

MENTAL HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

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 people to feel safe, secure, empowered and optimistic about their future.

We therefore need to create a mental health system that is easy to navigate and promotes positive mental wellbeing, so when a person needs support, regardless of where they sit on the continuum of need, they can access it.

WHY INVEST IN MENTAL HEALTH?

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.

With the stigma about mental health concerns being broken down in Australia, the service system needs to evolve to meet the increasing demand and changing expectations.

The Greens know that to achieve good mental health for all, and reduce the incidence of suicide, requires us to address the economic and social determinants of wellbeing, including access to housing, employment, education, as well as social engagement and connectedness.

We need a mental health system that delivers acute care, but also invests heavily in early intervention and community based services.

THAT'S WHY THE ACT GREENS WILL PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL \$47.35 MILLION OF FUNDING OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS TO INCREASE SUPPORTS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF CLINICAL AND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS BY:

1. building 5 additional supported accommodation houses over the next 4 years
2. refurbishing 10 beds at Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre
3. expanding the Police, Ambulance, Clinician Emergency Response (PACER) to two teams, 7 days per week
4. providing 2 years funding and an evaluation for Safe Haven Cafes
5. providing more support and services to address eating disorders
6. delivering a First Nations Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Postvention Program
7. improving respite for mental health carers
8. funding \$500,000 for more Mental Health Innovation Grants
9. building mental health workforce and capability with Nurse Practitioners
10. improving services to address the co-occurrence of alcohol and drug use and mental health

1. BUILDING 5 ADDITIONAL SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION HOUSES

The Greens will commit to building an additional 5 supported accommodation houses over the next 4 years.

Safe housing is a basic human necessity and stable accommodation provides the essential platform for determinants of mental ill-health to be addressed.

Since becoming Minister for Mental Health in 2016, Shane Rattenbury secured funding for the construction of four supported accommodation houses for people living with enduring mental illness. These houses enable the person to live as independently as possible in the community.

Supported accommodation has positive impacts on reducing Emergency Department presentations and in-patient admissions through the provision of consistent holistic psychosocial support, tenancy management support and clinical interventions.

This commitment aligns with the Greens [‘A Home for All’](#) package, addressing issues of homelessness and providing specialist services.

Cost: \$5 million capital expenditure for five supported accommodation houses.

As is the case with the current model, operational costs will be met through resident’s NDIS packages.

2. REFURBISHMENT OF 10 BEDS AT BRIAN HENNESSY REHABILITATION CENTRE

This commitment will refurbish a cottage at the Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre (BHRC) to provide 10 additional transitional care beds to the Extended Care Unit for those who are recovering in their mental health journey.

This additional bed capacity will provide those who live with residual symptoms of treatment resistant mental illness that impacts their ability to engage independently in daily living activities to have continued clinical support to progress rehabilitation and skill building for gradual integration into the community through multidisciplinary treatment of their illness.

The additional 10-beds are designed to be used as a step-down from medium-secure care and low-secure rehabilitation.

Cost: \$10 million for 10-bed refurbishment and \$3.25 million for 4 year operational costs.

3. EXPANSION OF PACER - TWO TEAMS 7 DAYS PER WEEK

The Police, Ambulance, Clinician Emergency Response (PACER) service provides in-community mental health treatment that maintains consumer dignity and uses least restrictive measures in a time of mental health crisis.

This service has demonstrated that 82% of people who have been visited by the PACER team have been able to avoid Emergency Department presentations and can receive follow-up care and referrals to ongoing support as required whilst remaining in the community.

The Greens will commit to an expansion of this model seeing two teams, one each in the North and South of Canberra, operating 7-days a week. We will allocate \$20 million over four years for two PACER teams, with a total FTE of 25.4.

4. PROVIDING 2 YEARS FUNDING AND AN EVALUATION FOR SAFE HAVEN CAFES

The Greens want mental health consumers' experience in the Emergency Department (ED) to improve. This is why Minister for Mental Health, Shane Rattenbury committed \$350,000 in the COVID-19 Mental Health Support Package to establish two Safe Haven Cafes as an alternative to EDs when a person is in distress and/or at risk of mental health crisis.

This commitment will provide \$600,000 for two years of funding for two Safe Haven Cafes and includes an evaluation to be completed by the end of 2022.

5. PROVIDING MORE SUPPORT AND SERVICES TO ADDRESS EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders not only impact the person experiencing the disorder, but also family and friends.

The Greens want to see Canberra's services grow to ensure that all people experiencing an eating disorder can promptly seek support and limit their need for acute care.

Minister for Mental Health, Shane Rattenbury, released the ACT Government Eating Disorders Position Statement and secured \$2.2 million in the 2019-20 budget for an Eating Disorders Specialist Clinical Hub and a community-based intervention support service. Planning is also underway for a residential eating disorders treatment facility which will be established over the 2021-2022 financial year.

A. EATING DISORDER DAY PROGRAM EXPANSION

The Greens will commit an additional \$2 million over four years to expand clinical services as part of the Canberra Health Services Eating Disorder Program to reduce wait times and increase access to program groups, in-reach and outreach services.

B. EATING DISORDERS PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Greens know that lived experience of mental illness or ill-health, and peer-led support, provide an additional level of support and service to a person experiencing any health complication. We want to see the ACT build a peer-workforce and peer support opportunities for people experiencing disordered eating or an eating disorder.

