



Policy Platform: Arts, Sport and Recreation Youth Coalition of the ACT

Young people participate in and contribute to the ACT community in a variety of ways, including through their families, friends, education, and employment opportunities; but also through structured activities such as arts, sport and recreation.

Under Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, young people have the right to rest, leisure, recreation and participation in cultural life and the arts¹. Public expressions of culture through art, dance, music and theatre play an important role in young people's experiences between each other and the wider community. Young people's individual cultures are influential in their development of self-identities. Individual and collective youth cultures are important in cultural awareness raising. These cultures can be both self-generating as well as supported by other groups within young people's communities such as the youth sector, family, cultural community groups and schools.

The benefits for young people's health and wellbeing as a result of being involved in physical recreational activities are clearly demonstrated. Physical recreation can reduce obesity, high blood pressure and Type 2 Diabetes as well as protecting against some forms of cancer and strengthening the musculoskeletal system and improving mental wellbeing through reducing feelings of stress, anxiety and depression.² Therefore, the ability for young people to take part in physical recreation is a key determinant of their health and wellbeing.

In the 2012 *Rate Canberra* survey conducted by the Youth Coalition, finding things to do in Canberra was rated amongst the top 5 issues and concerns. The top three organised activities that young people participated in were sports, volunteering, and school-based groups.³ However, young people's participation in sport and recreational activities often depends on their ability to access affordable facilities and programs. The Youth Coalition notes that access issues can cause some barriers to young people's participation in the community. In addition to affordability, access issues include: availability of services and facilities, transport, and public space. In addition, young people have reported that it is difficult to engage in sport and recreation activities unless they are part of an established peer group or 'team'. The most common barrier to participation in the survey was 'I'm too busy / I don't have time', followed by 'too expensive' and 'can't travel there / it's too hard to get there'.⁴

60% of young Canberrans use public transport in the ACT,⁵ making it a vital service. Young people face barriers to attending evening events when public transport runs infrequently, particularly at night and on the weekends.

Venues and programs must be affordable for young people. They must also be able to offer young people interesting and engaging programs and be supportive of projects initiated by young people – particularly projects that may not be mainstream and may reflect diverse cultures.

The Youth Coalition supports National Youth Week, which is held in April each year; and aims to celebrate and promote young people aged 12 – 25. The Youth Coalition is strongly engaged in supporting young people, youth workers and youth services to participate in National Youth Week in the ACT.

Commitments

1. Advocating for the active and supported participation of young people in arts, sport and recreational activities.
2. Advocating for young people to have equitable access to participate in their communities, particularly in arts, sport and recreational activities.
3. Advocating for the provision of high quality arts, sport and recreation facilities and programs for young people.
4. Advocating for the provision of public space and transport services that are accessible and affordable for young people.
5. Supporting positive images of young people, youth culture and young people engaged in recreation activities. To this end, the Youth Coalition aims to combat negative stereotypes.
6. Supporting and engaging in National Youth Week in the ACT, held in April of each year.
7. Advocating for the active involvement of young people in designing, planning and evaluating youth policy and service delivery frameworks in arts, sport and recreation.

¹ United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2006) Australia's Health 2006, Australian Government, Canberra

³ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2012) Rate Canberra 2012: Findings from the survey of Young People aged 12-25 in the ACT. Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.