



ACT Budget: Step By Step

Analysis of the ACT Budget 2011-2012

Part 1 of 3

Overview and Media Releases

May 2011

www.youthcoalition.net

The Youth Coalition of the ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, families and ancestors.

We acknowledge that the effect of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families as well as past racist policies and actions continues today.

We acknowledge that the Indigenous people hold distinctive rights as the original people of modern day Australia including the right to a distinct status and culture, self-determination and land. The Youth Coalition of the ACT celebrates Ngunnawal culture and the invaluable contribution it makes to our community.

The Youth Coalition of the ACT (Youth Coalition) is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and is responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years of age and those who work with them. The Youth Coalition works to actively promote the well being and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their political, cultural, economic and social development. The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on a range of issues related to young people and youth services. For more information phone the Youth Coalition on (02) 6247 3540 or email info@youthcoalition.net

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May 2011

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Thank you to the Youth Coalition team for their support.

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Budget Analysis Overview

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, acknowledges the challenges faced by the ACT Government in developing the ACT Budget 2011-2012 and welcomes the announcement of funding for some key initiatives.

However, the Youth Coalition is disappointed that overall the Budget has not addressed some of the biggest issues facing young people in the ACT community, such as affordable housing, mental health services, and engagement with education, training, and employment.

The ACT Budget 2011-2012 contains a number of promising gains for young people, with a particular focus on out of home and kinship care, and investment in diversion from detention and engagement with the criminal justice system.

Some of the key initiatives that have been funded are outlined below.

Chief Minister's Directorate

- **Community Engagement:** This initiative will enable the Chief Minister's Directorate to more effectively lead community engagement by providing directorates with training support and development of online and social media engagement options.

Community Services Directorate

- **Addressing Demand for Disability Services:** A sustained response will be provided to individuals who require support as a result of breakdown of natural and/or formal supports and who are transitioning from school to adult life. The initiative also provides specialist after school care and holiday support for young people with complex behaviour, associated with autism and other developmental delays.
- **Supporting Youth Transitioning from Out of Home Care:** A case management service will be provided for young people transitioning from out of home care to independent living, and extends support to these young people beyond the statutory age of 18 through to 25 years.
- **Enhanced Youth Justice Services:** Youth Services will be enhanced at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and response capacity improved for young people at risk of remand.
- **Care and Protection Community Kinship Care Program:** This initiative supports children in kinship care and their carers by offering specialised training and support to kinship carers caring for children with complex problems and promoting alternative mechanisms to support families.
- **Child Death Review Committee:** This initiative will see the establishment of a Child Death Review Committee that will review all child deaths in the ACT, consider the trends and patterns of these deaths and make recommendations that may contribute to preventing future child deaths.

Health Directorate

- **Expansion of the ACT Magistrate Courts Forensic Mental Health Court Liaison Team:** This initiative provides for mental health assessment,

consultation and liaison services to the ACT Law Courts to better meet the demands of the target population group and the judicial system.

- **Mental Health Training:** The Health Directorate will continue to work with the Education and Training Directorate, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Policing and the ACT Ambulance Service to provide mental health training for teachers, police and ambulance workers.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

- **Improved Access to Law and Justice Services and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People:** This initiative allows for the engagement of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guidance Partner to provide guidance and assistance to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are referred to or involved in restorative justice.

Housing ACT

- **Street to Home:** The Street to Home Program works to assertively engage people experiencing chronic homelessness (particularly 'rough sleepers') to re-engage with support services to gain and sustain a successful tenancy. This will increase the capacity of a similar program (*Community Outreach for Rough Sleepers*) funded in the 2009–2010 Budget by 50 per cent or 10 additional placements.
- **Antisocial Behaviour Response and Support:** This initiative provides for the implementation of tenancy management plans for inappropriate tenant behaviour that will address the underlying causes of problem behaviour including, drug and alcohol misuse, and will provide appropriate support options to clients.
- **Expansion of Social Housing:** Social Housing options will be increased with the construction of up to 32 dwellings to address housing affordability under this initiative. In particular an Intentional Community will be developed to house people with a disability supported by members of the surrounding community.

Education and Training Directorate

- **Disability Education:** Capacity will be enhanced under this initiative to meet the needs of students with a disability in ACT public schools.
- **ACT Public Secondary Schools Innovation Fund:** The innovation fund will provide access to additional resources for secondary schools to develop and implement improved approaches to teaching and learning, as well as new pathways for students.
- **CC Cares Program Design:** Designs will be developed for a new purpose built facilities for the Canberra College Cares (CC Cares) program at the Canberra College Woden campus.

