



Office of the Board of Secondary School Studies
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601
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26 May 2014

RE: ACT BSSS Review of Requirements for the ACT Year 12 Certificate

Dear Ms Kim Darcy,

On behalf of the Youth Coalition of the ACT (the Youth Coalition), I would like to thank the ACT Board of Secondary School Studies (BSSS) for the opportunity to provide input into the review of senior secondary certificates issued at the end of Year 12. While other submissions will provide the BSSS with more detailed recommendations, the Youth Coalition is primarily concerned with ensuring the review of the ACT Year 12 Certificate does not result in increased barriers for vulnerable young people who face difficulties in attaining their senior secondary certificates.

About the Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT. Comprised of 100 members, programs, and individuals, the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the interests and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25 years and those who work with them.

The activities of the Youth Coalition fall under four key themes: policy; sector development; advocacy and representation; and, projects that respond to ongoing and current issues. A key role of the Youth Coalition is the facilitation and development of strong linkages and collaboration between the community, government and private sectors to achieve better outcomes for young people in the ACT.

The Youth Coalition believes that education is an area of great importance for young people. Education should equip young people to make cultural, political and economic contributions to their communities. Education also transmits more abstract qualities such as critical thinking skills, healthy living, resilience, and self-confidence. The Youth Coalition welcomes the review of senior secondary certificates by the BSSS.

Education in the ACT

The Youth Coalition recognises the high level of educational attainment in the ACT. In the general ACT population, the level of Year 12 or equivalent attainment was 91.5% in 2011.¹ This places the ACT above the national average of 86% in 2011.² However, the Youth Coalition is concerned about the educational attainment of certain groups of young people in the ACT. For instance, the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous educational achievement and attainment rates is significant. In 2011, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the ACT had an attainment level of 71.1%.³

Another group of vulnerable young people in the ACT are young carers. In 2002, it was estimated that around 10% of the population of young people in the ACT were young carers.⁴ However, more recent research suggests that this figure is underestimated, as young people caring for family members affected by alcohol and other drug (AOD) use are often excluded from the definition of young carers.⁵ A 2005 research project conducted by the Youth Coalition found that young carers cared for an average of 6 hours per day, over a six-year duration. Not surprisingly, young carers reported poor outcomes in education as one of the major negative impacts of their experience as a carer.⁶

Response to the Review

The Youth Coalition has reviewed the Terms of Reference and has responded to the questions under the five key issue areas in the order they were asked. The Youth Coalition has developed this response through ongoing consultation with members and key stakeholders and the Youth Coalition's policy platform on education.

a) Number/purpose/types of certificates

The Youth Coalition makes no submission in regards to the number of certificates issued at the end of Year 12.

The Youth Coalition submits that the BSSS should continue to accredit highly modified curriculum (classified as M courses) to allow students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities to meet the requirements for an ACT Year 12 Certificate if they complete enough units and courses.

b) Number of different packages

The Youth Coalition submits that if any package is reduced or eliminated, it should not disadvantage any student and the packages that are available remain flexible. The Youth Coalition believes that all young people should be supported to obtain their Year 12 Certificate and/or Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES). The three special packages currently available (Repeat, Mature Age, Older Student) provide the opportunity and flexibility for particular groups of students who would not otherwise obtain their senior secondary certificates. Before making any changes to the packages available, the BSSS should consider how flexibility could be maintained for students who qualify for a special package.

c) Minimum requirements for certificates/packages, including English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy requirements

The Youth Coalition submits that if English and mathematics, or any other subjects, are made mandatory, it should not act as a barrier for those young people who have not yet obtained satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills. The Youth Coalition

believes that literacy and numeracy skills are essential for all young people as they are necessary for life skills, employment and community participation. However, the Youth Coalition is aware that some young people do not have the literacy and numeracy skills expected at the completion of Year 10. Before English and mathematics, or any other subjects, are made mandatory, the BSSS should consider how the changes would impact on those students who have not yet obtained satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills, and ensure that any changes do not disadvantage any student.

The Youth Coalition submits that the minimum number of units required to attain a Year 12 Certificate and/or TES should not be increased. The Youth Coalition recognises the importance of maintaining a high standard for the Year 12 Certificate, but is also aware that some young people face difficulties in attaining the minimum number of units required for a Year 12 Certificate and/or TES. The Youth Coalition believes that increasing the minimum number of units would raise further barriers to those young people who already face difficulties in attaining their senior secondary certificates.

The Youth Coalition encourages the BSSS to further consider the needs of vulnerable students who are facing difficulty completing their studies and explore additional options to help them attain their Year 12 Certificate and/or TES. Flexibility is vitally important for young people who face barriers in attaining their senior secondary certificates. The Youth Coalition would welcome a dialogue between the BSSS, the youth sector and students to discuss options to help more vulnerable young people attain their Year 12 Certificate and/or TES.

d) Recognition of extra-curricular activities and outside learning towards the requirements for the Year 12 Certificate

The Youth Coalition submits that the BSSS should continue to recognise a wide breadth of extra-curricular activities and outside learning towards the requirements for the Year 12 Certificate. The Youth Coalition is aware that recognition of extra-curricular activities and outside learning is important and often necessary for some young people who would not otherwise attain their Year 12 Certificate.

If the BSSS is seeking to establish guidelines for the recognition of extra-curricular activities and outside learning towards the requirements for the Year 12 Certificate, the Youth Coalition recommends that the activities recognised should involve skills and attributes that lead to employment. Guidelines should be created with reference to conceptualisations of employment-related skills, outlined in reports such as *Employability Skills for the Future*.⁷

e) Recognition of vocational learning towards the requirements for the certificates

The Youth Coalition submits that any changes to the recognition of vocational education and training (VET) should not disadvantage any student. The Youth Coalition is aware that VET is important for many young people in attaining their Year 12 Certificate. The Youth Coalition supports the BSSS in finding a more efficient strategy for the recognition of VET delivered by external Registered Training Organisations and through VET programs in colleges.

The Youth Coalition is interested to know the scope and results of the BSSS consultations with young people for the review of the Year 12 certificate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6247 3540 or at director@youthcoalition.net if you wish to discuss this submission further. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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¹ COAG Reform Council (2013) Indigenous Reform 2011–12: Comparing performance across Australia, (COAG Reform Council, Sydney) p. 52 <online>
<http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/reports/indigenous-reform/indigenous-reform-2011-12-comparing-performance-across-australia> Accessed 28 June 2013.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mary Gays (2002) A Lifetime of Caring: ACT Schools-based Young Carers Survey; Marymead Child and Family Centre, Canberra

⁵ Noble-Carr, D; Moore, T; McArthur, M (2009) Who Cares? Experiences of Young People Living with a Family Member who has a Alcohol or Other Drug Issue, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Canberra

⁶ Moore, T (2005) Stop to Listen: Findings from the ACT Young Carers Research Project, Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra

⁷ Hely, P (2002) Employability Skills for the Future. Produced by the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Australian National Training Authority.