



## **MEDIA RELEASE: ACT Budget 2017-18**

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### **Welcome investment into the wellbeing of young Canberrans**

The 2017-18 ACT Budget recognises the importance of youth mental health, but falls short of addressing youth unemployment and a lack of affordable housing for young Canberrans.

“We are pleased to see a number of positive initiatives focused on early intervention and prevention for young people at risk of mental health issues. We believe these measures have the potential to alleviate some of the growing pressure on youth mental health services in the Territory,” said Rebecca Cuzzillo, Policy Director of the Youth Coalition, the peak body for youth affairs in the ACT.

While Treasurer Andrew Barr highlights jobs growth, a stronger local economy and the success of our higher education sector as big achievements for the Territory, the Youth Coalition believes more needs to be done to ensure that younger members of our community can share in these opportunities.

“Canberra is becoming increasingly expensive for young people and there is a lack of pathways in to jobs. If we want to see continued sustainable growth of the local economy, we need focused investment that addresses both youth unemployment and the lack of affordable housing.”

“The Treasurer highlights that higher education is one of our biggest exports, but young people should be able to continue a life in the ACT beyond their formal education. That is only possible if young people can find work and afford to live here.”

Education inequity remains an issue for the Territory and the Youth Coalition will continue to call for a whole of community approach to addressing education inequity and recognition of the skills, knowledge and expertise of community services in supporting students who are at risk of disengaging from school.

“We support the focus on education equity through the new Future of Education project, but we are disappointed that there is little investment included in this budget to address the inequities in our education system.”

“We are concerned that the five new school psychologists will be employed by the Education Directorate, and will therefore not be available to provide support to children and young people outside of school hours and during school holidays.”

**For further comment please contact Rebecca Cuzzillo on 02 6247 3540**