



2016-17 ACT Budget: Recognising Social Inclusion as a Core Community Value

Analysis of the ACT Budget 2016-17

Overview, Priorities for Young People, and Media Release

June 2016

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.

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June 2016

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The Youth Coalition would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support and input of the ACT Peaks network, in particular our partnership work with Families ACT, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT, Mental Health Community Coalition ACT, ACT Shelter, Women's Centre for Health Matters, and the ACT Council of Social Services.

The Youth Coalition receives funding for peak activity (policy development, sector development, advocacy & representation) from the ACT Government Community Services Directorate.

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Introduction and General Comments

'Canberra is going from strength to strength. We have a strong economy, low unemployment and a well-educated population. We are the world's most liveable city. We have world-class health and systems, a thriving and dynamic business sector, and we care for those in need.'

'But to be the best city we can be, we must ensure that no one is left behind as we advance and develop. It is our responsibility to create a community where all people are treated fairly and equitably.'

Andrew Barr MLA, ACT Budget 2016-17 Social Inclusion Statement

The Youth Coalition welcomes the *Social Inclusion Statement* announced with the 2016-17 ACT Budget, and commends the ACT Government's commitment to reducing inequality. However we believe more is needed to ensure that younger members of our community have opportunities to fully participate both economically and socially in Canberra life.

We believe that Canberra is, and should be, the city of choice for young Australians. We are looking to our political leaders to stand up for all Canberrans. We believe that the ACT community can leverage the things that make Canberra unique (such as above national average incomes and education attainment) to stand out and also lead the country in how we care for, support, and provide opportunities for all of our citizens.

The 2016-17 ACT Budget outlines four focus areas for investment: health and education; economic growth and diversification; suburban renewal and better transport; enhancing liveability and social inclusion.

The Youth Coalition recognises that the 2016-17 ACT Budget includes much needed initiatives, such as investments in addressing domestic and family violence, strengthening the capacity of schools to support students with complex needs, and increased clinical mental health supports for young people.

Standout initiatives announced in the 2016-17 ACT Budget included:

- *Safer Families* package of \$21.42m over 4 years, which is a whole of government, community backed response to family violence.
- *Schools for All* package of \$21.5m over 4 years to support the delivery of recommendations from the Expert Panel Review of Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours in Schools.

The *Safer Families* package is a clear response to ACT community values and the Youth Coalition is pleased to see additional investment in community based services who have been working to eliminate violence against women and children, and provide support to those in our community who have experienced domestic and family violence for many years. We believe this package demonstrates how different areas of Government working together, and with community based services, can identify and mobilise resources to address key social issues.

The Youth Coalition also welcomes the significant commitment to delivering on the recommendations from the Expert Panel Review of Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours in Schools through the *Schools for All* package.

The Youth Coalition is concerned about the capacity of community based services to respond to and partner with schools. We will continue to advocate for increased investment in community based services to increase their capacity to work in partnership with schools to support vulnerable students. The next 12 months provide an excellent opportunity for ACT Government to look at the implementation of *Schools for All* against the outcomes of the work being done through the *Human Services Blueprint Better Services Initiatives* and align future funding decisions with need.

With youth unemployment in the ACT at 11.6%, nearly 3 times the general unemployment rate (4.1%), the Youth Coalition is disappointed with the lack of investment in specific initiatives to address youth unemployment and underemployment in the 2016-17 ACT Budget. We believe more needs to be done to support those at risk of unemployment or underemployment to fully participate in the ACT community.

The Youth Coalition will continue to encourage the ACT Government to implement targets and strategies to ensure that jobs created through government investment in infrastructure employ people in the community most vulnerable to unemployment, particularly young people.

Finally, housing affordability continues to be of concern to many young Canberrans. While acknowledging the 2016-17 ACT Budget includes strategies for economic growth and tax reform which look to address barriers to home ownership, more needs to be done to address rental market inaccessibility.

The Youth Coalition believes that it is essential that young people’s voices are heard across government, and that policy direction and investment should reflect their stake in the community.

Youth Coalition Recommendations

The Youth Coalition made recommendations in our submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget urging the ACT Government to make a sustainable difference to long term Government expenditure by investing in early intervention and prevention services, and addressing the social determinants of health. The Youth Coalition’s full submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget can be accessed [here](#). Our general recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

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| Increase investment in strategies and services that address social determinants of health. | Partially Met |
| Increase investment in early intervention and prevention services. | Not Met |
| <p>The Youth Coalition welcomes the ACT Government’s renewed focus on social inclusion. We believe that young people have the right to participate fully, economically, socially and politically, in the ACT community.</p> <p>An understanding of early intervention and prevention and the social determinants of health</p> | |

invites us to consider who is responsible for responses to significant social issues that affect our community across a range of spheres. For example, the prevention of homelessness is a whole of government responsibility requiring collaboration between the economic policy levers that create jobs, ensure adequate income when people are not in paid work, provide affordable housing and enable access to a range of social supports, including services that help people to access jobs.

While recognising that the significant investments in *Safer Families* and *Schools for All* address key social determinants of health, we believe that there is still an overall lack of investment and co-ordination to strengthen our community capacity to do early intervention and prevention work.

