



MEDIA RELEASE

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Howard Government Shafts Young People's Right to Access

The latest move by the Howard Government to even further restrict young people's access to vital health services is strongly rejected by the Youth Coalition of the ACT – the peak body for youth affairs in the ACT. The proposed legislation on the Access Card is a backwards step that attempts to put up more barriers for young people wanting to access health care services.

Julia Collin, Young Media Spokesperson for the Youth Coalition, says "This Government has continually shown a lack of concern and respect for young people and now once again we see young people are being shafted by the Howard Government. This government has effectively taken away the right of young people aged 16-18 to have their own Medicare card – a right that currently exists and is central to most young people's ability to access health care"

"We fully support the comments made by the Australia Medical Association that this piece of legislation is 'full of holes'. It is obvious that there has been little thought given to how young people living away from their parents will be able to access health care services.

"Nor does this government appreciate that Medicare cards are a key form of identification for young people and without these, many young people will not be able to prove their identity to key agencies such as Centrelink"

"We have debated raising the age of information confidentiality and access to Medicare services for young people back in 2004 where Liberal MP's opposed increases suggesting it would lead to 'a loss of life' should the confidentiality of 16 and 17 year olds not be protected. Now we are seeing a backhanded attempt to implement far reaching changes that result in young people being denied access to basic health care services should they wish to access healthcare independently".

"By forcing young people to apply for an exemption under the legislation to get a card to access health care services, this government is putting up a ridiculous and unnecessary barrier to accessing basic health care services. We should be encouraging and supporting young people to access health care services, not trying to stifle their every attempt"

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