Economic Development Directorate

- **Affordable Housing:** This initiative supports the delivery of the *Affordable Housing Action Plan* and the development of further policies to improve housing affordability.

- **University of Canberra:** Support for Student Accommodation Projects - Assistance will be provided to the University of Canberra to deliver additional accommodation for over 200 students.

Canberra Institute of Technology

- **New CIT Learning Centre:** This project provides for the design of a new Tuggeranong Learning Centre which follows on from the Feasibility Study included in the 2010-2011 Budget.

While the promising new spending initiatives are welcomed, much of the detail is still to come. We implore the ACT Government to take the opportunity to engage with young people, their families, community youth services, and allied community services (such as family support, mental health, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug services) to identify the best ways in which these resources can be utilised in the Canberra region to benefit young people and their families.

With much change happening across ACT Government, including the findings of the Hawke Review and subsequent decision to move to one ACT Public Service, the 2011-2012 ACT Budget represents a unique opportunity to clearly articulate how new government spending initiatives will be integrated with, and compliment, existing programs and activity.

In addition to the restructuring of the ACT Public Service from Departments to Directorates, ACT Government is also driving much change in the youth sector, including:

- Realignment of the Youth and Family Support Programs;
- Current reforms in the Youth Housing and Homelessness sector; and
- The ACT Youth Commitment.

Although the 2011-2012 ACT Budget catch cry is 'Working Smarter. Delivering More', we believe that the Budget contains discreet funded initiatives and programs and misses the opportunity to identify integration.

Further to this, a number of key initiatives and areas raised by the Youth Coalition in our submission to the 2011-2012 ACT Budget have not been addressed, including:

Chief Minister's

- Funding to develop and implement strategies to assist young people in the ACT to have equal access to private housing, that could include measures such as a 'tenancy ready' program for vulnerable young people aged 16 – 25, and create opportunities for dialogue with private real estate agencies.

Community Services

- Recurrent funding of \$20,000 per annum to support the continuation of the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network, representing a key opportunity for the ACT Government to significantly support multicultural young people in the ACT.
- Develop a comprehensive and evidenced based Diversionary Framework for young offenders aged 12 – 25 in the ACT, with the underlying principles including:
 - A whole of government approach;

- Strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and multicultural people;
- A whole of community collaboration focus, which includes community agencies and education providers.

Health

- Funding towards implementing the outcomes of the ACT Health Young People Feasibility Study in the 2011-2012 ACT Government Budget.
- Recurrent funding to headspace ACT, a key component of the youth mental health sector, to support them to meet increasing demand and provide timely early intervention supports to young people.
- Recurrent funding to support the continuation of the Comorbidity Bus Tours, a key training and professional development and induction tool for youth, alcohol and other drug and mental health services in the ACT.

Justice and Community Safety

- Develop a comprehensive and evidenced based Diversionary Framework for young offenders aged 12 – 25 in the ACT, with the underlying principles including:
 - A whole of government approach;
 - Strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and multicultural people;
 - A whole of community collaboration focus, which includes community agencies and education providers.

Housing

- Funding to develop and implement strategies to assist young people in the ACT to have equal access to private housing that could include measures such as a 'tenancy ready' program for vulnerable young people aged 16 – 25, and create opportunities for dialogue with private real estate agencies.
- Funding to build upon the work of the Youth Coalition of the ACT's Living Skills Toolkit Pilot Project and ensure its ongoing development and sustainability.

Education and Training

- Allocate resources to support a framework for re-engaging young people disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education or training. This would include:
 - Development of the framework and gap analysis;
 - Support to the work of the Re-engaging Youth Leadership Group, and Re-engaging Youth Regional Networks; and,
 - The provision of programs of resources to address any gaps in current service delivery, both in government and non-government settings.

Economic Development

- Funding to develop and implement strategies to assist young people in the ACT to have equal access to private housing, that could include measures such as a 'tenancy ready' program for vulnerable young people aged 16 – 25, and create opportunities for dialogue with private real estate agencies.

Finally, the short and long-term viability of the youth and community sector, and its workforce, has again not been addressed in the Budget 2011-2012.