Key Priorities for Young People & Youth Sector

Key priority areas that the Youth Coalition identified in our submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget were:

1. Education
2. Mental Health
3. Jobs Creation / Employment
4. Housing and Homelessness
5. Supports for Children, Young People, and Families

In addition, key recommendations were made in relation investment in infrastructure.

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| Invest in a purpose-built building for Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation. | Not Met |
| <p>One of the specific infrastructure needs that requires investment is a fully functioning building that meets the requirements of the services provided by Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.</p> <p>Gugan Gulwan is a key service for young people and their families in the ACT, and their work support families who are experiencing multiple and complex issues, and face significant discrimination and barriers to self determination.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition understands that there has been ongoing conversations between ACT Government and Gugan Gulwan for many years regarding the inadequacy of the current building the service is located in, but despite this there is still no investment into the infrastructure needs of this important service.</p> | |
| Focus investment on increasing frequency and hours of availability of affordable public transport in the ACT. | Partially met |
| Public transport is often the primary means of transportation for young people, and young Canberrans frequently identify that limited acces to public transport impacts on their ability to | |

access employment and education opportunities, health services, and to participate in recreational and volunteer activities that keep them connected with their community.

The Youth Coalition welcomes the extension of existing bus services through Molonglo to increase coverage to the new suburbs of Wright and Coombs, as well as the addition of a trial bus service between Weston Creek and Canberra City. However, increased frequency and hours of availability for public transport is required across all areas of the ACT, not just in newly developed areas.

An investment of \$47.1m over 4 years into improved delivery of ACTION services is also welcomed, as are other initiatives such as the free city loop bus, Wanniasa Park n Ride, and the electric bus trial. The Youth Coalition urges the ACT Government to ensure that young people are involved in the planning, design and implementation of new initiatives that arise from this investment.

1. Education

Improving education attainment outcomes and addressing educational inequity in the ACT has been a key focus area for the Youth Coalition in recent years. While the ACT has a relatively high standard of education and good outcomes for most young people, inequities still exist in the educational achievement of disadvantaged cohorts of young Canberrans.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government's commitment to *Schools for All*, the program established to implement the 50 recommendations of the *Report from the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour*. We welcome the investment of \$21.5 million over 4 years to support the implementation of the recommendations.

The Youth Coalition supports the funding of an additional 26 FTE allied health professionals as part of this package. We are pleased to see this investment in strengthening the capacity of multidisciplinary teams to support students with complex needs and their families. The Youth Coalition understands this support will be available both during the school term, as well as over the holiday periods.

We also support the increased focus on partnerships between schools and community services to support students with complex needs under the *Schools for All* program. However, the Youth Coalition recognises the already stretched capacity of community based services in the current funding environment.

Key initiatives and commitments in 2016-17 ACT Budget relating to education include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- *Better Schools - Enhancing quality assurance of schools - \$1.2m over 4 years*

A new school review process will provide stronger quality assurance and external validation of education services delivered to the ACT Community. As part of this process, every school will

undergo an external panel review within a five year cycle and use the *National School Improvement Tool* for an internal review each year.

- *Better Schools - Improving teacher quality - Scholarships for teachers - \$300,000 over 3 years*

The Government will provide scholarships for teachers to support a high quality Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) teaching workforce. The *STEM Skills Scholarships for Teachers* program will enhance the capacity of ACT teachers to deliver quality STEM education, by expanding access to professional education and training.

- *Better Schools - Support for students with disability - Special needs transport - \$1.1m over 1 year*

The Government will continue to provide special needs transport to and from Canberra public schools for students with disability, until the National Disability Insurance Scheme takes over responsibility for this service.

- *Better Schools - School modernisation - \$250,000 over 1 year*

The Government will continue to respond to the future needs of Canberra Public Schools through analysis of demographic trends and strategic planning for learning environments, ensuring that current and future education needs can be met by public schools.

- *Better Schools - Schools for All - \$21.5m over 4 years*

The Government is responding to the recommendations of the *Schools for All* report and will strengthen the capacity of schools to support students and their families through an additional 26 full time allied health positions.

- *Better Schools - Strengthening and promoting Ngunnawal culture and history - \$300,000 over 2 years*

The Government will support schools and students to engage with Traditional Owners and gain an understanding of the plant resources of this region used for food, medicine, tools and ceremonial purposes. The program will increase access to Ngunnawal cultural resources and increase cultural awareness within the local community.

- *Safer Families - Trauma Understanding and Sensitive Teaching (TRUST) Project - \$120,000 over 2 years*

The Government will support the continuation of a system-wide school program to effectively and sensitively assist students dealing with the impacts of trauma.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- *Better Schools - Investment in Gungahlin school infrastructure - \$12.2m over 4 years*

The Government will expand student capacity and facilities in Gungahlin across the Amaroo School and the Neville Bonner and Palmerston preschools.

