



Social Housing and Homelessness Services  
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To the Social Housing and Homelessness Services Unit;

On behalf of the Youth Coalition of the ACT (Youth Coalition), I would like to thank the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) for the opportunity to comment on chapters 1 and 2 of the *Road Map* Discussion Paper (Discussion Paper).

### **1. 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 people aged between 12 and 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 as well as 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.

### **2. Support of the Submission of the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS)**

The Youth Coalition recognises the importance of housing to the ACT Community and in particular to young people and as such we believe that the opportunity to comment on the Central Intake Service and Common Waiting List outlined in chapters 1 and 2 of the Discussion Paper is important. Having reviewed both the Discussion Paper and the ACTCOSS Submission to Chapters 1 and 2 of the Discussion Paper, the Youth Coalition broadly supports the content of the ACTCOSS Submission.

The Youth Coalition has identified a number of areas for further consideration, outlined below.

### **3. Response to Central Intake Service**

The Youth Coalition would like to commend the ACT Government on recognising that the Central Intake Service cannot be the exclusive pathway for intake. As noted by ACTCOSS, the Youth Coalition believes that further clarification is required regarding the interrelation of all access routes and points of entry for individuals.

The Youth Coalition is concerned about the role of allocation that the Central Intake Service will take and seeks further information in relation to the allocation model and implications of this. The Youth Coalition is in agreement with ACTCOSS, with regard to the need to ensure that allocation is made in close consultation with service providers and service users, in particular in the context of congruent living arrangements.

The Youth Coalition believes that it is imperative that the Central Intake Service is adequately funded to ensure appropriate resourcing, training and staffing. The Youth Coalition is concerned that a lack of adequate funding may have a detrimental impact on the Central Intake Service. The Youth Coalition supports ACTCOSS' position in relation to ensuring that the staff team within the proposed Central Intake Service have an in depth knowledge and understanding of the Housing and Homelessness Sector, along with a level of understanding of the barriers facing marginalised groups, including those identified in the ACTCOSS Submission, as well as, but not limited to:

- Young people aged 15 – 25;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people;
- Young people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness;
- Young people affected by alcohol and other drugs;
- Young people affected by mental health issues;
- Young people with disabilities;
- Young people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex;
- Multicultural young people;
- Newly arrived or refugee young people;
- Young carers;
- Young parents;
- Young people in care or who have been in care; and,
- Young people in the criminal justice system.

The Youth Coalition also has concerns about the implementation of the Central Intake Service and supports the call from ACTCOSS that Memorandums of Understanding between the proposed Central Intake Service and all services in the Housing and Homelessness Sector are established well before the implementation begins.

The Youth Coalition believes the intended start up date of 1 July 2010 is ambitious, and notes that it is essential that strong protocols and guidelines are developed and in place, clarifying the roles of every individual and service involved and guiding them in the process. It is important that the ACT Government recognises the learning's from the Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (YSAAP) Protocol, which was developed to guide the collaborative and joint work undertaken by Care and Protection Services, Youth Justice (including Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and Community Youth Justice), Turnaround and former SAAP services in the provision of services to young people aged 15 – 18 years old.

The Youth Coalition strongly supports ACTCOSS' recommendation that the Central Intake Service requires an initial phase in, trial period with a review and the capacity to re-scope if required.

#### **4. Response to the Common Waiting List**

The Youth Coalition would like to commend the ACT Government's commitment to streamline the common waiting list process. The Youth Coalition notes the accessibility concerns raised by ACTCOSS and agrees that, whilst the Common Waiting List will provide a smoother, simpler process for many individuals, consideration has not been made for those individuals who may be challenged by the process.

The Youth Coalition supports consideration for those mentioned by ACTCOSS and would also like to highlight the barrier to accessing Government services experienced by young people. The Youth Coalition is concerned that there has not been adequate consideration of the capacity of young people to participate in the Common Waiting List and the processes attached to it. It is important that the Common Waiting List, as within the Central Intake Service, provides individuals with a range of various access points and alternative entry, particularly in relation to Community Housing.

