$35 per session.

This commitment targets the 'mild to moderate' category of mental health need, as this has been identified as a key gap in current service models between Headspace and CAMHS, and we are aware that unfortunately this cohort often don't proactively seek support due to cost.

## 2. 10 ADDITIONAL CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIANS

The Greens will provide \$4.8 million over four years to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to recruit 10 additional clinicians and boost service delivery and client intake.

The additional funding to CAMHS will also provide flexibility in transitioning young consumers who have turned 18 from the CAMHS service to an adult service. This will allow for a staged and supportive transition approach.

Access to mental health treatment and support for adolescents is critical to keeping our young people safe, well, and limiting their need for intensive mental health support in future. By providing treatment and interventions that teach the skills, tools and resources required to manage their emotions, illness and circumstances, young people will have better mental health outcomes.

### 3. BOOST COMMUNITY COUNSELLING, MENTORING, HOME VISITS, ADVOCACY AND CASE MANAGEMENT FOR 10-25 YEAR OLDS

The Greens will commit \$2 million over four years to boost community services providing community based interventions with young people. These organisations deliver counselling, mentoring, home visits advocacy and case management for 10-25 year olds suffering or at risk of suffering a mental illness or mental health concerns. They work with young consumers and their families to support the development of goals, coping skills and resilience, positive lifestyle changes and strategies, and positive relationships and connectedness.

This funding commitment will also seek to expand capacity by establishing specific counselling and mentoring services for young people of all gender identities.

### 4. MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This \$900,000 commitment over 4 years will provide funding to Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) to pilot a primary school mental health program. It will support 8-12 year old children to receive mental health education, increase mental health literacy around physical, emotional and social experiences, promote early intervention, and reduce stigma. It will provide schools with initial touch points for students to open conversations that would help students to build their sense of belonging and understand themselves and others.

Prevention is one of our key opportunities to reduce the burden on chronic disease, and this includes mental illness and mental health concerns. The Greens want prevention programs and services to be an integral part of healthcare delivery.

## 5. MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING FOR PARENTS AND CARERS, AND SUPPORT GROUPS

This program will provide free seminars for parents and carers to provide advice and mental health training to support their young people. Delivered in school communities, the seminars will give parents knowledge and skills to help them understand the mental health challenges their young people are facing, skills to navigate the issues, and information on support services that are available.

We will also provide funding for community organisations to deliver smaller parent peer support groups to assist parents and carers of young people with mental illness or disorder or at risk of developing a mental health concern. These peer support groups will help parents better connect with others who may be having similar experiences in their caring duties and may benefit from connecting and talking freely with others.

We will allocate \$1.9 million over 4 years for these two projects.

## 6. MORE FUNDING AND FUNDING CERTAINTY FOR NGOs DELIVERY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Greens [Supporting the Community Sector](#) policy commits to funding indexation to match population growth, and extending funding agreements to a minimum of five years, with the ability for agencies with proven track records to have longer agreements. This policy would apply to providers of youth mental health services.

The level and range of pressures on community sector organisations and service providers is increasing. Short-term funding agreements and one-off grants create uncertainty and pressure for community service providers who just need to get on with delivering services instead of worrying about whether they can continue to deliver their programs and keep their staff.

We will also work with service providers to co-design a data capture system to ensure that we are capturing and reporting on the right data to enable us to better see the outcomes and impacts of investments in programs and policies, and where any gaps in data are.