Youth Coalition Recommendations

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to improve educational attainment for vulnerable students in the ACT by responding to a number of

recommendations. Our recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

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| <p>Resource community consultation to help prioritise and implement actions in response to the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour, chaired by Emeritus Professor Shaddock.</p> | <p>Met Through Other Initiatives</p> |
| <p>Resource the <i>Progressing Parental Engagement Project</i> so it can appropriately support schools to work with and engage with a range of families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, low socioeconomic families and refugee families.</p> | <p>Met</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition has been pleased with the ACT Government's commitment to engage with the community during the early stages of implementation of the <i>Schools for All</i> program. The Youth Coalition has participated in the two Ministerial Roundtables on <i>Schools for All</i> and we look forward to continued engagement over the three year delivery period of the program.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition also welcomes the \$80,000 investment over 2 years to continue the <i>Progressing Parental Engagement Project</i> with Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. The Youth Coalition believes that families play an important role in their children's learning and development, but we also recognise that for some families in the ACT community, parental engagement can be more challenging than it is for others.</p> | |
| <p>Focus investment in community services to increase capacity to partner with schools and provide targeted intensive supports to young people and their families.</p> | <p>Not Met</p> |
| <p>Focus investment in support services that provide case management and group work in schools and expand resources to increase the capacity and reach of services who work collaboratively with schools.</p> | <p>Partially Met</p> |
| <p>Focus investment in community services to provide targeted support to children and young people, particularly those aged 8-12 showing low attainment and at risk of entering high school unable to participate, to successfully transition from primary to high school.</p> | <p>Not Met</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition supports the <i>Schools for All</i> focus on schools and community services working together to support students with complex needs, however, we highlight the lack of additional funding to increase the capacity of community services to respond to and partner with schools.</p> <p>While community services have the skills, expertise and already established relationships to provide support to vulnerable young people with their education, we note that many community services are already stretched and unable to meet demand. The Youth Coalition continues to advocate for additional investment in community services to increase their capacity to work in</p> | |

partnership with schools to support vulnerable students.

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| Focus investment in building the capacity of schools to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. | Not Met |
| Focus investment in building the capacity of community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, who have established connections with families, to work collaboratively with schools and other community services to improve educational outcomes for young people and their families. | Partially Met |
| <p>The Youth Coalition welcomes budget measures that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to connect to culture and increase cultural awareness within the community. In particular, we note the investment in the new <i>Kickstart My Career Program</i> to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of leaving school and the funding allocation in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate for 1 FTE for one year at Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.</p> <p>However, the Youth Coalition is disappointed at the limited investment in both schools and community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to support and improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. We continue to advocate for investment in increasing the capacity of schools and services to work collaboratively to close the gap in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.</p> | |

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| Focus investment in addressing the needs of students experiencing disadvantage early and continue throughout childhood and teenage years (rather than short term initiatives at a single point later on). | Partially Met |
| Focus investment in early intervention in the early childhood and education settings for young children with social and emotional support needs to improve their engagement in learning and strengthen their peer relationships. | Not Met |
| <p>The Youth Coalition acknowledges that ACT public schools are currently transitioning to a needs based funding model as part of the <i>Student Resource Allocation</i> initiative. The Youth Coalition supports the implementation of a needs based funding model and continues to advocate for the full implementation of the Gonski reform agenda. The Youth Coalition will continue to work with the Education Directorate as the model is being rolled out, and we look forward to the evaluation of the program to ensure it is effectively meeting the needs of all students.</p> | |

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| Focus investment in successful programs that increase the capacity of schools to support students with a history of trauma, including training for teachers and partnerships with services outside of schools. | Partially Met |
| <p>The Youth Coalition welcomes the continuation of the <i>Trauma Understanding and Sensitive Teaching (TRUST) Project</i> over two years to support students dealing with the impacts of</p> | |

trauma. The Youth Coalition believes it is vital that schools have the capacity to support students with trauma histories and that school staff are trained in trauma-informed practice. While we support the continuation of the *TRUST Project*, we would like to see a commitment to additional investment in increasing the capacity of schools to support students with a history of trauma, and investment in community services to increase their capacity to work in partnership with schools to support students who have been impacted by trauma.

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| Report on the investment in, uptake and impact of the <i>Engaging Schools Framework</i> to understand whether it is on track to meet the needs of all students, including those most at risk of disengaging from education. | Not Met |
| <p>Following the release of the <i>Report from the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour</i> and the commencement of the <i>Schools for All</i> program, there are a number of new initiatives aimed at supporting students at risk of disengaging from education.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition will continue to work with the Education Directorate to advocate that ACT schools are working to meeting the needs of all students. We believe that it is essential that the outcomes and learnings from the work undertaken to implement the <i>Engaging Schools Framework</i> informs the <i>Schools for All</i> program.</p> | |

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| Evaluate current referral mechanisms used by schools (e.g. The Gateway) to connect students and their families to community services. | Not Met |
| <p>The Youth Coalition notes the recent changes to the Child, Youth and Family Gateway, the centralised referral service for child, youth and family services. A new Human Services Gateway will commence on 1 July 2016 and will provide a centralised referral service for child, youth and family services, housing and homelessness services and disability services.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition expects this service will be promoted within schools as a key referral mechanism to connect students and their families to community services. We will continue to call on the ACT Government to evaluate the referral mechanisms used by teachers and schools to ensure they are able to provide appropriate referrals to students and families in need of additional supports. Information about the outcomes of school staff referrals to community based services is essential to understanding where community based resource allocation is needed.</p> | |

