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ACT Budget 2000  
Health Portfolio 09

# Child and Adolescent Mental Health Funding Boost

An extra \$2.5 million over four years will be allocated by the ACT Government to address a growth in demand and unmet need in mental health services for young people, the Minister for Health and Community Care, Michael Moore, said today.

The measure, confirmed today, was first announced in the draft ACT Budget for 2000-2001.

*"Mental health problems are an issue of great concern for Government and the community alike," Mr Moore said.*

*"Australia as a whole has seen a huge increase in mental health problems, and we in the ACT are in no way isolated from this trend.*

*"Sadly, there has been a huge growth in demand for mental health services for children and adolescents in the ACT. This growth comes on top of existing need.*

*"These problems demand a rapid and comprehensive response.*

*"The additional funding will be used to build on existing services offered by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, as recommended by Professor Nurcombe in his review of the Service.*

*"This will allow us to provide well-targeted and effective mental health services to support the youth of Canberra," Mr Moore said.*

Waiting lists for assessment and treatment, and mental health service promotion activities, will also be expanded.

Mr Moore warned that mental health issues were a much more serious health issue than many people realised.

Reflecting national trends in mental illness, about 12% of the ACT population suffers from anxiety disorders, and 8% from depression.

Unlike many other diseases, the greatest burden of mental illness tends to fall on younger people.

Many ACT mental health services report increasing levels of unmet need. ACT Mental Health Services attempt to cover the spectrum of disease, but are often forced to concentrate on people with more severe disorders.

Their Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service reported a 100% increase in the number of occasions of service between June 1996 and June 1999.

Despite recent increases in funding for non-government mental health services, providers of respite care and residential services are reporting increased turn-away rates.

National Mental Health Survey data (1998) indicates that only about a third of men and half of women with mental illness access any health services for mental health problems.

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