



The City Plan,  
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To the City Plan Development Team,

On behalf of the Youth Coalition of the ACT (the Youth Coalition), I would like to thank the City Plan Team for the opportunity to provide input into the plan for the future of our wonderful city.

### **About the Youth Coalition of the ACT**

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT. Comprised of 90 members, programs, and individuals the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the interests and wellbeing of all young people aged 12 to 25 years and those who work with them.

The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT Government advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on youth issues, along with providing information to youth services about policy and program matters.

A key role of the Youth Coalition is the development and analysis of ACT social policy and program decisions for young people and youth services. The Youth Coalition facilitates the development of strong linkages and promotes collaboration between the community, government and private sectors to achieve better outcomes for young people in the ACT.

### **Submission**

The Youth Coalition recognises the five key themes for developing the City Plan and has read each of the discussion papers provided:

1. The role of the City
2. Growth in the City
3. Transport and Movement
4. Public Realm and Design
5. Implementing Change

In our submission the Youth Coalition would like to initiate discussion around six additional ideas:

- a. Canberra as a Child and Youth Friendly City
- b. Capital Works and Space Creation

- c. Access and Transport
- d. Community Sector Involvement
- e. Intersection with Education Institutions
- f. Young People's Contribution to an Environmental City

This submission provides an initial articulation and support of these ideas. We would envisage further discussion and facilitation regarding these topics with the youth sector and young people generally. The submission focuses on raising these themes, and identifies links to websites or papers in order to support the work of the City Plan Team in involving and including young people in our future city.

The Youth Coalition, in formulating this submission, utilised previous consultation and research with young people and other key stakeholders in the youth sector in previous years on related issues. In 2012 the Youth Coalition also conducted a survey of young Canberrans, which included seeking a range of input about how young people experience Canberra. The report from this survey entitled *Rate Canberra: Findings from the Survey of Young People Aged 12-25 in the ACT* can be accessed at [http://www.youthcoalition.net/dmdocuments/Rate\\_Canberra\\_2012.pdf](http://www.youthcoalition.net/dmdocuments/Rate_Canberra_2012.pdf)

#### **a. Canberra as a Child and Youth Friendly City**

The overall architecture of a Child and Youth Friendly City has connection across different elements of planning and governance to include transport, services and the wider community. Canberra, and its city centre in particular, needs to attract a variety of people, including the diverse range of young people. The concept of a Child and Youth Friendly City is a commitment made in both the *ACT Children's Plan*<sup>1</sup> and the *ACT Young People's Plan*<sup>2</sup>. It involves a concerted effort to regularly engage with a range of children and young people, empowering them to be part of each element of the city as it develops together with the wider community.

Young people need to be involved in the full range of planning and development decisions. The meaning of a Child and Youth Friendly City is well articulated by the United Nations,<sup>3</sup> and academics such as Paul Tranter.<sup>4</sup> A Child and Youth Friendly City involves creating a city 'in which children [and young people] can grow and develop to the extent of their powers; where they can build their confidence and become actively engaged in the world; yet be autonomous and capable of managing their own affairs'.<sup>5</sup>

The level of practical work required to achieve this participation is relatively complex and lengthy, but its prosecution would have a significant positive effect on the full range of activities and engagements that occur in our city. Indeed, it will not simply have benefits for young people, but the entire ACT community.

Benefits of youth participation for the Canberra community include:

- bringing new perspectives;
- ensuring programs are responsive and effective, community capacity building;
- promoting inclusive and cohesive communities; and,
- developing social competence and social responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ACT Children's Plan <http://www.children.act.gov.au/> Accessed 17 May 2013.

<sup>2</sup> ACT Young People's Plan <http://www.youth.act.gov.au/index.php/publications> Accessed 17 May 2013

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF *Child Friendly Cities* <online> <http://www.childfriendlycities.org/> Accessed 14 May 2013.

<sup>4</sup> References to Paul Tranter in 'built4kids', p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Lynch, K. (1977). *Growing up in cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT cited in 'built4kids', below n [#], p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (2008) National Youth Participation Strategy Scoping Project Report

Participation should be meaningful and this can only occur when:

- young people are adequately informed and supported to be involved;
- young people's contributions are valued;
- young people believe the work they are doing has a purpose;
- young people see the change occur; and,
- young people are provided with feedback.