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| Evaluate the short and medium / longer term educational engagement and employability outcomes for young people who have participated in the ACT <i>Flexible Learning Options</i> program. Based on the findings of this evaluation, invest in an evidence-based approach to flexible learning options that includes a focus on education and employment outcomes at 6,12 and 18 months. | Not Met |
| The Youth Coalition is seeking clarification on the status of the <i>ACT Flexible Learning Options</i> program. At time of writing, we are not aware that an evaluation has taken place. | |

2. Mental Health

Mental health issues are likely to be significant in many young people's lives with 25% experiencing a mental health issue in any given year.¹ There are approximately 78,000² young people in the ACT meaning almost 20,000 young Canberrans are likely to experience mental ill health at some point in any given year.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition supports budget measures that increase clinical mental health supports for young people. The investment of \$2.9m over 4 years to establish a Young People's Mental Health Treatment Team is a welcome boost to clinical supports for young people experiencing, or at high risk of developing, serious mental illness.

In our submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget, we raised concerns about the gap in information and service reported by young people and the youth sector. Young people and workers regularly express their frustration with the limited options for young people who are seeking help for mental health concerns, and community services report demand for therapeutic options for young people has increased. As a result of the limited services and resources available, waitlists continue to increase.

The Youth Coalition is disappointed in the lack of investment in early intervention and prevention initiatives in 2016-17 ACT Budget. With 25% of young people experiencing a mental health issue in any given year,³ we will continue to advocate for increased investment in early intervention mental health services for young people.

The Youth Coalition's recent submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Service *Inquiry into Youth Suicide and Self Harm* outlines the need for early intervention, community development, and services to support people with mild to moderate mental ill health in further detail. This submission can be viewed [here](#).

Key initiatives and commitments in 2016-17 ACT Budget relating to mental health include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- *Better Health Services – Primary health care for hard-to-reach populations - \$176,000 over 4 years*

The Government will establish an additional primary health care service for people who are unable to access standard primary services due to poverty, mental illness, homelessness, trauma, and/or drug and alcohol addiction. This initiative includes a grant to Orange Sky in 2016-17 to support a mobile laundry service for homeless people in the ACT.

- *Enhancing Health Services at the Alexander Maconochie Centre - \$816,000 over 2 years*

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Australian Social Trends: Mental Health.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Australian Social Trends: Mental Health.

The Government will increase staff numbers at the Forensic Mental Health Services unit in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) to provide assessments and treatment of detainees at risk of suicide and self harm.

- Supporting Good Mental Health – Enhanced rehabilitation and follow up services - \$2.956m over 4 years

The Government will establish a Young People's Mental Health Treatment Team for people experiencing, or at high risk of developing, serious mental illness. The team will provide outreach and treatment through interventions such as: assessment; case work; care planning; group work; advocacy and crisis intervention.

- Supporting Good Mental Health – Expansion of the Way Back Support Service - \$250,000 over 1 year

The Government will continue to deliver suicide prevention services through support of the *BeyondBlue Way Back Support Service* pilot. The program helps survivors of attempted suicide to access support and treatment services.

- Supporting Good Mental Health – Improved and expanded community mental health services - \$725,000 over 1 year

The Government will provide additional mental health services through expanding the existing Mental Health Detention Exit Community Outreach program to provide treatment and short-term support for people leaving mental health facilities. This initiative also includes the design of the Mental Health Recovery College (MHRC) to deliver courses for people with mental health conditions and their carers.

- Supporting Good Mental Health – More beds for the Adult Mental Health Unit - \$2.733m over 4 years

The Government will increase mental health services through expansion of the Adult Mental Health Unit, increasing the number of beds available from 35 to 37.

- Supporting Good Mental Health – Secure Mental Health Unit - \$43.434m over 4 years

The Government is supporting mental health through investing in staff resources to operate the Secure Mental Health Unit (SMHU). The SMHU will care for people with moderate to severe mental illnesses in a facility that focuses on rehabilitation and recovery. This initiative provides ongoing funding for the operation of the 10 beds that form phase one of the SMHU program.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- Supporting Good Mental Health – Support for people with mental health issues to recover and live in the community - \$5.982m over 4 years

The Government will expand mental health services through the construction of an Adult Step Up/Step Down mental health transitional service. The services will provide therapeutic and residential treatment for mental health patients for up to three months. A feasibility study will also be undertaken into the future accommodation and rehabilitation needs for people being released from mental health facilities.

