

Media Release

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NEW PROGRAM TO REDUCE RISK OF ACT CHILDREN TURNING TO ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

ACT children facing social isolation and risk due to disadvantage, including parental alcohol or drug dependence, will have access to a new program that will support them to participate in community activities, build resilience and create a more positive future for themselves, thanks to the creation of a new Local Drug Action Team (LDAT).

The Federal Government is funding the Australian Drug Foundation to provide over \$8 million between 2016-20 to help local community groups join together to form LDATs and develop initiatives to prevent and reduce the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs (AOD).

“We are very pleased to have been funded to establish an LDAT in the ACT in the latest grant round” Directions Health Services CEO, Bronwyn Hendry said. “This is the first time LDATs will be established in the ACT.”

“An estimated 7,000 ACT children aged under 14 are potentially impacted by parental substance use. Parental substance use can create significant risk and disadvantage for children and we know these children have a higher chance of early initiation into drug and alcohol use themselves. It can also mean that children and young people are unable to afford the fees to participate in community activities”

“When asked in a survey in 2010, young people in the ACT whose parents used substances indicated that they feel socially isolated and need service pathways to connect them with support networks and the wider community.

“The ACT Connect LDAT – Prevention through Participation is designed to fill this service gap.”

Directions Health Services is the lead agency for the ACT Connect LDAT, which will operate in partnership with the ACT Public Advocate / ACT Children and Young People Commission, Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, Belconnen Community Services, Every Chance to Play. The ACT Connect LDAT will establish a network of referral pathways to support the social connections and extracurricular needs of children and young people aged 8-14.

“Each of the members of the ACT Connect LDAT bring with them a very particular expertise that will ensure the effectiveness of this program. Together we will connect children and young people who are at risk of developing their own patterns of substance use with sports, creative, recreational and other capacity building programs to give them more opportunities to engage in activities that promote positive choices and self-esteem and build social capital,” Ms Hendry explained.

“The National Drug Strategy reported increased risks associated with alcohol and drug use in the 10-24 age group because young brains are more susceptible to permanent damage. Therefore, the ACT Connect LDAT is focused on early intervention for children who are currently more likely to engage in experimentation because substance use is either normalised in their home environment or has resulted in a high level of disadvantage.

“With this funding we can now build the infrastructure to create the ACT Connect LDAT referral pathways and increase the support available to ACT children.”

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