



## **Policy Platform: Transport**

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

*For information on arts, sport and recreation, refer also to the Arts, Sport and Recreation Policy Platform. For information on young people and social inclusion, refer also to the Young People and Social Inclusion Policy Platform.*

Young people participate in, contribute to, and engage with the ACT community in a variety of ways, including through their families, friends, education, employment and social inclusion activities. Transport to and from these activities is integral to participation and engagement.

The Youth Coalition recognises that access to affordable, safe and timely public transport is essential to the ability to participate and a key socio-economic determinant of health and wellbeing for young people. The Youth Coalition acknowledges that young people are among the greatest users of public transport options in the ACT, and that transport services need to be further developed. In the 2012 *Rate Canberra* survey conducted by the Youth Coalition, 60% of survey respondents aged 12 – 25 identified that the bus was one of their most common forms of transport,<sup>1</sup> making it a vital service for young people in the ACT.

#### **Access Issues**

Access issues, including affordability and availability of public transport, can cause barriers to young people's participation in the community. In *Rate Canberra* young people frequently identified 'I can't travel there' as a barrier to participation in activities.<sup>2</sup> Most laws, policies and programs produced by government will impact in some way on young people, yet young people are sometimes overlooked in the process of government, for example when decisions are made about the design of bus and other transport routes.

The Youth Coalition has engaged in policy and advocacy relating to public transport for a number of years. In a 2007 Youth Coalition submission that surveyed over 200 young people in the ACT on public transport, the frequency of services was highlighted as the most important issue.<sup>3</sup> Also, in a 2012 consultation, young people identified that there is a need for additional evening, late night and weekend bus services. This is particularly important for young people who are more likely than the general population to be engaged in part-time employment or recreational activities during the evenings and weekends, or those who live in Canberra's outer suburbs.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Vulnerable Young People**

Vulnerable young people, including young people engaged in alternative education, and young people with disability, require flexible transport arrangements to suit their individual needs. Although alternative education students are classed as full time, the complex nature of their enrolment means that their student cards are given part-time status, therefore inhibiting them from accessing concessional fares. Young people also identified that buses are driving past their bus stops if the buses are at full

capacity. This has a particular impact upon young people who are less likely to have alternative means of transport to travel to school or work, and can result in young people arriving late at their education institution or workplace. While the Youth Coalition acknowledges that this is not an easy issue to resolve, it is vital that data is collected from bus drivers on missed stops, in order for ACTION to be able to review the need for larger buses or more frequent services in these areas.

Increases in the cost of public transport fares can make it even more difficult for young people to participate in their community. In our 2013 consultations, many young participants referred to the recent increase in public transport fares as presenting an additional barrier to accessing public transport services. For young people who are on very limited incomes or allowances, increasing the cost of public transport may disproportionately affect their ability to engage in education, employment or social inclusion activities.

### ***Safety and Health***

Young people's safety and health whilst accessing public transport is of paramount importance. Bus interchanges must be equipped with appropriate lighting and other security measures. Smoking at bus stops and interchanges was identified as an issue by non smokers who are at risk of inhaling secondary smoke. The Youth Coalition strongly supports exploring strategies to address this.

It is also integral that young people feel a sense of connectedness to community whilst accessing public transport, and that their access is facilitated as much as possible. Bike'n'Ride is a positive initiative that supports young people's ability to access public transport, and the re-introduction of free fares for patrons that utilise the Bike'n'Ride service would be a further incentive for young people who are on a low income. It was identified in consultations that some older ACTION buses still include signage that requires children and young people to give up their seats if an adult would like to sit down. While the Youth Coalition supports signage that supports people with disabilities, pregnant women and elderly people to take priority seating, we support the need to review these signs to ensure that young people aged 12 – 25 are not otherwise being unfairly discriminated against based on their age.

### ***Driving***

Young people also feature highly in road statistics. Transport accidents are one of the leading causes of death in young people.<sup>5</sup> This has been linked to risky driving behaviours such as speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, and driving whilst fatigued. This makes it important for young people to have access to education about safe driving and road risks. The Road Ready program in the ACT is an important program that enables young people to get their Learner's licence. The Youth Coalition would support more funding dedicated to youth services in order to ensure that vulnerable young people are also able to access this service. Such young people would also benefit from having access to targeted courses that assist them to gain their provisional licence.

Young people participating in education, training or employment require timely, reliable transport to and from these activities. In particular, young apprentices find it difficult to access buses early in the morning, but cannot afford cars. Ensuring that there is transport available, or financial assistance to gain licences is important to provide an incentive for young people accessing apprenticeships or other employment.

## Commitments

1. Advocating for dedicated and adequate resourcing to support youth participation, including the development of a 'Child Friendly City' in the ACT.
2. Advocating for young people to have equitable access to participate in their communities.
3. Advocating for a public transport system that is accessible and affordable for young people, including adequate evening, late night and weekend bus services
4. Advocating for increased funding for community services to support vulnerable young people to access Road Ready and other driver education programs
5. Advocating for the ACT Government to explore strategies for improving safety at bus interchanges, including appropriate lighting and other security measures.
6. Advocating for the active involvement of young people in designing, planning and evaluating youth policy and service delivery frameworks around transport.
7. Advocating for the active and supported participation of young people in their individual care planning and case management around transport.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Youth Coalition of the ACT (2007) Submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Planning and Environment, Canberra

<sup>4</sup> Youth Coalition of the ACT (2012) Youth Coalition Briefing to the Bus Services Roundtable. Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra.

<sup>5</sup> AIHW (2012) Young Australians: Their health and wellbeing 2011. Australian Government, Canberra.