Youth Coalition Recommendations

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to support the mental health and wellbeing of young Canberrans by responding to a number of recommendations. Our recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

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| <p>Focus investment in projects and programs that increase family and community knowledge about, and confidence in supporting, mental health and wellbeing.</p> | <p>Not Met</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed in the lack of investment in initiatives that increase the community’s knowledge and confidence in supporting mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>We believe that investment in early intervention and prevention must acknowledge and engage family and friends in supporting young people’s mental health. It is frequently through the intervention of these people that professional mental health care is sought, and the information, beliefs and barriers experienced by family and friends must also be addressed.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition will continue to encourage the ACT Government to redeploy funding to grow investment in projects and programs that seek to increase the community’s knowledge about mental health, and support the capacity of young people and their families to seek help.</p> | |
| <p>Focus investment on increasing the mental health supports, such as health professionals, youth workers, social workers, and psychologists, available within schools to deliver more integrated, efficient and effective services.</p> | <p>Partially Met</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government’s commitment to <i>Schools for All</i>, and investment of \$21.5 million over 4 years to support the implementation of the recommendations of the <i>Report from the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour</i>. This includes funding of additional allied health professionals and investment in strengthening the capacity of multidisciplinary teams to support students with complex needs and their families.</p> <p>For further information please see section 1. Education.</p> | |
| <p>Prioritise young people experiencing mild to moderate mental ill health seeking support by (re)investing in community based therapeutic programs and support.</p> | <p>Not Met</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed in the lack of investment in mild to moderate mental health supports for young people. While we welcome the investment of \$2.9m over 4 years to establish a Young People’s Mental Health Treatment Team for young people experiencing, or at high risk of developing, serious mental illness, we remain concerned about the gap in supports available for young people experiencing mild to moderate mental ill health.</p> | |

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| <p>Focus investment in building the capacity of community based Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander services, who have established connections with families, to work collaboratively with health and other community services to improve mental health outcomes for young people and their families.</p> | <p>Partially Met</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed in the limited new funding for community based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to work with health and other community services to improve mental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families.</p> <p>In our submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget, we raised concerns about the barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people face in accessing help for mental health concerns. Our recent submission to ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Service <i>Inquiry into Youth Suicide and Self Harm</i> reiterated this and also identified the need to: 'Address inequality for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT Community and prioritise actions that build a positive sense of identity and connection to community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.'</p> <p>We will continue to call on the ACT Government to increase investment in targeted mental supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families and communities; to encourage the employment of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workers; and, to address the impacts of racism and intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> | |

3. Jobs Creation / Employment

Youth unemployment continues to be a concern both locally and nationally. Youth unemployment has risen considerably in the ACT over the past few years, with the rate at 11.6% in April 2016. These figures do not include young people who may be underemployed, such as part time or casual workers who want to work more hours.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition acknowledges that the ACT Government's business development strategy and increased infrastructure spending are key ways that the Government supports employment growth. We continue to encourage the ACT Government to implement targets and strategies to ensure that these jobs employ people in the community most vulnerable to unemployment, particularly young people.

With youth unemployment in the ACT at nearly 3 times the general unemployment rate, the Youth Coalition is disappointed with the lack of investment in specific initiatives to address youth unemployment and underemployment in the 2016-17 ACT Budget. We believe more needs to be done to support those at risk of unemployment or underemployment to fully participate in the ACT community and will continue to advocate for investment in initiatives that will increase the workforce participation of young people.

Key initiatives and commitments in 2016-17 ACT Budget relating to jobs creation / employment include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Kickstarting careers by connecting to culture - \$651,000 being met from the existing resources of the agencies involved

The Government will develop a new program to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at risk of leaving school. The program will develop culturally appropriate flexible learning options to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in nationally accredited and vocational training in culture and land management. The Environment and Planning Directorate is leading a whole of government approach to this program.

Youth Coalition Recommendations

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to address youth unemployment and underemployment through a number of recommendations. Our recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

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| <p>Develop and promote local responses to youth unemployment, that involve collaboration between ACT Government, business, schools, services and young people to design targeted local responses, and act on them.</p> | <p>Met Through Other Initiatives</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition acknowledges the work of Belconnen Community Services in the establishment of the <i>Belconnen Youth Employment Pathways Hub</i>, which aligns with the <i>Better Services Network</i> and is supported by the ACT Government through an Adult Community Education grant.</p> <p>The Hub includes a partnership with Riverview Projects ACT to provide suitable participants with work experience and vocational training at Certificate II and III via live training sites, in conjunction with the Master Builders Association, Housing Industry Association, Canberra Institute of Technology, and private Registered Training Organisations. Further partnerships are in development with other education, training, employment and community service providers.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition believes this is an important local response in the Belconnen region, and that ACT Government must support communities in other regions of Canberra to collaborate to address youth unemployment and underemployment also.</p> | |
| <p>Seek opportunities to respond to the changing nature of entry into work, such as flexible programs that provide meaningful work experience, and prepare young people for work in today’s world.</p> | <p>Partially Met Through Other Initiatives</p> |
| <p>The Youth Coalition is disappointed the 2016-17 ACT Budget did not prioritise the issue of youth unemployment in the Territory. While the Federal Government’s 2016-17 Budget announcement of funding for the <i>Youth Jobs PaTH</i> internship program may provide opportunities for young people to gain work experience, we have some concerns about this program and believe the</p> | |

ACT Government also has a responsibility to ensure young Canberrans can engage meaningfully and sustainably in the labour market.