Youth Sector Workforce and Viability

The service system set up to support young people must be viable to address existing and emerging need and to provide targeted support. The Youth Coalition, in its submission to the 2011/12 Budget called for the following key actions:

- A commitment to funding any increase in community sector wages as a result of the Pay Equity case, relating to ACT Government contracts, to ensure that vulnerable young people and their families, and those that work to support them, are not adversely affected;
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive workforce development strategy for the Child, Youth and Family support sectors, in partnership between the government and non-government sectors. The 1 – 2% professional development funding allocation in the Youth and Family Support Program could inform the basis of this strategy; but the strategy should be for the broader youth and family support sector; and,
- An increase to the total funding for the Youth and Family Support Program by at least 10%, to support the increase in service delivery and ensure that young people aged 18 – 25 also receive adequate support.

The Youth sector sees some highly skilled and experienced workers, who engage in extremely complex, innovative work with young people, and their families, and the Youth Coalition notes the importance of supporting these workers to remain in the sector. The Youth Coalition developed a profile of the Youth sector workforce in 2010, which identified that over 50% of workers hold tertiary qualifications.¹ This supports the argument that the Youth sector has a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

The ACT Government has previously indicated its support, in principle, for the Australian Services Union's case before Fair Work Australia. With hearings in this case concluded and an anticipated outcome to be announced in the next couple of months, the Youth Coalition calls on the ACT Government to articulate how it will ensure that vulnerable young people and their families, and those that work to support them, are not adversely affected by the decision.

Youth and community sector organisations cannot continue to deliver high quality programs and services with staff shortages; high turnovers and competition to attract suitably qualified or experienced workers.

The Youth Coalition supports the ACT Government's commitment to provide additional support to the Children's services sector to up-skill its workforce in time to meet the requirements of the new National Standards, which become effective in 2014, and calls on the ACT Government to provide similar additional investment in the Youth and Family support sectors.

We believe that current work being undertaken by the Children and Young People Sharing Responsibility Committee, Workforce Development Sub-group, should inform a comprehensive workforce strategy for the Youth and Family support sectors.

¹ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2010) Motivation, Money, Making a Difference: A Profile of the ACT Youth Sector Workforce, Canberra.

Further the Youth Coalition recognises that a key role for Youth services is to support young people aged 18 – 25 years to transition to independence and Adult services; and notes that this support work also requires specific resourcing and recognition. This vital support role has been recognised in other sectors, such as mental health (for example, through the development of CAMHS to support young people aged 12 – 25 years), and more recently through the out-of-home-care sector (with a recent focus on supporting young people to transition out of care, beyond the age of 18).

With the realignment of the Youth and Family Support Programs refocusing support for this age group the Youth Coalition calls on the ACT Government to articulate how young people aged 18-25 years who have not necessarily had engagement with the statutory system, but lack sufficient family support will be assisted to navigate transitions to adulthood.

Conclusion

The Youth Coalition is pleased that the ACT Budget 2011-2012 addresses some gaps in services, with significant spending commitments, and we look forward to working with the ACT Government and other community stakeholders in implementing the initiatives from this budget that relate to young people and Youth services.

The Youth Coalition of the ACT's ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis is divided into three parts:

- Part 1: Overview and Media Releases (this document)
- Part 2: Expenditure Initiatives
- Part 3: Capital Initiatives

Each part can be downloaded from www.youthcoalition.net or accessed in hardcopy by calling (02) 6247 3540.



MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 1

3 May 2011

ACT Budget and Young People

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, acknowledges the challenges faced by the ACT Government in developing the 2011-2012 ACT Budget, and welcomes many of the new initiatives.

Further investment in the areas of support for young people transitioning from out of home care, as well as new monies to support diverting young people from detention and engagement with the criminal justice system, are timely and responsive to calls from the community.

However, the Youth Coalition is disappointed that overall the Budget has not addressed some of the biggest issues facing young people in the ACT community, such as affordable housing, mental health services, and engagement with education, training, and employment.

'With the ACT Government announcing a budget focus on meeting commitments, increasing frontline services, and supporting those in the community who need it most, it is essential that investment in young people continues to be seen as a priority,' said Director Emma Robertson.

'Young people continue to face discrimination and be priced out of not only the private rental market, but also affordable housing initiatives.'

'Mental health issues continue to be significant in many young people's lives with the ABS identifying 25% experiencing a mental health issue in any given year.'

'The realignment of focus for youth support services means that there is limited capacity for youth services to offer any more to schools, a missed opportunity for early intervention and improved supports to young people at risk of disengaging from education.'