The Youth Coalition notes discussion around the issue of youth participation highlights that many young people do not feel engaged with decision making at a local level. Young people identify disconnection between what they think themselves and what decision-makers believe young people 'need'. Young people also feel that governments do not support genuine youth consultation, either in the methods used, or in taking expressed views seriously.

Concern has also been raised that governments only engage with young people who are highly educated or already actively engaged with community consultative processes. The Youth Coalition believes that a diverse range of young people should be consulted on all issues, not just those deemed to be 'young people's' issues.

Youth participation requires a commitment from across government, services and other stakeholders, to adequately resource the process in order to build a culture where young people are able to contribute in valued and meaningful ways. Without adequate resources and commitment to the implementation of youth participation policies and practices, services, infrastructure and community are at risk of engaging young people in tokenistic ways.

A number of theoretical models of youth participation have been developed in Australia, most notably Roger Hart's *Ladder of Young People's Participation*,<sup>7</sup> which outlines different styles in which young people are given opportunity to contribute, ranging from token through to meaningful engagement. The Youth Coalition supports the work progressed by other organisations in Australia, including the *Where are you Going With That Report*,<sup>8</sup> *Taking Young People Seriously Handbooks*,<sup>9</sup> and *Young People in Decision-Making Toolkit*.<sup>10</sup>

The Youth Coalition also points to the work of the NSW Government encapsulated in the toolkit *built4kids*.<sup>11</sup> This toolkit is designed to assist developing practices to incorporate the full involvement of children and young people into planning.

The Youth Coalition understands that a number of young people engaged with the the City Plan consultation tent, which was located in Garema PI for a week, and congratulates the ACT Government on taking this initiative. Continuing to build on this, reporting back to young people and engage them in all stages of the planning process would serve to solidify the work that has been undertaken so far. The Youth Coalition would be happy to provide support to youth participation processes for the

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<sup>7</sup> Hart, R (1997) Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (2010) *Where Are You Going with That: Maximising Young People's Impact on Organisational and Public Policy*, New South Wales.

<sup>9</sup> Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2009) *Taking Young People Seriously Handbooks*, Victoria.

<sup>10</sup> Wierenga, A (2003) *Sharing a New Story: Young People in Decision Making*, Foundation for Young Australians, Victoria.

<sup>11</sup> Office of Communities, Commission for Children and Young People (2009) 'built4kids - A good practice guide to creating child-friendly built environments'  
<http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/resources/publications.cfm?itemID=0665D537F09D577164DEE83D91C57AAC> Accessed 14 May 2013.

further development of the City Plan.

### **b. Capital Works and Space Creation**

Capital work such as expansion of buildings in the city needs to be integrated with the provision of adequate services for all members of the Canberra community. High quality buildings and associated capital infrastructure is vital for young people in our city. However, the Youth Coalition notes that access to use of buildings comes with the provision of appropriate youth friendly services and staff. It is the services and the people that connect young people to community.

Services and infrastructure need to attract young people. This will be more likely to achieve this if young people are involved in the production and maintenance of that space.<sup>12</sup> This further supports the concept of a Child and Youth Friendly City discussed above.

The importance of 'residential, commercial and retail' spaces was mentioned in Discussion Paper 3<sup>13</sup>. The Youth Coalition advocates that the City Plan needs to include community and recreation spaces also. Spaces such as parks, public playing fields and meeting centres provide people with an opportunity to interact in a dynamic way with the city as an area.

Discussion Paper 4 entitled *Public Realm and Design* highlighted to the Youth Coalition the importance of having dedicated spaces for young people within our city. Young people do not always have access to private space like other members of the community. This can mean that young people do not have space in which they can feel safe, and control the environment and atmosphere. The identification and creation of youth specific space would be a valuable opportunity to involve young people in the design, development, and use of our city.

The Youth Coalition calls on the City Plan Team to explore the meaning of 'accessible for everyone'.<sup>14</sup> To be fully accessible requires elements of the physical and social environment of a building to come together. This builds on the discussion around 'public realm' and the need for youth friendly and youth specific spaces discussed above.

The Youth Coalition stresses that proposed "City to the Lake" also needs to be inclusive of all members of the community. Space with lake frontage should not only be allocated to residential development, as this becomes an exclusive living location for only those who can afford it. Young people do not generally have the financial resources to purchase or rent accommodation built on prime public land such as this.

### **c. Access and Transport**

The issue of transport and access is of great important for young Canberrans. Respondents in the Youth Coalition's 2012 *Rate Canberra* survey identified transport as a key barrier to participating in opportunities and community life<sup>15</sup>.