Implement targets and strategies in all ACT Government-funded projects that anticipate creating jobs (such as the infrastructure program) to ensure that these jobs employ people from specific demographics who might be more vulnerable to unemployment, such as young people.

Not Met

While the Youth Coalition supports continued investment in the ACT's business development strategy, *Confident and Business Ready: Building on Our Strengths*, we remain concerned that a growing economy and new infrastructure programs have not translated into increased employment opportunities for young people. With the youth unemployment rate in the ACT at 11.6%, nearly 3 times the general unemployment rate (4.1%), more needs to be done to ensure that young Canberrans have access to employment pathways.

Along with the ACT Government's focus on creating a distinct economic identity, there is an opportunity for innovative employment strategies that focus on providing jobs to people from specific demographics who are more vulnerable to unemployment, including young people.

The Youth Coalition is encouraged by some promising projects involving collaboration between ACT Government, business, schools, and community services, such as the *Belconnen Youth Employment Pathways Hub*, and work being done through the two year *ACT Waste Feasibility Project*, including the recently established mattress recycling business. We understand this business, which has targeted its work force to people who are disadvantaged in the job market, is employing 6 people, 4 of whom are young people, and aims to grow to over 20 jobs in the next 3 years.

Programs such as these have the potential to make real change in a way that opens up opportunity for young people to gain a start at meaningful employment in our community, and are a great example of how focussed solutions can be established with real social change.

The Youth Coalition will continue to advocate for ACT Government to implement targets and strategies for ACT Government funded projects to employ people from specific demographics who might be more vulnerable to unemployment, including young people.

See also section [5. Supports for Children, Young People, and Families](#), comments in relation to the Youth Coalition's recommendation: 'Investigate piloting a program to offer a period of guaranteed employment in ACT Government to young people who are transitioning from Care.'

4. Housing and Homelessness

Addressing youth homelessness and improving the supply of affordable housing has been a key policy focus area for the Youth Coalition for a number of years. Housing is a fundamental determinant of health, well-being, social connection, and workforce participation.

General Comments

Over the last few years, the Youth Coalition has been working closely with the Peaks Network and the team at ACTCOSS to build a common position across the entire ACT community sector on how best to address housing and homelessness.

The Youth Coalition supports investment in improved quality and accessibility of public housing and welcomes budget initiatives that improve land supply and preference stamp duty reduction in lower cost housing as measures that should go some way to reduce growth in the property prices. However, we remain concerned about the gap in Canberra’s rental market for people not eligible for social housing but cannot afford private rental prices. We join ACTCOSS and other community agencies in expressing our disappointment in the lack of investment in measures that will effectively address housing affordability in the ACT.

Key initiatives and commitments in 2016-17 ACT Budget relating to housing and homelessness include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- Supporting Affordable Housing - Homes for Homes - \$100,000 over 2 years

The Government will assist low income and vulnerable people into affordable housing by providing \$100,000 in seed funding to the *Homes for Homes Scheme*.

Select Capital Works Initiatives

- Supporting Affordable Housing - Infrastructure upgrade at the Narrabundah Long Stay Park - \$399,000 over 4 years

The Government will upgrade the stormwater and drainage system at the Narrabundah Long Stay Park.

- Better Public Housing - New public housing properties - \$391,382 over 3 years

The Government is continuing to redevelop public housing in the Territory by replacing 864 units that have reached the end of their useful life with new public housing properties that are more energy efficient, comfortable and fit for purpose.

Recommendations

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to respond to a number of recommendations related to housing and homelessness that were jointly developed by the community sector under the leadership of ACTCOSS. The recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

| | |
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| Sustain funding to Commonwealth/ACT joint funded programs under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, even if Commonwealth withdraws funding, and improve access to emergency housing. | Not Met |
| Sustain funding for existing housing-related legal services and increase access to tenancy advice/advocacy/legal assistance and links with support that can address individual risk factors for tenants/owners at risk of losing | Not Met |