Overall the Youth Coalition commends the following ACT Government Budget initiatives:

- Funding of \$400,000 over 2 years to maximise the effectiveness of community engagement;
- Funding of \$646,000 over 4 years for the Forensic Mental Health Court Liaison team;
- \$1.2 million over 4 years for mental health training for the DET, JACS, AFP and ACT Ambulance Service workers;

- Funding of \$607,000 over 4 years to improve access to law and justice services and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- \$10.3 million over 4 years towards addressing the demand for disability services, including support for after school care and school holiday program access;
- \$2 million over 4 years towards supporting Youth Transitioning from Out of Home Care;
- \$3.9 million to enhance youth justice services;
- \$1.6 million for a care and protection Community Kinship Care program;
- \$2.2 million over 4 years towards Out of Home Care costs; and,
- 10 additional placements in the Street to Home program.

'While the Youth Coalition welcomes these initiatives, further information will need to be provided on how they will be implemented.'

'It is vital that these initiatives are further progressed in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, their families, and youth support services.'

'We look forward to working with the ACT Government on the further development of these initiatives.'

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, rights, and wellbeing of people aged 12 to 25 years, and those who work with them.

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 2

3 May 2011

Community Services Directorate – Out of Home Care

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, commends the following ACT Government Budget initiatives:

- \$2.1 million over 4 years towards supporting Youth Transitioning from Out of Home Care;
- \$1.6 million for a care and protection Community Kinship Care program; and,
- \$2.2 million over 4 years towards Out of Home Care costs.

‘This represents a significant financial investment in the Out of Home Care sector, and offers positive steps towards improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in the ACT’, Director Ms Emma Robertson said.

‘Young people with an out of home care experience are amongst the most vulnerable young people in our community, with frequently higher representation in the justice system, poorer educational and employment achievements, and often significant housing and accommodation stress.’

‘We are pleased to see that the Youth Coalition’s recommendations regarding the need for increased support to the services provided by kinship carers, and support to young people transitioning from care increased up to the age of 25 years, as raised in recent submissions to the ACT Government, have been recognised.’

‘These initiatives will bring the ACT closer in line with best practise regarding out of home care’, said Ms Robertson, ‘however, there is still a long way to go, particularly in relation to transitioning planning.’

‘While the Youth Coalition welcomes these initiatives, further information will need to be provided on how they will be implemented, and their relation to other initiatives, such as affordable housing and a commitment to educational attainments.’

‘It is vital that these initiatives are further progressed in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, their families, and youth support services.’

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 3

3 May 2011

Community Services Directorate – Youth Justice

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, welcomes the initiatives that seek to divert and/or support young people with involvement in the justice systems.

‘The Youth Coalition is pleased to see the \$2.1 million provided over 4 years that will go towards a bail support service, reflecting the concerns of our members raised during recent consultations informing our submission to the ACT Government discussion paper, *Towards a Diversionary Framework the ACT*’, Director Ms Emma Robertson said.

‘We are keen to see more details as to the practical delivery of this program, and we look forward to working closely with government and non- government stakeholders in its development.’

The Youth Coalition, in its submission to this year’s budget, called for the development of a comprehensive and evidenced based Diversionary Framework for young offenders aged 12 – 25 in the ACT, addressing:

- A whole of government approach;
- Strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and multicultural people; and,
- A whole of community collaboration focus, which includes community agencies and education providers.

‘It is positive to see the increased focus on enhancing diversionary services’, Ms Robertson said.

‘Similarly, we support the initiatives that seek to *Improve Access to Law and Justice Services and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, while acknowledging that more is needed in addressing the broader issues of the high representation of ATSI young people in detention.’

‘It is vital that these initiatives are further progressed in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, their families, and youth support services.’

For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 4

3 May 2011

Youth Sector Workforce and Viability

The service system set up to support young people must be viable to address existing and emerging need, and to provide targeted support. The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, in its submission to the 2011-2012 Budget, called for the following key actions, which have not been addressed in today's Budget release:

- A commitment to funding any increase in community sector wages as a result of the Pay Equity case, relating to ACT Government contracts, to ensure that vulnerable young people and their families, and those that work to support them, are not adversely affected;
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive workforce development strategy for the child, youth and family support sectors, in partnership between the government and non-government sectors; and,
- An increase to the total funding for the Youth and Family Support Program by at least 10%, to support the increase in service delivery and ensure that young people aged 18 – 25 also receive adequate support.

'The youth sector sees some highly skilled and experienced workers, who engage in extremely complex, innovative work with young people, and their families', Director Ms Emma Robertson said.

'The Youth Coalition notes the importance of supporting these workers to remain in the sector.'

'The ACT Government has previously indicated its in-principle support for the Australian Services Union's case before Fair Work Australia. With hearings in this case concluded and an anticipated outcome to be announced in the next couple of months, the Youth Coalition calls on the ACT Government to articulate how it will ensure that vulnerable young people and their families, and those that work to support them, are not adversely affected by the decision.'

