



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Mayor slams youth program funding backflip**

Barkly Regional Council Mayor Steve Edgington has criticised the Northern Territory Government over a funding agreement backflip on a long-term program for the town's youth.

In a meeting with the Minister for Territory Families, Dale Wakefield, held last week, Council's request for a five-year funding agreement for the Tennant Creek Youth Program was declined.

"The CEO and I met with Minister Wakefield last week and were told that the government will only offer two- years of funding for the town's youth program."

Mayor Edgington said this contradicted government policy to offer five-year funding agreements as part of its 2016 election commitment.

The five-year funding strategy, mainly aimed at non-government organisations, was designed to provide funding certainty, streamline grants administration, allow a greater focus on outcomes, improve strategic planning, and help with retaining and investing in a stable workforce.

"Without long-term funding it is not practical to plan or invest in major infrastructure upgrades of our Youth Links building or lock in long-term staff contracts," said Mayor Edgington.

"This is disappointing from Council's perspective as the Government has clearly departed from its own policy and done a backflip on its election commitment.

"I would have thought under the current circumstances the Government would have made a long-term commitment to ensure we have long-term programs in place for our youth, some of whom are our most vulnerable citizens."

While the Mayor said Council would continue to fight for long-term funding for the youth program, he welcomed the NTG's recent offer to increase the capacity of Territory Families in Tennant Creek.

The NT Government announced last week it would allocate five new permanent positions for the Territory Families office in Tennant Creek, including a Regional Director, a Youth Outreach Re-engagement Team Leader and a Youth Services Leader.

"It appears the Government has listened and acted on recommendations made during our meetings with the Minister for Territory Families, the Minister for Housing and Community Development and the Chief and Deputy Chief Minister to put in place a Regional Director and have the Youth Outreach Re-engagement Officers reporting to Tennant Creek rather than Alice Springs," said Mayor Edgington.

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“This is great news for the community and needs to be applauded, but there is still work to be done in terms of Council lobbying for and securing sufficient funds to support the ongoing growth of the youth program and the extra staff required to continue making the program a success.”

Mayor Edgington also welcomed the recent announcement by the Government for three public housing safety officers to be based in Tennant Creek.

“We will watch with interest to ensure they report to the local office in Tennant Creek while we wait to hear whether the Department of Housing and Community Development will also establish a position of Regional Director in Tennant Creek to enable local decision making.”

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