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| their housing by maintaining existing legal services and providing ongoing funding for the Street Law program. | |
| Sustain secure funding for existing housing-related legal services and increase access to tenancy advice/advocacy/legal assistance and links with support that can address individual risk factors for tenants/owners at risk of losing their housing by maintaining existing legal services and providing ongoing funding for the Supportive Tenancy Service. | Not Met |
| Fund independent professional housing advocacy for people living with disability, including mental health, by investing funding for 1.0 FTE dedicated housing advocacy position to be based at ADACAS. | Not Met |
| Increase the funding for COTA ACT's Housing Option Advice Service to cover 2 FTE staff. | Not Met |
| Any Directorate not already contributing at least one per cent of their operating budget to housing and/or reducing homelessness to allocate one per cent of their operating budget to fund additional measures that increase provision of services to reduce homelessness and increase supply of accessible, affordable housing. | Not Met |
| Provide recurrent funding for the Corrections Throughcare initiative as this program has a significant impact on accessing and sustaining housing after a period of incarceration in the criminal justice system. | Not Met |
| Fund knowledge and skills development so that people working with men and women exiting out of home care, mental health, drug and alcohol, acute health care, criminal justice and homelessness services are able to provide tenancy advice / advocacy / support. | Partially Met <i>(through Safer Families)</i> |
| The ACT Government divert \$100 million from its investment portfolio in bonds to create an investment fund for community housing providers for the purpose of building new accessible, affordable rental housing. The fund would be held in perpetuity and repaid at government bond rates. | Not Met |
| Apply the principles underpinning the Affordable Rental Scheme (that sets rent payments as a percentage of income instead of a percentage of market rent), currently open to people over 65 who meet an income eligibility threshold, to a wider group of low income households in order to create a system that could be applied to all people experiencing disadvantage in the ACT. | Not Met |
| Provide seed funding to support development of partnerships between the private real estate industry and housing support services, including: | Not Met |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supportive Tenancy Service - to increase its reach into the private rental market, recognising the benefits of tenancy support to government, landlords, real estate agents and tenants • The Human Services Gateway – to increase access to private rental market accommodation options | |
| Expand the Energy Efficiency Program and the Outreach Program to more proactively engage private sector and community housing landlords and tenants who are unable to afford fee-for service support. | Partially Met |
| The ACT Government offer incentives for landlords to increase the energy efficiency of their homes, so fewer tenants need to rely on energy and water concessions in order to meet their energy costs. | Partially Met |

5. Supports for Children, Young People, and Families

As the peak body for youth affairs, the Youth Coalition is committed to promoting the human rights, wellbeing and aspirations of young Canberrans. Addressing the root causes of social disadvantage and vulnerability is a clear policy goal locally and nationally, and a common desire in the community sector. We strongly believe that by addressing the social determinants of health, vulnerable young people can be supported to interrupt and/or move out of cycles of poverty and disadvantage, and live healthy, prosperous lives.

General Comments

The Youth Coalition commends the ACT Government's commitment to the *Safer Families* package, and supports this whole of government working with community approach to address family and domestic violence in our community.

The Youth Coalition continues to urge the ACT Government to make a sustainable difference to long term Government expenditure by investing in early intervention and prevention services to support children, young people and families.

In particular the Youth Coalition believes the community based services delivered under the Children, Youth, and Family Services Program (CYFSP) are well placed to work with local communities to strengthen their resilience and capacity to support each other.

Key initiatives and commitments in 2016-17 ACT Budget relating to supports for children, young people and families include:

Select Expense Initiatives

- Supporting Low Income Households - \$35m over 4 years

The Government will increase funding for the Concessions Program to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Developing life skills through Galambany Court - \$186,000 over 1 year

The Government will continue the trial program that develops life skills for young people as a sentencing option at the Galambany Court. The Government will also investigate options for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to reduce or prevent contact with the justice system.

- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Guidance partner program for Indigenous people - \$508,000 over 4 years

The Government will expand its *Indigenous Guidance Partner Program (IGP) for Restorative Justice*. The IGP provides guidance and assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth involved in the legal system, which will be expanded to also support adults.

- Improving Youth Justice Outcomes – Bimberi Youth Justice Centre – Improving operational capability - \$100,000 over 1 year

The Government will undertake a review of the structure and operations of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre to ensure that the facility is managed efficiently and effectively.

- More Resources for Out of Home Care - \$800,000 over 1 year

The Government will continue to provide support for children in out of home care by increasing resources to provide appropriate, child-centric options for children in care. The Government will also continue to support intensive prevention and restoration services to address the number of children and young people in out of home care.

- Restrictive Practice Regulation - \$145,000 over 1 year

The Government will undertake a review for the requirement to establish an Office of Senior Practitioner to provide independent oversight on the application of restrictive practice.

- Better Health Services - Expanding drug services - \$6.067m over 4 years

The Government will maintain and expand a range of existing drug treatment and support services in the ACT. This initiative will provide funding for: six drug treatment and support services; the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association, post-treatment drug rehabilitation programs; the naloxone program; and training sessions for drug treatment and support workers.

- Better Health Services – Improved sexual health - \$1.260m over 4 years

The Government is expanding access to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV and STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) vaccination, testing and treatment services, with a particular emphasis on outreach to vulnerable populations.

- Safer Families Package - \$21.42m over 4 years

In addition to the above initiatives, the *Safer Families* package of \$21.42m over 4 years is a whole of government, community backed response to family violence. This package aims to deliver an integrated and collaborative single service system for families experiencing domestic violence, and to respond to those who perpetrate violence. Initiatives and investment include:

- Additional resources for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre - \$416,000 over 4 years
- Additional resources for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service - \$830,000 over 4 years
- Early assistance for families at risk of violence - \$964,000 over 3 years