The Youth Coalition seeks further clarification as to what supports and options are in place for situations where an individual may be reluctant or unable to access the Common Waiting List, such as an individual who has a large debt or other negative relationship with Housing ACT or an other provider.

The Youth Coalition identified concerns regarding the application process in order for individuals to be accepted onto the Common Waiting List. As noted by ACTCOSS, Chapter 2 of the Discussion Paper acknowledges the literacy and numeracy barriers people experiencing homelessness may encounter. It is essential that supports are developed and put in place to ensure that all individuals are able to negotiate the application process equitably.

The Youth Coalition is also in agreement with ACTCOSS that the paperwork in relation to the Common Waiting List needs to be reviewed and simplified. It is essential that the Common Waiting List is staffed by highly experienced and knowledgeable people, with an understanding of the issues faced by individuals who may access the Common Waiting List, including, but not limited to:

- Young people aged 15 – 25;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people;
- Young people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness;
- Young people affected by alcohol and other drugs;
- Young people affected by mental health issues;
- Young people with disabilities;
- Young people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex;
- Multicultural young people;
- Newly arrived or refugee young people;
- Young carers;
- Young parents;
- Young people in care or who have been in care; and,
- Young people in the criminal justice system.

## **5. Further points of consideration**

The Youth Coalition seeks further clarification on how incorporating disability group homes into the Common Waiting List is going to improve access for people with disabilities and how these individuals will be supported through the process. The Youth Coalition is concerned that incorporating disability group homes into the Common Waiting List will have a detrimental effect on the already challenging system that people with disabilities have to negotiate in order to access group housing. Without further strategies to support this, the Youth Coalition cannot support this proposed incorporation by the ACT Government.

The Youth Coalition highlights issues of privacy and confidentiality both in the implementation of the Central Intake Line and Common Waiting List, as well as in their ongoing functions. We believe that it is important for the ACT Government to carefully consider and develop a framework that will support confidentiality principles. Further to this the ACT Government needs to provide and communicate information in relation to when, why, how long and with whose authority information will be shared and any other relevant decisions that may impact on individuals accessing the Central Intake Service and Common Waiting List.

The Youth Coalition strongly agrees with the ACTCOSS position regarding the tight timeframes stipulated in the Discussion Paper and fully supports the recommendation that both the Central Intake Service and Common Waiting List have a trial and evaluation period.

The Youth Coalition also strongly supports the ACTCOSS recommendation that regular meetings are scheduled between ACT Housing and service providers during the implementation period and duration of the two projects.

The Youth Coalition would like further clarification on how the Central Intake Service and Common Waiting List will interrelate with the broader community services sector, as well as broader Government Policy, both at a Territory and Federal level. In particular, clarification on how these projects will interact with the proposed Youth Guarantee. For example, if a young person who is 16 years of age, presents to the Central Intake Service and discloses that they are not currently in education, will they be denied access to support or will the Central Intake Service support the young person to link in with the appropriate mechanisms and services to enable them to access the Central Intake Service and Common Waiting List and be supported to re engage with education?

## **6. Inclusion of young people aged 15 - 25 as a key target group**

The inaccessibility of the private rental market for young people further highlights the need for a robust public housing sector. Public housing is a key exit point for young people in the homelessness system, but long waiting lists lead to difficult transitions. Additionally, young people who may not have traditionally entered the homelessness system are now doing so because public housing is difficult to access.

At present, the necessary resources and opportunities are not provided equitably, leaving many young people struggling to create a place for themselves. This in combination with the lack of capacity in public housing, as well as the unacceptably long waiting lists for allocation, has led to many young people remaining in homelessness services and medium term/transitional accommodation when they are able to live in less supported accommodation.

The Youth Coalition recommends that young people are an ongoing key target group in the implementation and ongoing function of the Central Intake Service and Common Waiting List.

The Youth Coalition again thanks the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) for the opportunity to comment on chapters 1 and 2 of the *Road Map* Discussion Paper (Discussion Paper) and we look forward to working with the Social Housing and Homelessness Services Unit to support youth services to continue to have input into the continuing development of these projects.

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

Yours truly,

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