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 5

3 May 2011

Budget Not So Healthy for Young People

'The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is concerned by a lack of focus in health initiatives for young people aged 12- 25 in the ACT Budget 2011-2012', Director Ms Emma Robertson said.

'The lack of resources for mental health services that support young people, including early intervention and prevention programs, is out of step with other jurisdictions.'

The Youth Coalition had called for the ACT Government to increase recurrent funding for headspace ACT, a key component of the youth mental health sector, in its submission to this budget.

'It is also disappointing to see that no funding was allocated to go towards the anticipated recommendations of the Healthy Young People Feasibility Study, which means the community may have wait another year to take advantage of this important work', Ms Robertson continued.

'It is vital that health initiatives for young people are further progressed, in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, their families, and youth support services, and in consideration with other allied interests such as comorbidity, housing and employment.'

'We call upon the ACT Government to implement an early intervention framework for young people in the ACT community, and see health services as an essential part of the continuum of service delivery.'

For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 6

3 May 2011

Not So Affordable

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, calls on the ACT Government to address the specific issue of affordable housing for young people.

'Young people continue to face discrimination and be priced out of not only the private rental market, but also affordable housing initiatives.' Director Ms Emma Robertson said.

'Housing is one of the fundamental determinants of the wellbeing of young people and should be given extremely high importance in any government policy development.'

The private rental market in the ACT is amongst the highest costing in Australia. Many young people report difficulty in gaining entry to private rental properties, due to cost, availability and discrimination. The Youth Coalition argues that more work needs to be done by the ACT Government in the area of housing affordability, and supporting young people to rent privately.

The Youth Coalition's submission to the ACT Budget 2011-2012 called on the ACT Government to; 'provide Chief Minister's Department and the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services with funding to develop and implement strategies to assist young people in the ACT to have equal access to private housing, that could include measures such as a 'tenancy ready' program for vulnerable young people aged 16 – 25, and create opportunities for dialogue with private real estate agencies.'

'While today's budget includes initiatives to address affordable housing, the Youth Coalition fears that young people will continue to miss out on this vital support.'

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 7

3 May 2011

Reengaging Young People

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, is concerned that the ACT Budget 2011-2012 does not clearly articulate nor adequately resource the increased support of young peoples ongoing educational engagement and attainment, required under the ACT Youth Commitment.

'The Youth Coalition has worked closely with the Department of Education and Training over the past year,' Director Ms Emma Robertson said.

'As a result of this work, and continuing engagement with key stakeholders, the Youth Coalition developed our budget submission for 2011-2012, calling for resources for re-engaging vulnerable young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging, from education.'

'These concerns have not been addressed.'

However, the Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government for the significant funding of \$20 million over four years, allocated to support young people with disabilities in ACT schools.

'We commend the aims of this initiative, in seeking to provide equal opportunities for all students and enhancing the capacity of schools to do this.'

'It is vital that education and training initiatives are further developed and resourced in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, their families, schools and youth support services, and in consideration of other work in allied fields, such as youth justice, out of home care, and housing.'

'We look forward to working with the ACT Government on the further development of these initiatives.'

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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Coalition ACT Budget 2011-2012 Analysis

No 8

3 May 2011

Engaging the Community

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs, looks forward to seeing more details of the ACT Budget 2011-2012 initiative that seeks to more effectively lead community engagement by providing Directorates with training support, and the development of online and social media engagement options.

Ms Emma Robertson, Director of the Youth Coalition, said, 'the Youth Coalition welcomes the practical opportunities that may be offered with this funding.'

'We are keen to see how this initiative will better support the community to engage with government, and what subsequent benefits the government will in turn receive.'

'The Youth Coalition has been involved in many consultations with the ACT Government, we are keen to work with both the government and non government sectors to provide input into the development of this initiative.'

The Youth Coalition has been concerned that many ACT Government community engagement and consultation activities occur at peak times, such as immediately prior to Christmas, or at the same time.

The Youth Coalition's submission to the ACT Budget 2011-2012 called for the ACT Government provide Chief Minister's Department (CMD) with funding to develop and implement a planning, approval and registration mechanism which requires all ACT Government agencies planning community engagement activities, to seek approval from CMD. CMD would be responsible for assessing the impact of the activity upon its target groups, in line with other planned community engagement activities.

'The restructure of the ACT Public Service could go a long way to addressing our concerns about different sections of government not being aware of what community consultations are already underway prior to launching further activity.'

For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469

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