This service will provide empathetic and empowering support, guided by insights from someone with a lived-experience that can provide hope and understanding. Often those receiving treatment, or in recovery, have not met anyone who has recovered and as a result, can find it challenging to believe it is possible.

\$2 million will be allocated over four years to establish and deliver a peer support program as part of the Canberra Health Service Eating Disorders Program.

C. FUNDING FOR EATING DISORDER CARER WORKSHOPS

Caring for someone with disordered eating or an eating disorder can be extremely traumatic and stressful. The Greens want free workshops for carers of a person with, or at risk of, an eating disorder to develop practical skills to support their loved one to recovery.

This workshop will deliver evidence-based information to help parents and carers to understand eating disorders, identify caring styles, adapt to the person's needs, manage difficult behaviour, and importantly learn how the carer can look after themselves through the process.

This Greens will provide \$1 million over four years for the delivery of eating disorder workshops for carers with a support and follow-up component.

D. SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EATING DISORDERS

\$100,000 per year will be made available for Canberra Health Services and Calvary Hospital staff to upskill and build expertise in treatment of eating disorders. Scholarship amounts will be assessed on a case-by-case basis dependent on the education and training being sought.

6. FIRST NATIONS MENTAL HEALTH, SUICIDE PREVENTION AND POSTVENTION PROGRAM

The ACT currently lacks culturally appropriate mental health programs for First Nations people and the Greens will provide \$2 million over four years to establish a First Nations-led community-based mental health, suicide prevention and postvention program.

Improving access to culturally appropriate healing support and social connection services to significantly reduce the rate of suicides in our community are key wellbeing indicators for the ACT Government.

We know that suicide continues to disproportionately impact First Nations at higher rates than non-First Nations people. As part of the LifeSpan Integrated Suicide Prevention Framework, the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing has been consulting with the First Nations health sector, including Winnunga Nimmityjah and Gugan Gulwan, and is near completion of a needs analysis for this program.

The Greens will deliver this program over the next four years to support First Nations people who may be suffering with mental health conditions.

7. IMPROVING RESPITE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARERS

Carers need greater recognition and support for the work they do in keeping so many Canberrans safe, secure and cared for.

The Greens want to see the recommendations in the Carer's Strategy 2018-28 actioned to ensure that Carers themselves are also supported.

We hear from carers of people with mental illness that sometimes they just need some time out so they can look after themselves and their own mental health. This is why we want the ACT to offer increased access to respite services.

This commitment will allocate \$100,000 for a co-designed scoping and feasibility study to determine best options for an ACT Government funded respite facility for mental health carers.

8. MENTAL HEALTH COVID RECOVERY INNOVATION GRANTS

The Greens will allocate an additional \$500,000 in the first year of the term in community grants for innovative new programs that support the mental health and wellbeing of Canberrans and can be delivered quickly, responding to needs in the community as they shift and change.

As part of the COVID-19 Mental Health Support Package the Minister for Mental Health, Shane Rattenbury dedicated \$350,000 to a grants round, which generated 98 funding applications totalling \$3.4 million. This demonstrates the high level of unmet need in the community in this challenging period, and also shows the creativity and expertise that individuals, community sector organisations and businesses have in responding to the mental health and wellbeing needs of Canberrans.

The Greens want to capitalise on this dynamism to make more wellbeing programs, activities and opportunities for engagement available to a greater number of people who may need some additional support over the next phase of COVID recovery.

9. BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE AND CAPABILITY WITH NURSE PRACTITIONERS

The Greens want clinical mental health service delivery to undergo reform, whereby models of care are adapted to include nurse practitioners in multidisciplinary team service delivery. As evidenced in other jurisdictions, the expertise they can bring will enrich and develop capability and quality of service delivery.

Expanding mental health service delivery capability and workforce to include utilisation and integration of nurse practitioner scope of practice presents an opportunity to help provide coordinated care for mental illness, expand service delivery and grow the mental health workforce.

Nurse practitioners offer a varied scope of practice and can provide complex case management, advanced assessment and interventions, and diagnosis and treatment of a variety of symptoms. Including this capability in mental health programs means patients can have other physical and medical health needs addressed, treating the patient holistically and potentially improving other health outcomes whilst receiving mental health medical care.

This will require concerted effort and leadership across the Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services to create the necessary job opportunities for nurse practitioners in service delivery and models of care. It will also require coordination with the Territory's tertiary education institutions to upskill and train nurse practitioners with a mental health speciality.

10. ADDRESSING ALCOHOL AND DRUG AND MENTAL HEALTH COMORBIDITIES

One of the biggest challenges in addressing mental health and drug dependence simultaneously is the siloed nature of services. Mental health services are less effective if a person is also substance dependent and conversely, drug and alcohol services can struggle to support someone with mental health issues. Added to this, there is often an underlying trauma that has caused, or been caused by, these circumstances.

The Greens propose the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing conduct a needs analysis in the first year of the new term, with recommendations for addressing comorbid and co-occurring mental ill-health and alcohol and drug dependency in clinical and community settings.

To improve integration and coordination of care in the Emergency Department (ED) the Greens will allocate \$800,000 over four years for an Alcohol and Drug and Mental Health Consultation Liaison Service available at Canberra Hospital's ED.

This team will be able to provide assessment, treatment options, withdrawal management and referral pathways for co-morbidity consumers. It will also be integrated into existing Alcohol and Drug, and Mental Health teams to facilitate assertive follow-up and referrals so those who may not be motivated to address their substance use can be encouraged by specialist teams.