



MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition 2010/11 Budget Analysis

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is concerned about the lack of targeted initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in yesterday's budget.

We commend the budget for its inclusion of initiatives such as:

- The proposed employment by the Legal Aid Commission of an Indigenous Liaison Officer, who will be tasked with reducing barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing legal services; and
- The increased capacity of the Canberra Woman's Legal Services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, under the *Prevention of Violence Against Women* initiative.

However, we believe there are many areas that warrant more direct programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

'It is well established that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experience significant barriers to engaging in education opportunities. The Youth Coalition believes that in light of the recent legislative changes to education attainment requirements, the ACT Budget 2010-11 should reflect more proactive initiatives to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people,' said Director Emma Robertson.

In a recent submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly's *Inquiry Into the Educational Achievement Gap*, it was identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have, on average, lower retention and completion rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts; and while almost all non-Indigenous students complete their junior secondary education, one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student in seven nationally will leave school before completing Year 10.

'We are also concerned about the lack of initiatives focused on reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's incarceration and detention rates. We call on the ACT government to direct resources to evidence based diversion and early intervention programs to address the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in ACT detention centres.'

For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and is responsible for representing the interests of people aged 12 to 25 years, and those who work with them.

www.youthcoalition.net