It is important to highlight the discussion of 'access to services and jobs'<sup>16</sup> for young

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<sup>12</sup> Building from Discussion Paper 1, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Discussion Paper 3, p. 1

<sup>14</sup> Discussion Paper 4, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Rate Canberra: Findings from the Survey of Young People Aged 12-25 in the ACT, 2012*

<sup>16</sup> Discussion Paper 1, p. 1.

people. Many young people do not have a car making them reliant on public transport or others driving them.

The Youth Coalition would like to outline a meaning of 'well serviced by public transport',<sup>17</sup> to include regular services, late night, and out of hours services in order to meet the needs of young people coming in to and out of the city.

The Youth Coalition supports the call for a 'whole of network' approach<sup>18</sup> if it means that service users are able to cross the transport network with ease. Easy access to transport for young people using the public transport network means better access to education, work and recreation activities.

The Youth Coalition supports the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to encouraging active transport (pedestrians and cycling) within the City Plan. It is important that infrastructure is accompanied by advertising promoting its provision. In addition to promoting the use of active transport it is essential that it comprehensively integrated with public transport at hubs.

For example, the ACT Government has been implementing a bicycle network around the city. The network's existence and use need to be promoted to people already in the city, and further to those who might want to access the city. This bicycle network integrates nicely with the bicycle racks available on the Action bus network's 'Bike and Ride' program.

Further, there is a need for more services such as public drinking fountains and bicycle racks for those using active methods of transport.

#### **d. Community Sector Involvement**

The discussion papers mention the involvement of business and public sectors in the development of our city.<sup>19</sup> The Youth Coalition believes that it is important that the Community Sector is also involved in the city development in order to recognise the significant role, voice and perspective it brings to the planning of the city.

The Youth Coalition has identified the importance of collocation of community services in various submissions to the ACT Government, including the submission to the ACT 2013-2014 Budget.<sup>20</sup> Community services in many cities are located in hub arrangements. Canberra's City Plan could provide for the collocation of community services instead of, or in addition to, the 'townhall' that is proposed in the plan.<sup>21</sup> It is important that planning considers the demand for growth in community services and provides potential for future services to be integrated with existing services.

#### **e. Intersection with Education Institutions**

The Youth Coalition believes that there is a need to consider the intersection between the Australian National University, and the city. The ANU is located on the outskirts of the area being reviewed for The City Plan. The Plan needs to ensure that its principles and connections flow through and connect the city with the University.

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<sup>17</sup> Discussion Paper 3, p. 4 and Discussion Paper 4, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Transport proposal, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> The involvement of business and public sectors comes up in Discussion Paper 4, p. 5 and Discussion Paper 3, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Youth Coalition of the ACT, Submission to the ACT Budget 2013-14, 2013

<sup>21</sup> Discussed in Discussion Paper 1, p. 6.

The proposal papers also mention the idea of having a school in the city, especially if the City Plan were to include more residential living. The Youth Coalition believes planning needs to consider integration of services and that any school should be located close to other educational institutions and to the community services hub discussed above.

#### **f. Young People's Contribution to an Environmental City**

The Youth Coalition was pleased to see that outline of The City Plan includes ideas such as the use of 'rooftop gardens'.<sup>22</sup> Young people continue to identify the environment as an issue of importance to them, and this has been clearly identified in the *ACT Young People's Plan*<sup>23</sup>. Many young Canberrans are actively engaged with environmental initiatives and this knowledge could be expanded to the development of the City Plan.

For example, young people have been developing rooftop gardens at ANU residences, groups such as *Dirty Bean Stalk*, located in the ANU Food Coop,<sup>24</sup> and other youth led groups would add much value to the planning around the use of rooftop gardens and other environmental initiatives.

#### **Conclusion**

The Youth Coalition would welcome the opportunity to work with ACT Government to support the young people and the youth sector to have input into the further development of the City Plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6247 3540 or at [director@youthcoalition.net](mailto:director@youthcoalition.net) if you wish to discuss this letter further.

Sincerely,



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<sup>22</sup> Discussion Paper 4, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> ACT Young People's Plan <http://www.youth.act.gov.au/index.php/publications> Accessed 17 May 2013

<sup>24</sup> *The Dirty Bean Stalk* <online> <http://foodco-opshop.com.au/2012/08/31/the-dirty-beanstalk-the-co-ops-gardening-greening-crew/> Accessed 15 May 2013.