- Reportable conduct scheme for employees (Room 4 change) - \$1.336m over 4 years
- Enhanced child protection case management and coordination - \$2.471m over 4 years
- Integrated case management - \$2.606m over 4 years
- Support for women and children to leave violence - \$315,000 over 4 years
- Training in domestic violence for frontline workers - \$770,000 over 4 years
- Trauma Understanding and Sensitive Teaching (TRUST) Project - \$120,000 over 2 years
- Support and referral through specialist drug and alcohol treatment services - \$2m over 4 years
- Contribution to the Tara Costigan Foundation - \$20,000 over 1 year
- Enhancing access to justice for non-English speakers - \$1.223m over 4 years
- Implementation of the Joint Australian Law Reform Commission and NSW Law Reform Commission Report on Family Violence - \$1.457m over 4 years
- Improving information sharing for government and service delivery agencies - \$15,000 over 1 year
- Risk assessment tool - \$50,000 over 1 year
- Safer families team - \$3.070m over 4 years
- Stronger criminal justice responses - \$1.363 over 4 years
- Stronger police support for family violence victims - \$1.180m over 4 years
- Improved access to Legal Aid - \$1.214m over 4 years

The *Safer Families* package will be primarily funded through a \$30 per annum levy applied to all residential and rural properties.

Youth Coalition Recommendations

The Youth Coalition submission to the 2016-17 ACT Budget called on the ACT Government to support young Canberrans and their families through a number of recommendations. Our recommendations are outlined below with an indication of whether they were reflected in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

| | |
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| Investigate piloting a program to offer a period of guaranteed employment in ACT Government to young people who are transitioning from Care. | Not Met |
| <p>The Youth Coalition believes that young people who have had significant involvement of statutory services throughout their lives would benefit from further assistance making the transition to independence. We are disappointed there has been no consideration of piloting a program to offer a period of guaranteed employment in ACT Government to young people who are transitioning from Care.</p> <p>It is a common experience that family play a part in securing employment for young people who don't have work experience or history, particularly as the job market gets tighter and people look to their networks to assist. We believe that a period of guaranteed employment, coupled with available support through the existing Youth Transition Team, would mean young people transitioning from care would be supported to navigate their way to independence and economic participation.</p> | |

The Youth Coalition will continue to call on the ACT Government, as a body exercising aspects of parental responsibility for children and young people in care, to consider guaranteeing a period of employment for young people who are transitioning from care.

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| Maintain or increase the current level of funding within the Child, Youth and Family Services Program. | Met Through Other Initiatives |
| Maintain funding levels currently committed to human services workforce development initiatives, including the 2% of the Children, Youth, and Family Services Program (CYFSP) that is earmarked for workforce development. | Met Through Other Initiatives |
| <p>The Youth Coalition is pleased that the previous level of funding commitment to the Child, Youth and Family Services Program has been extended for two years, with a possible further 1 year, and the workforce development funding has remained stable.</p> <p>The Youth Coalition highlights that ACT community-based children, youth, and family support services are well positioned to integrate and provide responses with and across the various government systems that provide support to young people. However, we remain concerned that to work well, the newly funded <i>Schools for All</i> and <i>Safer Families</i> initiatives will put additional demands on a wide range of community services who are already stretched and unable to meet demand.</p> <p>We continue to advocate for additional investment in community services to increase their capacity to work in partnership with government to support the most vulnerable members of our community. Community service organisations have the skills, expertise and already established relationships to provide support to children, young people, and families. It is important to note that the level of service needed to meet the vision of a fully integrated community service component complementing (and diverting from) government services exceeds current capacity.</p> | |



MEDIA RELEASE: ACT Budget 2016-17

7 June 2016

ACT's peak body for youth affairs, the Youth Coalition of the ACT, welcomed the ACT Government commitment to social inclusion announced in today's 2016-17 ACT Budget, however believes more is needed to ensure that younger members of our community have opportunities to participate economically and socially in Canberra life.

The Youth Coalition continues to believe that Canberra is, and should be, the city of choice for young Australians.

'We are looking to our political leaders to stand up for all Canberrans. We believe that the ACT community can leverage the things that make Canberra unique (such as above national average incomes and education attainment) to stand out and also lead the country in how we care for, support, and provide opportunities for all of our citizens', said Director Emma Robertson.

'We are really pleased to see some great initiatives in this ACT Budget, such as investments in addressing domestic and family violence, strengthening the capacity of schools to support students with complex needs, and increased clinical mental health supports for young people.'

'However, with youth unemployment in the ACT at 11.6%, nearly 3 times the general unemployment rate (4.1%), we believe more needs to be done to support those at risk of unemployment or underemployment to achieve full participation in community.'

The Youth Coalition will continue to urge the ACT Government to make a sustainable difference to long term Government expenditure by investing in early intervention and prevention services, and addressing the social determinants of health.

'We believe capacity for education and early intervention with young people around gender equality and healthy relationships is essential to reducing violence against women and children in our community.'

'Strengthening capacity for collaborative partnerships between schools and community based services to provide the right support at the right time is essential to ensuring educational attainment and employment pathways for vulnerable students and their families.'

'And as young Canberrans continue to identify mental health as a top issue of concern, we believe that in addition to clinical supports, investment to increase family and community knowledge about and confidence in supporting mental health and wellbeing is essential.'

These are long term investments across the budgets of all sections of government, and require strategic perspective that looks beyond the silos of government portfolios.