



ACT Government  
**BUDGET 2006-2007**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**\$8 MILLION TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The 2006–07 ACT Budget has provided more than \$8 million to improve the Territory’s mental health services, including the promotion of mental health and prevention and early intervention.

Minister for Health Katy Gallagher, said today \$5 million of the funding would be used to increase the number of specialist mental health providers, including consumer and carer positions and to provide supported accommodation for young people.

“These initiatives will improve access to specialist mental health services and reduce delays between seeking and receiving mental health care,” Ms Gallagher said.

“They will provide early intervention strategies and increase the involvement of consumers and carers in the planning of mental health care.

Ms Gallagher said the initiatives would also provide for mixed short and long-term 24 hour residential youth supported accommodation and day care support for young people with serious mental illnesses.

“The short-term accommodation will include a ‘step-up/step-down’ option as an alternative to acute admission while the long-term support will focus on providing a home environment for young people with serious mental illnesses,” she said.

“It is well recognised across the mental health sector that there is a shortage of supported accommodation for youth experiencing acute mental health symptoms in the ACT.

“The ACT Mental Health Strategy & Action Plan 2003–08 identified this need and required supported accommodation options to be increased in the ACT for all age groups” Ms Gallagher said.

Ms Gallagher highlighted the promotion of mental health, and prevention and early intervention of mental illness, as a comparatively new direction in mental health.

“It has been identified as a priority nationally in the National Mental Health Plan 2003-2008 and the Budget has provided \$3.1 million over four years for this purpose.”

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Ms Gallagher said it was widely recognised that the burden of mental illness is increasing with depression alone predicted to be the leading cause of illness burden internationally by 2020.

“The move to increase the focus on mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention (PPEI) is driven by several factors, including a recognition that this burden cannot be met by providing treatment services alone,” she said.

“It also acknowledges the effectiveness of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention, and the way prevention can deliver a better quality of life for individuals than reactive treatment approaches.

“The Budget funding will enable the ACT to implement a prevention and early intervention focus in mental health, as called for in the National Mental Health Strategy and is linked to the ACT Government’s election commitment to develop a Mental Health Strategy for the Territory,” she concluded.